

VEILED ISLAM: A DECONSTRUCTIVE SUFI FORMATION

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis describes and analyzes the practice of Sufism in a contemporary setting in Ankara from the insider point of view. The research deals critically with various approaches to Sufism in the field of anthropology, and introduces the Sufi scene in Turkey. The subject of the study is a Sufi formation which eludes categories in the field of Sufism, presenting close master/disciple relationships instead of institutional structures and normativity, and avoiding dichotomies such as modern/traditional, sacred/profane or unity/multiplicity. The research focuses on the interaction between its lack of form and the content of this particular Sufi practice, on the levels of the individuals and the group, and contextualizes it within the tradition of Islam. It also analyzes the processes of change occurred in the formation and within individuals during the time with the master and after his death. Plurality, respect for individual and cultural differences, deconstruction of existing categories –such as being, religion, the self, power and hierarchy-, ambiguity, the processuality and the open-endedness of experience and signification processes are important characteristics of the formation. Participants in the ethnographic research are restricted to the educated middle-class members of the formation. The applied method of research is Multi Grounded Theory enriched with the phenomenological mode of interviewing and collaboration of the members of the formation.

Keywords: Sufism, Anti-structure, Deconstruction, Heterotopias, Liminality

ÖZ

SAKLI İSLAM: YAPISÖKÜMCÜ BİR SUFİ OLUŞUMU

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Bu tez günümüz Ankara’ında bir Sufi pratiğini içerden bir bakışla betimlemekte ve analiz etmektedir. Araştırma, antropoloji alanında Sufizme yaklaşımlara dair eleştirel bir duruş sergilemekte ve Türkiye’deki Sufi geleneğe gerek tarihsel süreç içinde gerekse günümüzdeki haliyle kısaca göz atmaktadır. Araştırma konusu olan Sufi oluşumu, Sufizm alanındaki kategorileri altüst etmekte; kurumsal yapılar ve düzgüsel kurallar yerine yakın usta/öğrenci ilişkisine ve modern/geleneksel, kutsal/gündelik, birlik/çokluk ikilemelerinin yıkımına yönelmektedir. Araştırmanın odağını oluşumun yapısızlığı ile Sufi pratiğinin içeriği arasındaki ilişki oluşturmaktadır. Yapısızlığın, gerek bireylere gerekse gruba etkileri incelenmekte ve İslam geleneğindeki yeri tartışılmaktadır. Hem usta hayattayken hem de onun ölümünden sonra ortaya çıkan deęişim süreçleri, oluşum ve bireyler açısından analiz edilmektedir. Çoğulculuk, bireysel ve kültürel farklılıklara saygı, varlık, din, benlik, güç ve hiyerarşi gibi yapıların sökülmesi, belirsizlik, deneyim ve anlamlandırmanın ucunun açıklığı oluşumun önemli özellikleri olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Etnografik araştırmanın katılımcıları oluşumun kentli, eğitimli orta-sınıf üyeleriyle sınırlanmıştır. Etnografik araştırmada “Çoklu Gömülü Kuram” yöntemi uygulanmış; ancak bu yöntem, fenomenolojik görüşme biçimi ve oluşum üyelerinin araştırma sürecinde ve sonuçları hakkında fikirleri alınarak zenginleştirilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Sufizm, yapı karşıtlığı, yapısöküm, heterotopya, eşiklik.

To my Parents, especially my Mother from whom I learned to listen to and observe the silence.

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I have tried to be worthy of all the support I have been given and to do my best. Any errors in this thesis are mine.

PREFACE

Ahmet Kayhan writes:

Islam and Sufism is an endless garden of wisdom. There are flowers and fruit there for all to enjoy. Everybody has different taste, yet this garden is so vast and so rich in variety that everybody will find something right for them in it. We gathered a bouquet, a basket from this garden for you, although it might not be exactly what you desired, we tried to give something that you would feel close to. Our wish is for your improvement in knowledge and wisdom, what a delight for us if we are able to contribute to it (Kayhan 2009, back cover).

Sufism has gained popularity throughout history not as an ideology or a religious system or as an organisation model but through some Sufis' writings or sayings which many people felt addressed them directly, giving them hope or shaking their preconceptions. These Sufi sayings then found their re-utterance in quite different mouths, such as Mawlana Jalaladdin Rumi's "come as you are" from the mouth of a rock singer or, say, in the words of a head covered old lady in a Sufi order in Istanbul, or in those of a younger lady in a brothel a few roads away. Sufism's "spirit" also echoes in the voice of Jesus Christ when he said "he who has no sins shall throw the first stone" or in the voice of the Prophet Mohammad when he said "Blessed are those who are busy with their own flaws, rather than the flaws of others" (Ghazzali 1, 80 in Abdel-Qadir, 1995: 42). I hope this thesis will be an example of a living practice that can address different people in different contexts although it brings the subjective experiences of a small group of people into light, or maybe it is this very subjectivity that brings it so close to people.

Ahmet Kayhan was able to bring various approaches and tendencies together under his aegis. But some of the ideas represented in this thesis may not be approved by all of those who met him, because they are the result of research done among a small group of his followers and the thesis does not claim to represent what Ahmet Kayhan stands for in his fullness. The approach and emphasis might partly be reflecting the researcher's own tendency. This tendency is influenced by a socio-political context that is dominated by Islamophobia. The research would probably emphasise quite different aspects if the researcher had in the back of her mind a context where, for instance, Sufism was accused of being a heresy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The words, concepts start a stream of images that run through our mind. Images, of course, play an important role in constructing our ideas, perceptions and convictions, and they also reflect them. There are hegemonic, repressive ones because they are much louder, and quiet ones which go without being noticed if they are not made loud through for example a piece of writing as this thesis means to be.

There were images of Muslim lands with bright colours, narrow mysterious roads with small shops smelling spices and amber, among the smokes of opium and incense sticks, a thousand and one night stories, tempting, dizzying, poetic, round, strongly sensual, welcoming and exciting, yet alien, yet dangerous: the faraway exotic lands of the Orient, the “other” of the sometimes boring and restrictive, yet much praised rationality of the Occident. These images have long been replaced, especially since the “other” has nested more and more in the Western territory and places bombs or bomb like images of veiled, repressed women with black chadors and aggressive, fanatic men with long dark beards; furious terrorists and the collapsing of the twin towers. The Muslim has become associated with religious fundamentalism, backwardness, corruption, trouble, arousing emotions of threat, anger and vulnerability.

There are though many other lives in the interstices, beside or beneath such images. They may be veiled behind the common and ordinary. The subject of my research is one of this kind, and while it has almost nothing which would strike the “outer” eye, this does not make it less real. It itself claims to see with the “inner” eye, the eye of imagination, or the “eye of the heart”, and to become visible it needs the unveiling of the language. My interest towards anthropology and towards Sufism at one point have pretty much the same motivation: challenging the preconceived ideas and convictions which are generally constructed by dominant and loud discourses and images by means of revealing ways of life that are maybe not that loud and visible. This study makes the invisible topographies of a group of people within the Islamic Sufi context visible.

1.1 The Context of Sufism and Representations of Sufism

Is Sufism a locally coloured popular Saint cult with shrines and shaikhs who are believed to bring about miracles of healing and solutions to life struggles even when they are long dead? Is it a highly intellectual neo-Platonic mystical theosophy addressing the urban elite? Is it itself a patriarchal hierarchical socio-political institution? Does it stand in aversion to the mainstream social discourse and its institutions? Is it pacifistic? Is it activist? Has it been assimilated by the modernity? Is it in revival? These are some of the questions which can be posed in dealing with Sufism and all of them could be answered with yes when we consider all the different manifestations of it.

Sufism stands mainly for three seemingly different things: first the mystical or esoteric aspect of Islam mostly referred to as “classical Sufism”, of “long dead Saints” still nourishing the urban elite’s religious search (Gilsenan 1982: 244-246). The mystical aspect is mostly represented in Sufi literature, the most famous of which was produced in the period of 11th- 14th centuries, such as Mathnawi of Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi and Fusus-ul Hiqam of Ibn Arabi, and poetry of Hafiz e-Shirazi and Omar Khayyam. Some historians and anthropologists treat today’s Sufism as a continuation of the classical Sufism such as historian Weismann (2007), anthropologists Katherine P. Ewing (2007) and Valerie Hoffman (1995). Secondly as a hierarchical social institution (*tariqah*) in Islamic contexts with a charismatic leader where the loci of interest is mostly on how the “charisma” is constructed and justified and the relations with modernity (Gilsenan 1982, Werbner 2003, Silverstein 2007), and as transnational “Sufi saint cults” with branches in various parts of the world applying the same structures (Werbner 2003). Thirdly it is dealt as a heterodox belief attributing magical powers to Saints and their shrines by people in search for blessing in their daily troubles (Geertz 1968, Gellner 1981). More typifications are New-Sufism (Rahman 1979) where tariqahs in reaction to modernism and to comply with the Muslim orthodoxy make reformations since the 19th century¹. Newly there is also the “New Age” or “Western

¹ This idea is attested by various scholars; Weismann writes in agreement with O’Fahey and Radtke; “... the characteristics attributed to Sufism in that phase- an orthodox bent, veneration of the Prophet, and socio-political activism- were eventually part of the rich and variegated Sufi experience also in

Sufism” where the spirituality and universality are more in the forefront and the doctrine and organisations are adapted to the modern or post-modern context (Howell 2007).

The second chapter of this thesis “Literature Review and Theoretical Debates” deals with various representations of Sufism within the discipline of anthropology in the West. Katherina Pratt Ewing (1977) represents Sufism as a means to subjectivity which is enabled through the competing discourses within Islam and Sufism and modernity, where these discourses make possible a critical distance from all discourses. In Marcus Marsden’s (2005) book, Persian classical Sufism is one discourse beside the contemporary trends of revivalist movements and the Taliban, and Sunni and Shia Islam in the setting of a village where village people critically engage with these discourses as a source of a vivid intellectual and emotional life. Pnina Werbner (2003) represents Sufism as a universal religious ideology with one shared implicit logic based on a discourse of duality between body and soul, and purity and impurity; and as having panoptican methods of control on both the self and the space. Ken Lizzio (2007) on the other hand represents Sufism as an individual mystical and spiritual phenomenon generating both intellectual and ecstatic modes of experience. The various representations, I think, arise from a combination of the anthropologist’s approach and interest and the field where they conduct their research.

In the context of Turkey the term *tasawwuf* is generally attached to classical Sufism whose most famous figures are Mawlana Jalaladdun Rumi and Yunus Emre who have a wide acceptance in the various milieus of the society. The category “folk religion” is labelled on the shrines and their visitors with their “superstitious” traditions which are contested by the orthodoxy. The broad category *Cemaatler* (religious communities) is used for religious organisations which can be highly political, modernist or sharia oriented, and some of these communities come from the tradition of *tariqahs* (Sufi brotherhoods or orders) . The *tariqah* organisations were officially abandoned with the reformations of the Republic but continued to exist partly underground, and have become more publicly present especially after the 1980s because of a liberalisation towards religious movements.

previous generations, down to the very formation of the brotherhoods in the twelfth century” (2007: 9).

Sufism today is mostly known with its formal organisation *tariqah*, an institution with carefully defined structures. Most of them date back to 13th or 14th centuries. They are institutions mostly with a mosque which is also a place for *sohbet*² (lecture or ethical conversation) and congregational *zikh*³ (recitation of the Koran and the names of God) and *wird*⁴ originating from the founder of the *tariqah*, and also sometimes *sema* (whirling and making music). Mostly *türbes* (the tombs of the death d *shaikhs* and *khalifs*) are included in the site. These mostly served as dormitories for some *derwishes*, the followers of Sufism in older times. These sites are called *dergah* or *tekke* in Turkey.

A *tariqah* organization is normally highly hierarchical. *Shaikh* or *Murshid* is the spiritual guide and charismatic leader. In large ones many of the followers can hardly meet the *shaikh* in person but his *khalifs* or *vekils* (representatives). *Khalifs* who are high at the rank of spirituality and nearness to *shaikhs* can become *shaikhs* themselves or one of them is attained as the successors of the *shaikh* mostly by the *shaikh* himself before he dies. In some *tariqahs* the succession is hereditary. *Vekils* represent the *shaikh* when he is absent. *Murid* is the applicant. If a person is interested in Sufism she/he attends a *tariqah* i.e. gets initiated by the *shaikh* with a ritual. The practices include *sohbet* (especially in the Naqshbandi order) and extra practices then the five pillars of Islam, which are a keen self-observation, *zikh*s and an ethical code to be obeyed. *Murids* are given daily exercises according to their levels. In some *tariqah* organisations they wear special garments. There is mostly a separation of men and women during the rituals and in ways how to approach the *shaikh*.

The institutionalisation was a historical process from informal, heterogeneous, small groups of spiritual masters and their disciples at the formation period, towards consolidation and systemisation of the teaching which led to broader institutes of *tariqahs*. Heterogeneity has

² Referred to as *suhba* in most anthropological texts as it is used in Arabic.

³ *Dhikr* in Arabic.

⁴ *Awrad* (pl. of *wird*) are devotional prayers which “consist of passages of the Quran or prayers upon the Prophet, which are commonly recited at public gatherings. There are several famous devotional prayers of this kind that have come from spiritual teachers” (Ibn Arabi, 2000: 2)

yet remained a characteristic feature expressing itself in various *tariqahs* (paths) and their branches. “Sufism, the major mystical tradition in Islam, emerged from within renunciatory modes of *zuhd* (piety) during a period that extended from the last decades of the eighth century to the beginning of the tenth century” (Karamustafa 2007: 1). Until 12th-13th centuries Sufi groups had a loose structure where people who were interested in getting a special spiritual training visited a master, and also went from master to master. In the second period distinct schools, *tariqah* (paths) with their different approaches, practices and emphasis took shape such as the Qadiriyya, the Suhrawardiyya and the Yasawiyya (Trimingham 1998). The different approaches and practices were either the expression of the context (urban, rural, and the pre-existing beliefs and rituals,) or *meshrep* (inclination) such as ecstatic or sober, intellectualistic or ritualistic. In the third period (13th and 14th centuries) these paths got institutionalised, building dormitories (*tekkes*, *dergahs*), distinguishing themselves from other Muslims and becoming widely spread. In the initiation period of the Naqshbandiyya path (14th century) we find a reaction to the institutionalisation (Weismann 2007) though it didn’t take long until it also got institutionalised.

Sufism has appeared in apolitical even asocial forms as well as in political, institutionalised and normative ones. It has been able to exist in various social and political contexts, being beside or against or shaping various hegemonic discourses and being in interaction with them.

As for the content, generally speaking it is an orientation towards “’discovery’ and cultivation of the inner dimensions of the human person, [...] accompanied by a parallel effort to discern the inner meaning of the Koran and the Sunnah, a method of interpretation from within [...] often described as *istinbat* (inference)” (Karamustafa 2007: 2). There is a consensus among the theologians about the sources of Islam which are the Koran and the Hadith (the extra-Koran expressions of the Prophet) and the *sunnah* (the application of the Islam as in the life of the Prophet). However there are discussions about which of the Hadith are reliable and which are not, and the interpretations of the Koran. One of the reasons of differences in interpretations can be referred to the Koran’s language: the verses are of two types in terms of expression, one type is called *muhkem* (clear) and the other is *muteshabih* (ambiguous). While some of the ambiguous ones are considered to be interpretable when someone’s knowledge is deep, some others are considered to be a secret for everybody. There are three different approaches to interpretation; for some the interpretation is restricted to the generation of the prophet and the following two generations. Theologians consider scientific study of sources, other works and reasoning as a valid way of interpretation, *tafsir* (literally uncovering). And the third group find that intuition, unveiling and inspiration are

the faculties which have to be included in the interpretation⁵. The Sufis belong to the last category.

1.2 The Field

The Sufi formation, the subject of this ethnographic research, demonstrates an obscurity of borders within the context of Islam and Sufism. I have chosen to call it a formation because other concepts such as *tariqah*, Sufi brotherhood, community (*cemaat* in Turkish) -or even group- which are common in the field of Sufism are not adequate: the formation lacks a formal institution and people do not consider themselves as members of a social group. It seems to combine “classical” and “popular” aspects of Sufism, and although it makes use of the accumulated knowledge of Islamic and Sufi traditions it is embedded in the modern context without considering it as a conflict.

At its centre is Ahmet Kayhan (1898-1998) a Sufi master in Ankara, addressed as Efendi or Dede by the followers. He came from the Samini branch of the Naqshbandiyya tradition. The branch is unknown in the academia, although the Naqshbandiyya in general is one of the most studied and wide spread traditions of Sufism in Turkey. In contrast to the Ahmet Kayhan’s formation the Naqshbandies are known for their highly institutionalised organisation and the role they played among the ruling elites since Ottoman times. They are also present in the politics of present day Turkey.

There is a consensus among the members of the formation that Ahmet Kayhan was above *tariqahs*. Except one informant they also supported the abolishment of the *tariqahs* in Turkey. They suggested that Sufism did not need what one informant called a “social club” in order to transmit its teaching. It could be experienced through an interaction with an *Insan-ı Kamil* (the realised/perfect human being) or *Veli* (Gnostic or God’s companion), self-observation, and through relations and responsibilities in the society.

⁵ The information is taken from the webpage of the Platform for the Staff of the Religious Affairs: <http://www.diyanetpersonel.com/ilitam-sinavlari-ve-cikmis-sorulari/1513-ankara-ilitam-kuran-ve-hadis-ilimleri-ozetleri-print.html>, (accessed 18 February 2012).

The formal features which are considered to be the characteristics of *tariqah* organisations such as regular, communal meetings, rituals and initiation ceremonies and a succession of the *shaikh* are not existent in this formation. The bond was based on a feeling of mutual acceptance and love as many formulated it. There is however a mosque and *türbe* (tomb) complex which was built short before his passing away is near Ankara and run by a board, and some books which were printed at the time of the master are considered as common property by the most. The network is scattered; smaller groups have contact through close friendships but larger meetings are very rare except on the annual of his death. There are also newcomers who are introduced to Dede's teaching and personality through friends, relatives, dreams or his books. The "network" as it is now an "acephalous" one since the death of Dede in 1998, still with Dede in the centre in spite of his physical absence. There is yet a "shared culture" consisting of a perception of life, some principles and practices.

Although some aspects may seem like a modern or even post-modern adaptation of a tradition there are features that embed the formation within the Naqshbandi tradition. The principles of self-observation, being an active member of the society and the rejection of *tariqah* organisations are similar to the Khawajagan- Naqshbandiyya (the Naqshbandiyya in Bukhara during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries). It also had an element of rejection of the institutionalisation of tariqahs and conducting a *khanqah* (spiritual centre) (Khismatulin 2005: 252 and Weismann 2007: 21).

Ahmet Kayhan (Dede or Efendi as he is called by the followers) is considered an *Insan-i Kamil* (the Realised or Perfect Human Being), a representative of the prophet, and standing above *tariqahs* and even religions and embracing them all. He indeed had followers from various backgrounds and other *tariqahs* such as the Mawlawis, the Jerrahis and the Qadiris which seems to be another characteristic of the Naqshbandiyya; "the inner cohesion of the Naqshbandiyya has always been weak while its boundaries to other brotherhoods and with the larger Muslim community have never been demarcated" (Weismann 2007: 11). The classical Sufi concepts are also alive such as *nafs* (the self) and *fana* (self-annihilation or loss of self), and classical Sufi texts are read widely as well as the Koran and the Hadith. The practice of *namaz* (salah) is given special emphasis.

Ahmet Kayhan had followers from various milieus of society, but the research participants are restricted to the urban educated middle class. Most of them have a critical outlook and an anti-authoritarian tendency towards sociological, political and religious matters, and have tried various ways of life and philosophies. They either do not come from traditional upbringing or had cut off their relations with religion. They have gone through a

signification process about Islam, Sufism and *Insan-ı Kamil* after having met Dede. They have remained embedded in modern society while being strongly connected to the master. Dede had kept a good distance to media and politics, just as the formation was quite invisible in the public space. They also carried no outer signs implicating their intensive occupation with Sufism.

At the beginning not all reactions among the group members were positive about the idea of an anthropological research for various reasons. The main caution was about the master: He was ungraspable and every representation would fall short to describe him. I was warned that I would not be able to get at the master in himself but everybody's own version which would rather tell about the participants themselves. Some members of the group did not consider it as the right time to take the formation to a more public space. Some brought about their caution that religion has become instrumental of the political discourse and they did not want to be drawn to this field of contestation. Some others said that as there was none of the social political economical relations and accumulation of power arising from such relationships, no formal structures or norms –the things which they thought would interest the discipline of anthropology– it would not really be in the scope of interest of social sciences. These reactions were actually the expression of the awareness of subjectivity, plurality and partiality of perspectives which is the main characteristic of the research field.

1.3 The Research Interest

I met Hadji Ahmet Kayhan in May 1997, long before I started studying social anthropology, and remained in Ankara because of him. The research idea arose in the Seminar for Theory of Anthropology with Tayfun Atay in 2009 as my interest of study tended towards anthropology of religion. The difference of the formation made it an attractive field of research. This research is about the perception and practice of Sufism in this particular context. A phenomenological approach was chosen where the lifeworld of the participants consisting of physical and imaginal, emotional and intellectual levels and bodily sensations are represented within themselves.

Detachment becomes an important issue when one is an insider who tries to bring the intimate knowledge with the detachment of scientific study to a fruitful combination. I had to learn to look at the field from a different perspective than I was used to. I thought, at the beginning, as an insider I knew a lot. I considered my problem as dealing with a huge amount of data, the difficulty created by the lack of clear structures and norms in the formation, and translating the experience into the language of anthropology. But soon I realised that I knew very little and the research has become a learning process. I often had to

deal with deficiency of knowledge about both the Sufi and anthropological fields, besides the language in which I had to write my thesis. My participants have often become my consultants. Yet the thesis is inevitably a depiction through my lens. The integration of anthropological way of looking at the phenomenon will be completely new to my participants.

Multiple GTM and constructivist GTM were applied as research methodology. They teach how to collect data and how to let the theory emerge from the data and also consider the role of the researcher in these phases. The distance I needed from the discourse of the field which hindered me to look at the master as a research subject was supplied through the methodology, the anthropological theory and the history of Sufism that helped me to contextualise the subjective, intimate experiences of my participants in the anthropological field and the social historical context.

It seems that Sufism in the form we are encountering it with these people constantly teaches and enacts a unity in multiplicity and a multiplicity in unity. This is at the heart of every detail of teaching, the practice and the organisational structure –or lack of structure. It has ways of dealing with culture and multiplicity, particular and universal, assumptions, imaginations and knowledge, love, tension and dissonance both within the individual and in the society. It interconnects the spiritual, the imaginal and the physical; the doctrine and the practice; the scriptural and the experiential; the normative and the non-normative; the cultural and the meta-cultural; the individual and the sociological; the rupture and the continuity; the post-modern and the traditional, and the historical and the meta-historical spheres. Bringing together of various incompatible sites into a single real place, creating an “absolutely different place” where “all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault 1984: 3) is what makes Foucault’s heterotopia. The study looks at the ways how these are interwoven in the formation.

I found that Victor Turner’s theory of liminality and anti-structure was relevant to the field. Liminality is described as an “in-betweenness”, a “neither here nor there condition” where the liminars during a transition ritual are placed by the initiators and symbols of the ritual. During these rituals the initiands, “passengers”, are deprived of their status and put into a condition where the structures of their community are turned upside down that have a deconstructive effect of the habitual ways of perception and action and relate the passengers with the deeper structures of their culture and open up their creative capacities. There is minimization of sex distinctions, disregard for personal appearance, unselfishness, total

obedience, sacred instruction, silence, continuous reference to mystical powers, foolishness, simplicity, acceptance of pain and suffering and heteronomy (Turner 1991: 106-107). The groups built among the initiands during these rituals are called *communitas* where the individuals are equal and can relate with each other wholly. It is “in and out of time and in and out of secular social structure” (Turner 1991: 96).

These find an echo in the narrations of my participants’ experiences. On the other hand there are no such ritual patterns as in Turner’s transition rituals. It is the confrontation with the master which has such effects on the “Sufi traveller”. Yet different than in the case of Turner’s temporary liminars, the liminality is rather a continuous or at least a long term condition and the Sufi travellers are not deprived of their place in the society. The experience they go through takes place beside their social roles and duties, beside the structures, and causes changes in perception. According to Turner liminality is also marked by marginality, *communitas* exist in the interstices of the society and break with the commonsensical and enact reflexivity for the society and the individuals who take part in them. Considering my participants lives they had a certain degree of liminality before they were initiated into Sufism: they had cosmopolitan tendencies, various sometimes conflicting interests and searches, were critical of the structures of the society and not totally established in the society. And although their liminality was intensified after meeting Dede there was a difference; their criticality turned more to themselves and they had to learn to be more inclusive of different cultures and approaches. That is, they also gained distance towards themselves and their perceptions which brought them closer to others or equalled them to others, where the other was not outside anymore. I call the period before meeting the master “liminality of negation”, while the latter the “liminality of affirmation”.

Turner asserts that the *communitas* either dissolve or get institutionalised. In our case the *communitas* which were the smaller networks within the formation have dissolved. There is no institutionalisation but a loose formation is still consistent and there are new adherents.

Talal Asad’s conception of Islam as a “discursive tradition” and suggestion that anthropologists should take their departure from the scriptures, the Koran and the Hadith as the Muslims do whatever tradition of Islam they are studying (Asad 1986) is the overall frame of the research and is apt to the practices in the formation. There is yet a remarkable difference; how they deal with the scripture and the text in general –which they understand consisting of the scriptures, the self and the universe- is deconstructive. It allows various and open interpretations which are based on experience that widens the restrictions the texts place when they would have been taken only literally or physically. This is not meant as depriving

them of any substance or meaning but getting nearer at the meanings or what lies behind the structures. In this sense it is an “affirmative deconstruction”.

1.4 Research Focus and Aim

As it is evident from the portrayal of the phenomenon, the main question the research poses is the non-institutionalised aspect of this Sufi formation and its relation with the master’s content and method of teaching, and the practices as well as its intake by the followers. What constitutes the master’s attraction and binding effect without a formal structure dictating order and authority? How are the differences dealt with? What is it that the members share and do not share? How do people handle the acephalous state after him both in their personal lives and as a network of people who sometimes must decide on issues which concern them all? What are the tendencies in the networks and in individuals? How do people relate to their society? These are all the questions I will try to tackle on. I will focus on the educated urban middle class members as they are quite multiple in themselves and well represented in terms of their number in the formation. As they do not fit well in the picture of “new conscious Muslims” of for example the Gülen Community or the Iskenderpaşa Community it will still present another niche of the society, and show how they integrate their devotion in their daily lives in the contemporary Turkish context.

I hope the research will open up some aspects of Sufism which have remained in the shadow in the scholarship as the emphasis of the formation is neither the common tariqah organisation nor the magicity. The phenomenon at hand seems to have deconstructive effects, breaking the categories of religiosity, public and private spheres, esoteric and exoteric, the gender, identity and the “other”, modern and traditional without even caring to construct new ones. I hope to cause a scissure in stereotyped Muslim identity perceptions both in Turkey and globally, and to contribute to the intensive debates on religion, religiosity and religious communities. Giving justice to the openness of the people who shared their intimate experiences with me is another major concern. This research shall be a reflection for the ones, including me, who had met Hadji Ahmet Kayhan. Although their relationship with each other is not as intensive as it used to be, if the representation here is successful, it will be a revisiting the field they have once shared physically.

The research has restrictions mainly because of the restricted milieu of the participants although the formation itself consists of a rich variety. The Alawites, the uneducated milieus, the ones with traditional backgrounds, the ones who act as *murshids* after Dede would all need to be looked at to give a full picture of the formation and to test the results of this

research as to how far they can be generalised to the whole formation, and what differences there are which are dependent on the backgrounds of the people.

1.5 Content

I approach to Sufism from an insider perspective to discuss and analyse the elements that make up the lifeworld of the adherents of the Sufi master, Ahmet Kayhan in this thesis. First I will introduce the theoretical debates in the field of anthropology and discuss the influences that shape the discipline's approaches to the field based on some contributions that represent a variety of approaches. Then I will explain my approach and methodology together with underlying rationales to choose them in this study. In the chapter about the field theory I will first present the debates in search of new theories in the field of Sufism in anthropology. Then I will present my theoretical framework which is composed of Turner's concept of "liminality", Foucault's "heterotopias" and Asad's Islam as a "discursive tradition", and discuss their relevance to explicate the main issues of the ethnographic findings of this research.

Chapter 5 "*Tariqahs* and Sufism in the Present Day Turkey" discusses the Turkish historical context in terms of Sufism and the transformations *tariqahs* have gone through during the republican era. It also discusses the supposition that Sufism in Turkey has declined which might be the underlying reason of the apparent rarity of anthropological studies about Sufism in Turkey. The anthropological works which are discussed are to the most part unpublished MA or PhD theses, but they yet give an idea of the variety of Sufi groups in Turkey. The Iskenderpaşa Community which is a Gümüşhanevi branch of the Khalidi sub-order of the Naqshbandi Sufi order is represented by two studies: Brian Silverstein's analyses of the order (2007 and 2008) which is theoretically based on Asad's conception of Islam as a discursive tradition represents the order as a modern regime of power and knowledge, while Emin Yaşar Demirci's unpublished PhD thesis (1996) emphasises the function of the community in its national identity building mission. Two other examples are women dominated communities: Cemal Nur Sargut's Rifai community is discussed in terms of "Western Sufism" and "New Age Sufism" as university style adult education centres to gain followers among the cosmopolitan urban middle classes by Aslihan A. Akman (unpublished

MA thesis 2007). Mehmed Gönen Foundation⁶ is represented as a charity organisation practicing Sufi rituals and creating private space for women (Raudvere in the review of Bishop, 2005). The last study (unpublished thesis by Aras, 1997) focuses on the Galibi Order, an organisation that shows characteristics of a “regional cult” (Werbner 2003). Ö. Recep Aras finds that the order’s structure is highly hierarchical just like the secular organizations but the members’ emotional commitment is very high.

In chapter 6 “A Short History of Sufism and Its Concepts”, the researched Sufi formation is contextualised in the history of Islam and Sufism. The debates in the Islamic tradition in general and in Sufism in particular are presented. The chapter includes the basic approaches towards knowledge acquisition which underlie the differences between philosophical, theological and Sufi traditions. The focus is on Sufi attitudes towards institutionalisation, ritual, visibility and integration in the society. Along with it, its concepts which demarcate its ontological and epistemological approaches are delineated which gives Sufism its particularity among other Islamic traditions. Early critique towards institutionalisation among the Naqshbandiyya and the Malamatiyya are given special emphasis.

Chapter 7 “The *Silsila* and the Characteristics of the Path” focuses on the tradition of the master based on the spiritual chain of transmission of the teaching (*silsila*). It focuses on the branch which the master comes from and points at the differences from other known *silsilas* in terms of ambiguities. It touches upon the question of invisibility both in scientific studies and from the perceptive of the followers and relates it to rejection of institutionalisation. It also gives information about master’s life, education and gaining popularity.

Chapter 8 “A Contemporary Deconstructive Discursive Sufi Formation” discusses the formation, its practices and perceptions based on the interviews, observations and texts people refer to. The first section gives the general picture of the formation, and focuses on the plurality and its doctrinal basis. It exemplifies the deconstruction and affirmation of “culture”. The second section focuses on the characteristics, motives and perceptions of the individuals as well as the changes they have gone through. It shows the signification processes of the master as an *Insan-ı Kamil* (the Perfect Human Being) and how the

⁶ I could find only a review written on the book and will not be able to discuss it in detail.

participants deal with Sufism as they have experienced it with the master. It exemplifies the deconstruction of the presumptions. Third section discusses the networks as a field of learning about and accepting multiplicity and subjectivity, and in their roles of dissemination of the teaching and practices. The focus is on the concepts of power and hierarchies and exemplifies the deconstruction of these. In the fourth section of the chapter the post-Dede period is discussed in terms of changes and continuities. Fifth section goes deeper in the sources: the occupation with the scriptures and the self, and how these are dealt with and deconstructed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL DEBATES IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF SUFISM

How shall I represent the world of my informants/friends in their relationship with Sufism as they experience it within the field of anthropology? In this chapter I will discuss the concerns which guided my research by means of theoretical debates in the field of anthropology of Islam and Sufism. My informants experience the world in interaction with the social and the individual, the East and the West, the past and the present, and the phenomenal and the non-phenomenal. They have neither been connected through the organisation of any religious order nor practiced any structured communal rituals although these are common in most Sufi orders. Rather they are a loose community around a Sufi master, and now that they are acephalous the community has become even looser. My research asks what, in such a case, are the causes of non-institutionalisation, what kind of group dynamics it generates and what are its impacts on the group's members?

2.1 Introduction

The anthropological scholarship had depicted Sufism as a form of popular or folk Islam which appealed mostly to rural people and which was expected to decline in the face of modernity (Trimingham 1998, Geertz 1971). Yet current research has both identified a "return of the religious" and recognised that Sufism is not restricted to a social type (Gilsenan 2000, Howell and Bruinessen 2007). Michael Gilsenan relates the process of a return to religion to a failure of the modernist project of disenchantment of the world, as it created new enchantments of consumption, cult of celebrity, idealisation, social honour, and sacrifice on one hand, and a need for the certainty that religions can offer in the face of multiple moralities of pluralism on the other (Gilsenan 2000: 598-99). John O. Voll marks the revival of religious interest in the late twentieth century as demonstrating the "postmaterialist" era where the emphasis is no longer on the distribution of material goods but on how to put reformed lifestyles into practice (Voll 2007: 295-296). Although these ideas might have relevance especially in societies where modernity was born, it should be noted that in many societies religion has never lost its importance in the lives of people. In the research reported in this thesis, I concentrated on people from educated urban middle

class who represent a milieu of the society that would be expected to have “rid the world of magic” in the sense of modernity. They apparently lead modern lives and do not seem to have problems with plurality. I will question what appeals to them in Sufism.

In most studies Sufism is taken as synonymous with *tariqah* orders⁷ and rituals⁸, but these are not relevant in the case of this formation, and this was the reason for the initial research question. Further familiarity with anthropological scholarship on Sufism is another major issue: Barring some similarities with Robert Rozeznal (2007), Marcus Marsden (2005) and Katherine P. Ewing (1997) –the latter two to be discussed below- most representations of Sufism in the anthropological literature would not correspond with the experiences and ideas of my informants: Sufism is represented as born out of need in the face of an ambiguous God (Lindholm 1998), as a function of conflict and distress resolution, as a means of self-representation (Ewing 1990: 59-60), or as an assertion of the power and confidence of the underprivileged (Werbner 1996: 333). The *pir* was the “ultimate planner and decision maker” and the disciple was void of agency (Werbner 1998, Landell Mills 1998); and the space such as the shrine and objects such as the tomb were to be associated with *pirs* invariably (Landell Mills 1998). In more recent studies the “new Sufism” has been represented as an attempt to adapt to the necessities of modernity: as rationalised religious institutions with economic and political purposes (Bruinessen 2007) or as modern regimes of power and knowledge (Silverstein 2007) or as a political identity (Yavuz 1999) or as “offers of certainty” (Gilsenan 2000) or as “Sufi fundamentalism” with an orthodox, political bent (Weismann 2007a). Some forms of “new Sufism” had a secular “*sharia* teacher” who rather than seeking “transcendence” was a mere alternative to “Islamists” who aimed at establishing an Islamic state (Sikand 2007), and “New Age Sufism”, it has been said, offered university style adult education centres to gain followers among the cosmopolitan urban middle classes (Howell 2007, Haenni and Voix 2007, Akman 2007).

⁷ The social organization of Sufism with carefully defined structures and hierarchies mostly translated as Order or Sufi brotherhood with a leading *shaikh* or *pir* who follows one another in succession.

⁸ Initiation ceremonies, communal repetition of the names of Allah *zikr/dhikr* are the most common rituals.

In earlier studies mostly Weberian theories were used, and Foucaultian theories as well as parts of social movement theories were referred to in the latter cases. None of these seem appropriate to my findings or my research questions. Indeed, a number of scholars have indicated some problems in anthropological approaches that relate to the mismatch of materials and existing theories that I have experienced. Some of these debates will be presented below, along with an indication of the relationships between the theory, the anthropologist and the ethnographic work by means of four examples from the field. I want to point at the interrelationships between the anthropologist's approach towards the field and the theory that is used, and how they play a role in her/his analysis of the facts of the field. I will present the critique in the field of the anthropology of Islam as expressed by Ken Lizzio, Talal Asad, and Daniel Varisco who call for consideration about the preconceptions anthropologist has while entering a field and which might interfere with his/her analyses.

An anthropologist is a translator of cultures, i.e. s/he takes the signs of one culture and tries to make them understandable for another culture. S/he tries to make a "deep-translation" where the meanings people attach to the concepts are translated. These translations themselves bear a great deal of interpretation as in the example of the concept "*fana fillah*", which will be discussed below, and which literally means "loss in God", and "God" as a sign is very open. When it is translated as "the loss of self" (Ewing 1977) or "self-annihilation" (Werbner 2003) it hints at a choice of the anthropologist (both translations are widespread in texts on Sufism also elsewhere) and restricts and fixes the meaning to a certain aspect of the concept of which we would not know if it is the only connotation when people themselves use it. Talal Asad also points to a problem, which is that it is actually the anthropologist who determines the meanings of the subjects. S/he is not confronted with a piece of discourse which is textualised (as with the linguist) but must "construct the discourse as a cultural text" out of what s/he gets from the people, and then s/he attributes meanings to it like a psychoanalyst determining the subjects' meanings before s/he analyses them (Asad 1986).

In this thesis, in order to understand the concepts as they are meant by the people themselves, I argue that relevant Sufi theory and historical processes must be included in the analysis, as the people themselves take on these in their habitus even if they cannot verbalize them. As there are many practices and understandings of Sufism even in similar contexts, generalisations about what Sufism is and aims at universally would be misplaced and misguiding.

Most current research on Sufism is conducted in post-colonial countries, and it is supposed that Sufism has declined in the face of modernity in the Middle East and Turkey (Lindholm

1998), but is flourishing “despite reform movements” in the South Asia (Werbner and Basu 1998: 3). The anthropology of Sufism in Turkey will be discussed in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

All four studies I chose to discuss in this chapter are situated in Pakistan. The complexity and variety of approaches of both the researcher and the researched will be investigated and explained through these studies. Katherine Pratt Ewing (1977) researches the various and often conflicting positions that groups, individuals and modern state take towards Sufism. She represents Sufism as a means to subjectivity which is enabled through the competing discourses within Islam and Sufism and modernity, where these discourses make possible a critical distance from all discourses. In Marcus Marsden’s book (2005), Persian classical Sufism is one discourse beside the contemporary trends of revivalist movements and the Taliban, and Sunni and Shii Islam in the setting of a village. Village people critically engage with these discourses and this religious engagement is a source of a vivid intellectual and emotional life. Pnina Werbner (2003) on the contrary represents Sufism as a universalist religious ideology with one shared implicit logic based on a discourse of duality between body and soul, and purity and impurity; it has panoptican methods of control on both the self and the space and the freedom of it promises is “imagined” because the followers are expected to be “obedient non-thinkers” in the face of the saint. Ken Lizzio (2007) stands on the opposite end of the spectrum to Werbner in his representation of Sufism as an individual mystical and spiritual phenomenon generating both intellectual and ecstatic modes of experience. While Werbner remains an outsider observing the social political aspects of her field, and explaining the individual perceptions as a product of collective imagination, and generalising her findings to Sufism as a whole, Lizzio goes native and delineates only the individual, mystical aspects of Sufism in a social, political vacuum as an ahistorical phenomenon. Although Pnina Werbner and Ken Lizzio seem to represent two quite opposite poles in their representation of Sufism, they show similarity in excluding other discourses of Sufism and Islam in the wider context which might be competing with these discourses that influence the subject positions that are described and analysed in their studies. For Ewing and Marsden there are various discourses and their representations show both individual and social aspects in interrelation.

These contributions demonstrate how differently anthropologists analyse the phenomenon of Sufism even in one and the same country which seems to be due to a combination of various factors; the theory applied, the methodology, the research-field, the personal experiences of the anthropologist, and the intersubjective relationship between the researcher and the

researched. The inclusion or exclusion of the wider context also seems to play a role in yielding very different representations of Sufism.

The theoretical debates and anthropological contributions referred to and discussed below were determined by my desire to build my own approach into the research. It focuses upon those debates that guided me the most. I learned from their warnings, merits and demerits.

2.2 Theoretical Debates on Anthropology of Islam

The debates in the anthropology of Islam seem to be moving around ethnocentrism and cultural particularism. The question is how far the modern discourse which is contextual and the theories born out of it are appropriate to delineate the situation in Islamic cultures.

Religion is an important aspect of cultures. It supplies people with a universe of meanings, perceptions and interpretations, and it arises and develops in particular cultural and historical contexts. It has its discourses, which are in a reciprocal relationship with its context. The modern discourse on religion arose mainly in the nineteenth century Christian context of Europe and was expressed by the philosopher Feuerbach in his influential work *The Essence of Christianity* (first published in 1841). He denoted the man-made nature of religion, saying, to put it very briefly, that religion was born out of the needs of transcendence and objectification. By means of two human capacities, feelings and imagination, man objectified his longing for a reality outside himself, to grant him his deepest wishes of immortality, power, perfection and limitless being. This objectification was a source of alienation which Coser described as “a condition in which men are dominated by the forces of their own creation, which confront them as alien powers” (Coser 1977: 50 in Olson).

The sociological and anthropological theory of religion is based on the insights of Marx, Durkheim and Weber. Marx emphasised the role of religion as a tool in the hands of capitalism to justify and preserve its status quo and ideology. For Durkheim the source of religion was the collective consciousness of the society, and it had various functions such as furnishing the society with stability, cohesion, social identity, collective conscience, socialisation, social control, meaning and purpose. For Weber there was a correlation between a society's religion and its people's material needs and interests; religions which were on the side of the repressed in their initial years afterwards became rationalised and institutionalised, becoming a stabilising factor in the society. They would be renewed by another prophet or charismatic figure when the interests of people ceased to be met, and this was a cyclic movement in the history of men. Until very recently these theories were the foundation of the theories of religion applied and developed by anthropologists.

Some anthropologists who have found themselves confronted with Islamic cultures, their texts and practices for long periods of time have voiced dissatisfaction about the representations of Islam in the anthropological literature. They refer the problem mainly to the fact that anthropology and its theories has arisen out of western contexts and discourses. Ken Lizzio puts forward the argument that the structuralist/functionalist theory was focused on the social, political and economic functions of the Sufi orders and thus neglected the major aspect of the orders about the cultivation of a spiritual life, and that the hermeneutical anthropological analysis was based on an assumption that “the mystical experience was socially constructed and therefore not ‘really real’” (Lizzio 2007: 3-4).

Talal Asad, a prominent theorist of the anthropology of religion, points to the problems arising out of the meta-language of the anthropologist. In an interview with Saba Mahmood (1996) he stresses the necessity of using people’s own categories instead of categories of the Western sociological tradition, to be able to describe things in their own terms. Asad asserts that the “intellectualised abstracted system of doctrines” and embodied practices which aim at developing “a distinctive set of virtues (articulated by religion) are interconnected and the anthropologist would do better if he/she studied both”. Vincent Cornell takes this idea a step further and asserts agency to Sufi theory to describe itself. He says the logic of symbolic anthropology in the West can be used to illustrate, not to replace the concepts of Sufism (Cornell 1983: 69).

In Katherine Pratt Ewing’s book *Arguing Sainthood- Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam* (1997) we find a good example of application of Sufi theory. She discusses the subject positions in a complex social field of conflicting ideologies and cross-cutting interests in Lahore, and applies a methodology which combines anthropological, psychoanalytical and Sufi theories (ibid.: xiii). Her work is marked by her use of Sufi concepts as “explanatory models”; i.e. she includes in her analysis the terms and concepts that Sufis themselves use to explain the nature of culture, reality, and the psyche (ibid.: xiii). She grounds her confrontation in her desire to understand them and not to project only “otherness” to the alien culture. She explains: “I allowed my own beliefs and values to be challenged; I allowed Sufi insights about human nature and the world to speak to me as truth” (ibid.: xii). She manages to generate intertextuality between theories out of the source and target cultures.

During her three years (1975-77, 1984-85) of field research in Lahore, Pakistan and with some informants in the USA, she observed and took part in practices surrounding the Sufi *pirs* from various forms of Sufism. She studied various discourses and practices of Sufism, Islam and modernity and paid attention to how various subject positions are taken among

these competing discourses. She presents the phenomenon both in present and in its historicity.

Muhammad Iqbal (1877 -1938), a Pakistani poet and philosopher attracted her attention to the notion of desire in earlier Sufi thinkers, where she found many parallels to Lacan's theory of self in Ghazzali (1058 -1111) (ibid.: 257-265). Her confrontation with the concept of *fana fillah* "loss of self", which is a central Sufi theme, is a good example of her approach: She suggests that the developmental aspect of the emergence of human subject out of an undifferentiated matrix of infancy is shared by both thinkers (Ghazzali and Lacan), with some differences, but they are placed differently. With the Sufis the object of desire is God and with Lacan it is the absent mother. For Lacan the subject cannot experience wholeness when it desires unification with the mother s/he had in the prelanguage period. As for Ghazali, God has being in itself and the rest is not-being, deriving its being from not-being and having no existence by itself. As an attempt to capture being, the illusory ego, constructed and fixed out of metaphors, creates more metaphors which become veils concealing the object of desire. Even when the gap is closed when the Sufi experiences ecstasy or loss of self, it reopens. Hence for both the Sufis and Lacan "desire is oriented towards an abyss" (ibid.: 257-261).

Pratt Ewing takes us through Ghazzali's category of thought processes which have some similarities to the ideas of western philosophers and sociologists: the "sensory spirit" receives need-based information brought in by the senses in infancy; the "imaginative spirit" which develops later in childhood keeps a record of the information conveyed by the senses (object permanence), and can build a desire in the absence of the objects. The desire in this case is directed to the image preserved in the imagination. This image then influences perception. The "intelligential spirit" of the adult on the other hand apprehends ideas and gives causal explanations but these are built upon this already distorted perception. Then the "discursive spirit" takes these data and arranges them as premises, deducing knowledge from them. This "knowledge" is detached from the "real" and has an ideological character. Ghazzali concludes that the relational properties of the ideas we hold stand in arbitrary relationship to 'truth'. Yet the Cartesian reflexive I is not a fantasy with Sufis as it is with Lacan because Ghazzali envisages another "spirit", which does not depend on rational thought processes (*'aql*) but on an irruption from elsewhere. Ewing comments that "[a]ccess to truth requires an irruption, a disruption of the imaginary, of the ideologies, including the ideology of the "self" that place a screen or 'veil' between us and truth. Without such an irruption we are caught in a historically contingent discursive formation" (ibid.: 258-259). This irruption leads to *tawwakul* (a state of reliance) in Sufis with its stages working towards

a reversed developmental sequence of childhood, the illusory autonomous individual entrusting his affairs to God until he becomes like the child in womb without any demands, because demands come from separation. She can thus say about *fana fillah* “loss of self” that

From a Lacanian perspective, the Sufi has, of course passed through the Symbolic Order, through the signifier, which has structured the unconscious. By focusing on the moment at which absence is no longer absence, one is confronting the paradoxical structure of the founding moment of the subject in absence, in lack. (ibid.: 260)

The Lacanian ego is the image in the mirror and the Symbolic Order is the frame of the mirror which is not seen. Just as the child claims this image in the mirror as his own, for Ghazzali the Sufi in ecstasy may identify himself with God;

[al-Ghazzali] has recognised the otherness of this specular image and feels to have been absorbed by this otherness- hence, the Sufi discourse about loss of self. But this is still a fantasy of a merging of the self and other. Just as for Lacan, al-Ghazzali says that the Other, God, the Symbolic Order, is not that specular image but rather the unseen form of the mirror itself. The gap can never be fully closed. The self of the Sufi is not God, but an existent not-being, illuminated only by a borrowed light. (ibid.: 261-262)

Ewing, through this Lacanian reading of Ghazzali, enables readers to follow the Sufi theory which would be quite alien and maybe impenetrable for those who are not familiar with the Sufi concepts, and she also shows where the two sets of ideas diverge. She seems to have realised Iqbal’s desire of a new kind of subject that “transcend[s] the dichotomy between the Occidental and Oriental psyches” (ibid.: 254).

2.3 The Problem of Preconceptions and/or Biases

Daniel Varisco in his book, which he named *Islam Obscured* (2005) as an antithesis to Geertz’s *Islam Observed* (1968), discusses some of the seminal anthropological works on Islam (by Clifford Geertz, Ernest Gellner, Fatima Mernissi and Akbar Ahmad) on the basis of the preconceptions that exist when an anthropologist attends the field. He criticises Geertz for meta-theorising on Islam and applying Western sociological concepts of religion without consulting Islamic texts at all (Varisco 2005: 22), Gellner excluding real Moroccan discourses (ibid.: 58), Mernissi for her depiction of Muslim woman as oppressed (ibid.: 81) and Ahmad for lacking neutrality and defining the Muslim ideal as that of Ahmad’s own faith in Islam (ibid.: 125).

Varisco asserts that the role of the anthropologist is to experience life as the natives do, even though it can be devastating at times and comes with huge physical and emotional costs. He says that it is still worth doing as it enables the anthropologist to demonstrate how particular

beliefs are put into practice in particular times and places. In line with Asad he argues against any definitions of religions and for a confrontation with Islamic texts, as they play a crucial role in the tradition and should thus be considered also by the anthropologist. Asad also draws attention to the anthropologist's own conception of religion which inevitably shapes the categories s/he makes in his/her research and analysis, and criticises the taking up of the ideas of the great Western sociologists indiscriminately to describe forms of Islam (Asad 1993: 13). He touches upon the problem that definitions of religion, which are considered to be universal, are necessarily contextual, and would hinder us from asking the questions relevant to a particular context. Every definition means leaving out some aspects and including others, while different religions stress different things such as immanence or transcendence, practice or belief (Asad 2001). One could easily substitute Sufism for his 'religion' to hint at the problems in Pnina Werbner's book on Sufism (Werbner 2003).

Werbner's *Pilgrims of Love: The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult* (2003) is marked by a powerful language, a strong foundation in Weberian and Foucaultian theory and by the authoritative tone of her conclusions. What surprises about her book is her universal definitions of Sufism, and her talk about "underlying logic" of Sufism based upon her fieldwork with a transnational network in Pakistan and Birmingham which she identifies as a "regional cult". She turns down the postmodern paradigm to stress the local as against the universal. She claims to have debunked the cosmology of Sufism as based on a duality of body and soul, its promises as imaginary, and its aim as islamisation of the individual and the space.

Her field work lasted three years altogether and took place from 1989 to 2000 with breaks in between. She was confronted by her informants with mixed reactions, from being welcomed to being repelled as an "infidel". These changes in rapport seem to be due to the conflicting tendencies of the various members of the network and due to the ambiguities of some of these individuals, and they caused her great stress leading to a crisis that eventually stopped her project. She relates her struggles, explaining: that she tried various strategies to fulfil local expectations, and that she produced simplified, censored versions of her work, but that it came to a point where she was asked to burn her work (ibid.: 291-300). In her description of Sufism as a universalist ideology aiming to conquer the Western lands, one is reminded of the trauma of the anthropologist went through, which must have had an influence on her conclusion.

Werbner situates the network she analyses as a "regional cult"; "a comparative, analytic term which is used to describe centrally focused, non-contiguous religious organisations which

extend across boundaries” (ibid.: 19) and it is built around one “charismatic leader”. She claims that “Sufism everywhere shares the same deep structural logic of ideas” (ibid.: 25) and that it aims at transforming the self and space. She defines Sufism as; “performative and embodied in ritual practice, even when it appears to construct an abstract, highly integrated cosmology based on the *dualism* of body and soul” (italic original) (ibid.: 29). Her description finds its support in her revelation of the Sufi concept *fena fillah*, annihilation in God, which makes a strict distinction of the body and the soul. This is reminiscent of some forms of the Judeo-Christian tradition where the body is considered dirty and the soul sacred, and it is this Judeo-Christian idea which echoes in her interpretation of the Islamic Sufi tradition. She explains;

Very briefly, Sufi Islam posits a complex relationship between body and soul expressed in spiritual dualism between the *nafs*, the vital, desiring self or spirit, and the eternal soul, the *ruh*. The move towards self-purification is a move towards the transformation of the self, the *nafs*, through a transcendence of bodily desires and need. By totally denying the self, the *nafs* is purified and ‘dies’. (ibid.: 41)

The self is transformed through a purification of *nafs*, through self-denial, the wilderness where the Sufi shaikh Zindapir built his *darbar*⁹ was transformed through purifying it from *jinn*s¹⁰ and outlaws (ibid.: 41-43), and the lands of infidels and unbelievers are purified, transformed through i.e. islamised through *urs*¹¹ ritual;

Twice a year processions of Muslim men wind their way through the drab dilapidated streets of Birmingham, Manchester or London’s immigrant neighbourhoods [...] as they march they chant the *zikh*. In chanting thus they not only purify their hearts and souls; they also sacralise and ‘Islamicise’ the very earth. (ibid.: 30)

Werbner observes “The ‘*urs* are the major Sufi ritual; connecting people across space, enacting sentiments of love and devotion in opposition to the material world of everyday

⁹ “Muslim saint’s shrine, tomb, or, by extension, lodge” (Werbner 2003: 317).

¹⁰ “Fiery spirit(s) or demon(s), often amoral, [...] who may afflict or help humans and are said to live in a paralel world” (Werbner 2003: 321).

¹¹ Religious festival held annually to commemorate the death/unification with God of a Muslim Saint” (Werbner 2003: 332).

postcolonial life” (ibid.: 29). In her description Sufism becomes an Islamisation project though in a “peaceful” manner, as she reminds readers at the beginning of her work; “On the whole, however, Sufism and its world-renouncing saints are almost everywhere committed to peaceful coexistence and tolerance” (ibid.: 7).

She claims Sufism generates myths and moral fables about living saints which serve to legitimise these saints. The implicit nature of the fables results in their naturalisation and being taken-for-granted as a certainty among the believers (ibid.: 23). She finds that Sufi charisma appears to be focused on an individual, the saint, but routinized, patriarchal and institutionally permanent as opposed to the Weber’s notion of “pure charisma”(Weber 1948 in ibid.: 286). Foucault’s notion of power in modernity which has no central locus and based on discourse and panoptican methods of control does not explain the phenomenon or helps us to understand it at first glance either (Foucault 1977 in ibid.: 286) because the participation in a Sufi group is perceived by the followers as freedom giving and as a challenge to the established order. She questions where this perception may come from and decides that it is an “imagined freedom”, not a “real” one, as the followers are expected to be “obedient non-thinkers” in the face of the saint (ibid.: 146). She concludes that Sufism serves as a resistance to power and gives the followers an “imagined freedom” and individual autonomy, while actually it creating other structures of authority and modes of control embedded in “the universal religious ideology or episteme”. This has the effect of globalised, panoptican surveillance, as in Foucault’s notion of power in the modernity which is without a central locus and is based on discourse and panoptican methods of control (ibid.: 285-86).

Werbner asserts that there are structural similarities between Sufi legends, self-denial being the ultimate value, and that the modes of organisation are repeated every time and in every place. She finds “a single paradigmatic common sense” (ibid.: 291) and “the same processual narrative” (ibid.: 290) in every type Sufism. She argues that

“[t]he underlying logic of the fables constituting this religious imagination is the *same* logic [...everywhere]. It is based on a single and constant set of equations [...]:

World renunciation (ascetism) = divine love and intimacy with God= divine ‘hidden’ knowledge= the ability to transform the world= the hegemony of spiritual hegemony of spiritual authority over temporal power and authority. (italic original) (ibid.: 290)

She concludes that Sufism is “a global religious ideology” with a ‘shared implicit logic’” (ibid.: 289) producing just another hegemonic discourse; “the displacement of one heteronomy or tyranny by another” (ibid.: 286).

She rejects the postmodern anthropological tendency to stress the local, and this includes Geertz's idea of global religions taking the shape of the local. Sufism, she contends, despite its apparent variety and concrete localism, is a global religious ideology with a tendency to be politicised and to "becom[e] self-conscious in a charged social field", "reshape[ing] the cultural environments [it] invade[s]" with its fabulation of "the *possibility* of human perfection" (italics are original) rather than modifying itself as it travels (ibid.: 289). Its shared implicit logic is revealed in the structural similarities between Sufi legends and modes of organisation in widely dispersed localities, separated in time as well as in space (ibid.: 289). Looking at the "relation between (global) text and (local) context (ibid.: 287) she concludes what universal Sufism is, what it makes and aims at as a global religion.

Werbner's book reinforces the stereotypes of the unreflective, unfree Oriental with a tyrannical, authoritative leader. There are intrigues, gossip and suspicion among people behind the veil of freedom and love. They call the other "infidel" and threaten the other-minded. Although they are peaceful now, they bear the potential of radicalisation in the face of a charged social field (ibid.: 288). The demonstration of the power of the "Oriental other" in Western lands through *urs* resonates with the fear of being colonised and conquered by the "other": the sacralising of the space around the devotees is a central, essential aspect of Sufism as "a missionising, purificatory cult", a movement of "islamicising the universe" (ibid.: 43) of which she finds evidence both in Zindapir's foundation of the *darbar* in Pakistan and in Birmingham.

Werbner and Basu argue that Sufism is "a single, total, symbolic reality" in spite of the variations it shows (2002: 4). They criticise that Sufism and Sufi saint cults are not brought into conjunction, and explain; Sufism is considered "as an elaborate and coherent neo-Platonic theosophy of mystical realities" which appeals to the urban elite through writings and poetry (Gilsenan 1982: 244-246 in Werbner and Basu ibid.: 4) and the saints' cults as syncretic and magical appealing to the superstitious folk; "Such saints, unlike Sufis, are described as miracle makers whose deeds are publicised through sacred hagiographies" (ibid.: 4). They consider these to be "false" oppositions and categories and suggest that the Sufi cults should be studied as; "contemporary, viable and generative symbolic and ethical movements". They assert that studying them as such would enable us "to explore the connections between Sufi cosmologies, ethical ideas, bodily ritual practices and organisational forms, which have been lost in earlier historical and anthropological studies (ibid.: 4).

That the Sufi cults and Sufism exist side by side, in interrelation or together will be shown in the history section of this thesis, as well as in my research. Yet when interest is devoted to delineate this “single, total symbolic reality” in the field of anthropology problems arise, as in the case of the study of Werbner. In addition, such “single”, “total” realities would open the gates to discussions about what Sufism and Sufi saint cults are and what they are not universally. It seems that the perception and practice of this “reality” changes from context to context, immensely. If anthropology aims at studying these practices, this totalising idea may not in fact have much relevance in the field. It can easily lead to a search for this supposed “reality” in every form of Sufism and inscribe it to them.

Robert Rozeznal suggests in his review of the book *Pilgrims of Love* that, “This book will be easily and effectively integrated into undergraduate and graduate courses in anthropology and Islamic studies. Beyond the classroom, it will also appeal to a wide readership interested in the dynamism of contemporary Sufism in South Asia and beyond” (Rozeznal 2004). It unfortunately also has the potential to be misused by a radical right who wants to “purify [a] Western land from Muslims who have invaded it”. As I was writing this review the world was shaken by the attacks in Oslo of a radical rightist, which led to the deaths of 76 people. He believed that “Christian lands” were under the attack of Islam, and Marxism with its multicultural politics. Werbner’s book is loaded with images of Islam which would justify the worries of such people about invasion. Even if we accept Werbner’s arguments about the group she studies, her generalisation about Sufism as a universal ideology aiming at Islamicising the universe is unsupported and indicates Werbner’s personal fear of the other. The concept *fena fillah* as she or/and the group understands it cannot be generalised as the “Sufi understanding” of the concept either, as we have already seen a different approach, described above by Ewing, will see another below by Lizzio and yet another in my research.

In Ken Lizzio’s article *Ritual and Charisma in Naqshbandi Sufi Mysticism* (2007) we see a quite different representation of Sufism than in Werbner. He treats Sufism as a mystical practice aiming at cultivation of “deeper states of consciousness” in the theoretical framework of a “transcendental anthropology” (ibid.: 1) devoid of the social, political environment. He undertook his fieldwork in Pakistan in 1996-1997, in a hospice by the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order of Sufism, as a disciple of the *pir*. He made use of *khanaqah*’s, order’s, library as well as local libraries and conducted interviews with local government officials, tribal elders and religious figures. The order is an example of ecstatic Sufism where the mystical experience shows itself at times with violent physical reactions. He combines the methods of “ethnographic investigation and historical/textual analysis” along with “recent theories in transpersonal psychology” to explain the phenomena he observes and

experiences in this order which have caused his “preconceptions dissolve before [his] eyes” (ibid.: 1) and which combines an intellectual mode with its ecstatic Sufism (ibid.: 3). His main concern is to represent Sufism without reducing its mystical aspects. Lizzio claims that representing these experiences as a socially constructed phenomenon in the tradition of Western sociology and “focusing almost exclusively on the socio-political aspects” is not enough to elucidate the practices of Sufism (ibid.: 3). Lizzio, going native, experiences Sufism from another perspective, different from that of many other ethnographers, which makes him quite critical of ethnographers who mainly focus on the socio-political aspects. He asserts that such a focus dismisses the important aspect of Sufi orders which is cultivation of the spiritual life. He maintains that the orders are “fundamentally transcendental in nature and only secondarily and by extension social, economic, and political”, and adds that “key components of Sufi spirituality are the mysterious nature of the *shaikh*’s charisma, and a ritual process that is dynamic and open-ended” (ibid.: 6).

He states his aims as correcting some of the distortions in anthropological works due to inadequate theory, ethnocentric bias, or insufficient data with his study. He conceives as reductionist and ethnocentric the preconceptions in the structuralist/functionalist approach, in hermeneutics and in symbolic/structuralist interpretations which consider the mystical experience and source of charisma as socially constructed, and belief in charismatic power as socially shaped through a “discourse of legitimation”, following a charismatic figure as crisis resolution and the basis for an aptitude to believe in miracles (ibid.: 6). This reductionism lies in missing the lived experience, ignoring the claims of Sufis themselves, and produces ethnocentered Western version of a phenomenon which has to do with altered states of consciousness, spiritual transformation and somatic reactions for the people themselves.

His summary of Naqshbandi theory is well studied and translations of the terminology seem apt to the usage among Sufis; e.g. *ruh* spirit (as against Werbner’s soul), *aql* mind, *jism* body. Although he deals only with one order his inclusion of degrees of perception, practices of the degrees, trans-temporality, differentiation in practices such as types of *dhikr*, and companionship, *suhba*, are good enough to represent the ideas shared by the multiplicity of Sufi orders. In the same manner he doesn’t deal with “annihilation” as one monolithic act of self-denial, or death of *nafs*, but differentiates between the degrees of annihilation which begin with a process of purification of thought and act and leads to an “expanded breast”, and “produce[s] benefits in the *nafs* leading to a total elimination of bad habits and desires ” until one experiences a “calm and quite union with God’s unity of essence, *baqa*” which are attained through the practices of *dhikr* and relation with the *shaikh*. He gives examples of various types of *dhikr* and other rituals combining primary texts and the practice, and

explains how the body reacts to them as well as how these reactions change in time (ibid.: 8-24). His own experiences of the practices seem to enable him to give a grounded presentation of the technical information in classical Sufi texts which could otherwise appear to the reader as uncomfortably alien.

In search of an adequate theory to translate the experience to the reader, Lizzio tries Victor Turner's theory of ritual where ritual is a generator of new modes of experience and a form of anti-structure. Yet he finds Victor Turner's emphasis on the function of ritual in the social structure to be similar to Durkheim's social cohesion, and both are inadequate to explain a phenomenon which has individual aspects which are expressed in the practice in solitude to the most part. He deploys Edith Turner's attempt at reconciliation between the models including individual aspects; this detects rituals as "openers to the unknown". He finds in Ken Wilber's transpersonal psychology a model which seems adequate to him to explain the phenomenon: Wilber defines two basic processes in the human development; translation and transformation. Translation shows itself in "sub-vocal chatter" of mind translating and editing one's reality according to the symbolic structures of his language-and-thought; "verbal thoughts, concepts, and their emotive content essential for the maintenance of egoic consciousness" (ibid.: 27, 28). Transformation is freeing awareness to move beyond the level of socially-constructed self through a vertical movement meaning a growth of consciousness. Lizzio marks *dhikr* as a tool to enact this vertical movement which leads to "entirely new and cognitively more advanced modes of experiencing the world" (ibid.: 28) "a kind of excavation of consciousness taking awareness down through the levels of the psyche" (ibid.: 29).

He further explains the somatic expressions of dervishes during *dhikr* by Washburn's theory, according to which the spiritual process is a dynamic dialectic between egoic and non-egoic poles of psyche. The non-egoic pole contains both the pre-personal unconscious and the transpersonal "Dynamic Ground" (spirit), "both sealed off from the ego during original repression in infancy" (ibid.: 31). *Dhikr* has an undoing effect on original repression and releases the dormant energy in the body causing sudden alterations of breath, involuntary movements such as fits of shaking, weeping and vocalisations - "spiritual awakening [...] is also a bodily awakening" (Washburn in Lizzio, ibid.: 32) which are more common in novices as the awakened energy encounters obstructions. The fits become less frequent in more advanced devotees, and when mystical development reaches its full completion in the saint, it becomes an embodied spiritual power (ibid.: 31-33). Instead of taking Weber's description of charisma and tasting it against what he observes in the field, he makes a new description of the concept, arising out of the field: "Charisma is a dynamic physical

manifestation of the spiritually realised person or one in whom the process of awakening has begun. Charisma is intentionally projected and intentionally –and sometimes unintentionally- received [...it] is a catalyst for mystical experience and development” (ibid.: 33).

Lizzio’s attempt to understand the mystical-spiritual aspects of Sufism through trans-personal psychology is unique and conforms to the New Age movement in the west. His use of primary sources to understand what the claim of Sufism is, combined with his participation and interviews, bring about a different understanding of Sufism than is found in other anthropological texts. Yet his exclusion of the social context fails to bring light to the expectations of the social scientist for an understanding of the phenomenon in its wider context. Although Lizzio is surely right in claiming that anthropology has been blind about the spiritual aspects of its object and to different modes of consciousness or being, research such as his nevertheless still has social and political connotations, because individuals are situated in societies. Depending on the form of Sufism, the social political context, and the individual perceptions and choices of the devotees, one of these aspects might be more dominant in a field of Sufism. Some forms of Sufism are also politically apolitical or distanced as some Sufis prefer, or socially anti-social as in the case of the *qalandars* reported in Ewing. An anthropological work must include discussions of such aspects.

2.4 Dealing with Multiplicity of Discourses

The variety in interpretations of Islam all claiming to be based on the Koran and the Sunnah can be dizzying for both insider and outsider anthropologist. Asad criticises both relativistic approaches where in the face of the heterogeneity of Islamic interpretations Islam as an analytic category disappears as in the cases of El-Zein and Gilsenan (Asad1986: 2), and essentialising tendencies where in an effort to achieve coherence in doctrines and practice definitions of religion and categories are being made (Asad 1993: 29) which would mean essentialisation. The dichotomies of orthodox and nonorthodox Islam or Great and Little traditions, urban and rural Islam of Geertz and Gellner are also contested by him because he finds it “wrong to represent types of Islam as being correlated with types of social structure” as there is no evidence of such correlations in the indigenous historical sources (ibid.: 6). The history section of this research will also support his critique.

Ewing found out that discourses about Sufi *pirs* vary and are conflicting; *pirs* can be considered fraud, miracle maker, pious or unruly depending on the *pir* and the individual. She concludes that the competing discourses within Islam and Sufism and the interaction with the modernity altogether make a critical distance possible from all discourses; and are the means to subjectivity (Ewing 1997: 5). She argues against the presumption of the

hegemony of modernity on the post-colonial subject (ibid.: 5) and claims Sufism constitutes “lines of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) that escape the hegemonic discourses (Ewing 1997: 14). Among the groups she observed were the *qalandar* and wandering dervishes –or “God’s unruly friends” as the historian Ahmet Karamustafa (1994) calls them. She claims they represent the counter-hegemonic discourse which she compares with Deleuze and Guattari’s “schizo”; and suggests that they find a Dionysian escape from a determining order (ibid.: 264).

As Ewing depicts the competing discourses as a way to subjectivity, Marcus Marsden ascertains them as a source of vivid emotional and intellectual life in form of religious confrontation. In Marsden’s book *Living Islam- Muslim Religious Experience in Pakistan’s North-West Frontier* (Marsden 2005) we read how all the categories collapse. Marsden points to the lack of anthropological interest in the interaction between intellectual and emotional processes and leans on the theory of “moral sentiments” of Adam Smith (2002 [1870] in 2005: 27) where the play of the mind has an emotional dimension, and where pleasure plays an important role “in people’s attempts to understand the thoughts and, importantly, sentiments of others” (ibid.: 27). His Muslims don’t fit in categories of ‘Islamist’, ‘modernist’ or ‘fundamentalist’, they have multiple identities (ibid.: 31), can combine styles of spirituality and Muslim identity with features which are considered irreconcilable such as reformist Islamists writing mystical poetry, an occupation with Western philosophers along with Sufis (ibid.: 32, 240), rural life and intellectuality. They lead a “culture of debate and play of the mind” in their everyday life and in their moral judgements (ibid.: 29) which is both a cause for pleasure and anxiety (ibid.: 260) as the right way of thought and action is not that obvious but must be worked out. They are not non-critical pious people obeying blindly to the constraints of their scriptural religion or the authority. Marsden argues self-consciousness and self-examination have deep historical roots in Muslim thought and has been broadened through the media and educational facilities of the present day (ibid.: 30). With his study he manages to argue against many stereotypes and is able to demonstrate the complexity and diversity of Muslim identities.

Marsden’s book is based on extensive field work spread in a time span of 10 years in the villages of Chitral in Pakistan on the border of Afghanistan with Shi’a Īsmai’li and Sunni inhabitants. Marsden became a part of the village life which enabled him to bring valuable insight about the lives of people. The author investigates in the lives of village people, how they “locally” and critically engage with Islamic tradition, Sufism which is represented by classical Persian Sufi literature, and contemporary trends from revivalist movements to Taliban. Religious engagement is presented as a source of intellectual and emotional

satisfaction in the book, and Marsden discusses the relationship between thought and emotion in an environment where debate is considered an integral part of “virtuous life”.

Marsden’s informants demonstrate a highly critical and creative thinking which is accompanied with emotion in their debates. They confront themselves with Islamic and Sufi concepts, morality, inner and outer world tensions, social and political issues on daily basis. Marsden observes they maintain a sense of individuality in spite of the prescribed faith and the constraints of it. Based upon this observation he finds individual self should be a category needing further exploration in anthropological analysis (ibid.: 262).

Marsden delineates the interplay of intellectual and emotional processes and how people themselves engage in their talk the interaction between them referring to Islamic and Sufi concepts (ibid.: 191). He argues that vivid intellectual activity accompanied with emotion transcends the mind-body duality as emotions have an effect on the body (ibid.: 262). He names his anthropology “anthropology of the embodied experience of thought” documenting how people “immerse themselves in a culture of joking, impersonation, music, dance, poetry and travelling” and debate which is a must of a “virtuous life” (ibid.: 28). He concludes “the spirituality of Chitral’s Muslims is both highly intellectual and experienced in embodied ways” (ibid.: 243). Marsden formulates his research interest as documenting the interconnectedness of religion and sociality and bases his theory on Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (2002 [1870]) hinting at the emotional dimension of the intellectual activity (ibid.: 27), “the role of emotions and feelings in the spread of ideas” (Stewart 2002 in ibid.: 27).

Marsden believes that Chitral with its border setting must have led to the cultural and ethnic diversity and this vivid intellectual life with multiple identities and this occurrence is different from other regions of the Muslim world (ibid.: 253). Yet I do not think that Chitral is such an exception as there are many places especially in cities where multiple discourses come together to create such openness.

In this book we are confronted with a very lively picture of the village life and its inhabitants along with their debates, conflicts arising from their relations among themselves, between genders, generations, educated and uneducated, Sunnis and Ismai’lis, with the world and with themselves. Marsden is able to show the interplay of religious, moral, individual and social issues and the transformations of them in time in a book which is read like watching a movie, and both pleasurable and informative without letting theory dominate his work and the lives of his informants.

2.5 Conclusion

I chose contributions that demonstrate different approaches by the anthropologists arriving at different, at times contrasting, conclusions which I think cannot be referred to the field alone. Anthropology is not an “objective” science; as is often remarked, it arises out of intersubjectivity between the researched and the researcher. Although anthropologists try hard to come to a rapport with their informants, with whom they often share their lives intensively for some period, it is not always possible to achieve this, as in the case of Werbner. In such cases the anthropologist’s text arises out of a clash of discourses rather than from intertextuality and the discourse of the anthropologist as the producer of the text becomes hegemonic. On the other hand, being too much in harmony with the informants can cause the researcher take on their agenda and lose discrimination when it comes to other discourses in the context –this was the case with the research of Silverstein, whose work I will discuss in the fifth chapter of the thesis. In both cases the generalisations that the anthropological product attempts are distorted.

The anthropologist’s body is the platform where discourses emerging from two different contexts –that of the researcher and that of the researched- confront each other and grow into an intertextuality which might have a violent effect on the researcher. This is expressed by Daniel Bradburd when he says: “To me the field experience is far more like a sharp blow to the head or a large spoonful of horseradish” (in Varisco 2005: 143). To me this sense of violence to the person did not end with the field experience, but continued and even accelerated during the analysis, maybe because of my insidersness. This might be how research can bring insights about both of the discourses that challenge the already existing knowledge or presuppositions, and how it can become a source of self-reflection when it is returned as a finished product of the anthropologist to the contexts from where it arose.

The anthropology of Islam in general and Sufism in particular seems to ask for many qualities in the anthropologist. Sufism today arises in interactions between the East and the West, the past and the present, the social and the individual, and the phenomenal and the non-phenomenal. In order to be able to cover all these aspects in the research, data should be collected from multiple sources: historical and contemporary primary sources, as well as secondary sources, in-depth interviews and participant observation and a lot of contemplation. The field should be contextualised both locally and globally, and both diachronically and synchronically. Anthropological/sociological theories might not be enough to analyse the discourses and practices Sufism entails, hence philosophical and indigenous theories should be embedded in the researcher’s intertextual discourses even if it

often feels too much of a challenge. My research takes these aspects into consideration and represents Sufism as *a deconstructive (unveiling) discursive tradition which has implications on the person, organisation, society and materiality* as it will be discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH PROCESS – METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

3.1 Introduction

I used Grounded Theory Method (GTM) in collecting and analysing the data, and my research has phenomenological tendencies and some collaborative elements. GTM is a method that allows theory to emerge from data (Borgatti 1996, Wiener 2007: 304, Byrant and Charmaz 2007); a phenomenological approach gives precedence to the lived experiences of informants and highlights the role of intersubjectivity between the researcher and the researched in the research process and analysis (Finlay 2009); collaboration in this case means collecting commentary from the participants to see if they approve of their representation and then integrating their comments into the ethnography.

In this thesis, in order to understand the concepts as they are meant by the people who use them, I use a variety of sources –in-depth and phenomenological interviews, focus group discussions, informal talks, participation, and participant observation, primary literature, and history- along with anthropological and philosophical sources which can enlighten the phenomenon at hand. I am a part of the formation that is being studied, although not a very established part of it, which enabled me to get access to the people who would otherwise be difficult to detect as a Sufi group and who are uneasy about possible misrepresentation. While my experiences with Sufism, the master, the formation and the individuals enriched the data and made it easier to relate to the informants, it also made distancing a crucial issue to be dealt with especially in the analysis stage.

At the core of the research is the relation between the form and the content of this particular Sufi formation. Departing from a form that shows elements of anti-structure, its interaction with its content as understood and experienced by the members of the formation are the focus of attention. The research is restricted to the urban, educated members of the formation in the context of Ankara, most of whom do not have any traditional religious background; the study looks into the ways in which they integrate Sufi doctrine and practice in their lives.

3.2 The Method of Research: Grounded Theory Method

GTM was developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s and is a method which has been widely used in social sciences since the 1980s. It teaches how to let theory emerge from data, as against using data to test theories. The method suggests both how to collect data and how to develop it into theories, to ensure the methodological rigour. The theoretical matching, where theories already available in a field and those emerging from the field are compared, is delayed. The expressions and concepts people use to express themselves are considered in the discursive contexts in which they arise. Emic understandings of the world are used to make categories drawn from the respondents themselves, and in this way implicit belief systems are made explicit. The theory demands a “theoretical sensitivity,” which means “the ability to perceive variables and [their] relationships” in the data during the process of the field research (Borgatti 1996). The data collection, choice of sample and analysis are ordered according to the aim of developing theories. The researcher makes decisions during the research to let the theory emerge from the data, by delaying the problem statement and an extensive review of literature (Byrant and Charmaz 2007: 20). The method’s inductivity, “moving from particular to the more general,” animates the researcher to find patterns and variations (ibid.: 15). While conducting fieldwork, the researcher needs to ask “what groups or sub-groups of populations, events, and/or activities do I turn to next in order to find varying dimensions, strategies, and/or other action and for what theoretical purpose?” (Wiener 2007: 304) which enables her to move with the data while still using deliberate control, active debate and analysis of the data, all of which lead to theory. With its emphasis on theory emerging from data, GTM teaches that “everything is data,” and this includes the interrelation of the researcher and the researched; it shows how to become a participant observer, i.e. while “grounding” in the field, “distancing” for a critical reading of the data, again during the field-research, is necessary.

Grounded theory presents the steps of coding from the more particular to the general. “Open coding” most of the time identifies names or adjectives, the categories, in a respondent’s discourse, while going through each line, sentence and paragraph. The second stage is “axial coding” where the researcher relates these codes from the open coding to each other, paying special attention to causal relationships, context, action strategies and consequences, which form a basic frame of generic relationships. The last stage in coding is the selection of a “core category” which aims at developing a single storyline around which everything else can be arranged. During the field work the researcher takes three types of notes: field notes, code notes and theoretical notes. To be able to make generalisations there are various levels of comparative work: first the interviews are compared to each other and then, when the

theories begin to emerge, the data is compared to the theory; lastly the theories from the research are compared to the theories in the relevant literature. The sampling is guided by the emerging theory, which means it is chosen to diversify and saturate the theory, and this is called “theoretical sampling”. A literature review is part of the data collection, in which the researcher reads widely in the relevant literature while avoiding the most closely related literature so that it won’t constrain the coding and memo-taking, while comparing them with the emerging data. The fieldwork is completed when new data collection from interviews, informal conversations, focus groups begin to repeat themselves, which is called “saturation” (Borgatti 1996).

The early version of GTM has been discussed and criticised. It was first criticised especially because it sees the researcher as a passive and open figure whereas the researcher has great control over the theory in that s/he decides on the categories and can gather incommensurate data from which s/he can choose idiosyncratically to develop her constructed concepts. In this context it was argued that the idea that the theories emerged from the data as if from itself was a “fairytale”. Secondly, it was claimed that the delay of engagement with the most relevant literature could cause a lack of awareness of the field and frequently lead to research which had been undertaken before. And the third critique was that it was impossible to enter the field without prejudices. In the later versions of GTM these weaknesses were corrected (Bryant 2009). GTM also calls for the question of what is meant by the theory. Bryant puts forward that it is not a "conjecture" or "supposition," rather “it implies something with an enhanced status, attained only after exhaustive efforts to test and challenge it”, and a theory grounded in the context is not universal and can only become formal when it is tested in other contexts by other researchers (ibid.: paragraphs 3-5).

3.3 “Epistemologies of Intimacy” and of “Estrangement”

Here, looking at the general debates on self-interpretation and agency in anthropology will be useful, especially because distancing is a critical issue in this research. Webb Keane discusses this problem in the article *Self-Interpretation, Agency, and the Objects of Anthropology: Reflections on a Genealogy* (Keane 2003) where he first begins with a discussion of what he calls the “epistemology of intimacy” which fosters self-interpretation of the objects of anthropology. He writes: “Although the current emphasis on intimacy and engagement, and the suspicion of objectification, are associated with post-colonial critique, practice theory, deconstruction, power/knowledge, and identity politics, I argue that its roots are deeper” (ibid.: 223), and these deeper roots are, according to him, an “ethic that stresses the value of human self-determination” (ibid.: 224). He writes that Sahlins accordingly

argued that although maximization of material gain was considered a given in the West, it was not. It was rather a choice which arose out of the vision of humans as “imperfect creatures of need and desire” (Sahlins 200: 453-54 in *ibid.*: 228) and it is obvious that this vision is not shared in every cultural context that the anthropologist must be aware of. The symbolic and interpretive turns of the 1960s and 70s were reactions against “superficial empiricism”, universalism and ethnocentrism, while arguing for “irreducible cultural specificity” and for making analysis of cultures in their own context where the categories of the cultural system were taken as point of departure (*ibid.*: 228, 229). Keane writes that according to Taylor, “the crucial metalanguage is that which guides the actor herself with a description of what is going on” (*ibid.*: 231) giving richer access to meanings, and Geertz’s “thick description” was one such attempt (*ibid.*: 230). Keane calls this approach the “epistemology of intimacy” (*ibid.*: 232).

This principle was contested because of its ignorance of the fact that in any culture there would be various discourses in competition rather than one metalanguage, and what seems to be the metalanguage might be the dominant discourse of the powerful while some others are oppressed. Hence comes the conclusion that: “metalanguages are not merely neutral guides to action but part of the discourse of self-justification, they offer poor purchase for certain kinds of critical insight” (*ibid.*: 232). Keane suggests that this is where “an epistemology of estrangement is crucial” (*ibid.*: 232): for when the anthropologist distances himself from the culture, lived experiences are scrutinized through reflexivity. He argues that a capacity to shift between “epistemologies of intimacy” and of “estrangement” is necessary for a rigorous understanding (*ibid.*: 238).

This conclusion is nearer to a version of Grounded Theory which is called the Multi Grounded Theory approach (Goldkohl and Cronholm 2003) which emphasises a critical engagement with the data on the basis of two questions: “What kind of phenomenon is this?” and “Where does it exist?” (*ibid.*: 7). In this version the inductive coding is done as in the initial GTM, while this stage is followed by a “critical refinement” (*ibid.*: 6). This means that in order to hinder “slavery to data”, the researcher reflects critically on empirical statements and determines ontological categories according to a framework called the “socio-instrumental pragmatics”. According to this framework, the ontological categories are: 1. Human, 2. Human inner worlds (intra-subjective as well as inter-subjective parts), 3. Human actions (intervention, interpretation and reflection as action), 4. Symbolic objects, 5. Artefacts, and 6. Natural environment (*ibid.*: 7). This kind of reflection is supplemented by a linguistic reflection where the correspondence between the categories and its word forms are questioned in terms of their being separate entities or just attributes of the same entity (*ibid.*:

8). Another addition of the MGT is the stage of “explicit grounding” where the evolving theory is checked on three bases: 1. is it in accordance with other theories in the field? This is theoretical matching. 2. Is it in accordance with the empirical data? and 3. Is it internally valid, i.e. a coherent way of talking about the world? (ibid.: 8, 9). This approach also advises entering the field with an open research question but sharp purpose so that the research will not be unfocused (ibid.: 5).

In this thesis this approach together with the constructivist GTM where emphasis is given to the role of the researcher in the research process, are taken as methodological guides. The constructivist version of GTM developed by Charmaz corrects the ignorance of the role of the researcher as an important element of the research process, and asks of the researcher to become aware of her philosophy of life, of her concept of the self and the real, and of the relation between the researcher and the researched:

In the classic grounded theory works, Glaser and Strauss talk about discovering theory as emerging from data separate from the scientific observer. Unlike their position, I assume that neither data nor theories are discovered. Rather, we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices. (Charmaz 2006: 10)

In these versions GTM gives the researcher enough flexibility as well as a firm basis to follow a creative and a rigorous study.

3.4 Grounded Theory in Practice

Because of my insider position, initial GTM was only partly applicable for me. While I profited from its procedure of theory development, a focused research question was crucial from the beginning, as against the advice of the grounded theory. I have already read quite a bit of primary Sufi literature and some anthropological studies on Islamic cultures, and was “grounded” in the field for thirteen years. I needed a new orientation in the field. The reading of anthropological literature made me realise what was special about the group, and motivated me to find new perspectives. The most specific feature of the Sufi formation was that it had no formal organisation. I decided to concentrate on this aspect and to find out if it was a general perception of the members and how it was experienced. I did not only prepare a research question but had detailed questions for interviews based on my previous knowledge of the field to guide me. I divided them into three sequences: before, during and after the life of the formation’s master. But during the interviews I realised that working explicitly with the questions gave a formal tone and constriction to the relationship between me and the participants, and hindered openness. I decided to let the informants tell me about

what was important to them, what they wanted to bring forth, which was actually also a method more in harmony with GTM. I turned my concentration towards the lived experiences, and when the participants talked about their inductions, abstract ideas and thoroughly thought-out points, I asked for their experiences. In this way, with most of the participants I found that by the end of the interviews I had the answers to the prepared questions, anyway.

My initial research question was about the master's content and method of teaching, especially in respect to non-institutionalisation, and what effects it had on the disciples when he himself was alive and afterwards. It soon became clear that the form and content, i.e. the Sufi doctrine as transmitted by the master, and its perception and experience by the participants were interrelated, even in harmony with the given form, and the data was combining these two aspects. I therefore decided to concentrate on the interaction of these two, i.e. on the form and the content in more general terms, which was more focal to the data. My informants were embedded in modern society while strongly connected to the master, and they seemed to have integrated Sufi doctrine into their daily lives. I decided to look at how they managed to do this, and reformulated the research-question slightly: I chose a broader concept, "form" instead of the "non- institutionalisation", which was chosen as against the model of *tariqah* organisations.

I wrote down analytical memos and did some open coding during the fieldwork as advised by GTM, mostly as I was writing my field notes and going through the interviews in my mind; in this I concentrated mainly on one interviewee mostly for one week or two. Unfortunately in the third month of my field-research my laptop was stolen and the notes I had taken during and after non-recorded interviews, memos and some literature review were lost and I had to reconstruct my notes depending on my memory. Luckily most of the interviews were audio-recorded, and all the recorded material was also recorded elsewhere. Any interview material that had not been recorded was material that had either emerged spontaneously or that the informant had refused to have been recorded because recordings in PCs belonged already to the public space.

My first research attempt for a term-paper on this subject was for a seminar (Tayfun Atay's) in 2009 and lasted two months. At that time I had no research question; I just raised the idea and asked for permission from the son of the master. His reaction was positive and he also warned me that this attempt would cause much discussion which could become upsetting for me. When I declared my intention to some possible informants, I realised that his positive reaction have not been influential on them. The loudest argument against this research was

that it carried the possibility of a misrepresentation of Dede. In a group meeting with six participants in Ankara and in two other circles I had to watch how negatively the idea was taken: because it would be a reduction, because it might be being opportunistic in using this intimate, private relationship for my study, because the time for such a research was wrong in the given political situation in Turkey, because they could not represent the teaching of Dede and Sufism, and because anthropology was the wrong discipline as this was not a community, having neither power nor economic ambitions. For the term paper, in spite of this, I was able to conduct in-depth interviews with five people who had shown approval. This pilot research, then, taught me some lessons.

3.5 The Context of the Field

I was researching a “religious group” at a time when the political situation was quite heated; there was a sharp polarity between “religious” and “secular” fronts which evidently had effects on the construction of the field. The ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP*) had its origin in Erbakan’s “Islamist” the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi, FP*) and its predecessor the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) –now under the name Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*)- and these had had leading roles in the “Islamist” National Front (*Milli Görüş, MG*). The opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP*), accused the AKP of having a hidden Islamist agenda. The AKP presented itself as the voice of marginalised, oppressed people with Islamic/traditional tendencies and the CHP as the Kemalist elite which were responsible for this oppression. The battle between the fronts was demonstrated especially in the battle over power in the military and judiciary institutions. There was a strong sense of insecurity because of illegal eavesdroppings, and arrests with unproved accusations of involvement in planning a military coup.

The political affiliations of the group members were various, which caused heated discussions during the Referendum for or against a change in the constitution -which turned out to be a vote of confidence for the AKP in September 2010. Among the formation there were voters both for and against the change, as well as ones who preferred to refuse to vote; some of which I learned also from internet.

3.6 Construction of the Field Site

The master died in 1998 and left no successor; according to most of the members he said he was leaving a thousand people as successors, and someone heard him say he offered it to various people but nobody was ready to take it. The group was acephalous and there were

tensions and splits among groups, couples and individuals. Some thought that after Dede everybody turned to their way of life as if they had not learned anything. There were also a few who claimed to be his successor and recruited new-comers.

The development of the construction of the field in terms of the members of the group's acceptance reveals the decision-making process in this acephalous society. There was at first suspicion and then curiosity, and all were united in one thing: everybody would have his/her version of Dede, there would be no reconstruction of Dede in himself.

I needed more cooperation to be able to further the research for my thesis. I knew the expectation would be high and it was unsure if I could get enough support, and considered giving up the idea altogether. It needed lobbying from various sides. The role of a friend, Rayiha¹², was immense in supporting me and in contacting some of my important informants and accompanying me during some of the interviews on the wish of the interviewee. She was the key person both in preparing the way to contacts and in giving detailed open hearted interviews. But a wider acceptance still failed until another friend, Burcu, offered help in contacting one key figure, Ruşen, whose ideas were respected by many –not by everybody. Rayiha contacted and convinced another important figure, Berrak. Both Ruşen and Berrak had been very close to Dede and very critical of disseminations in the internet and a newly published book which included some of Dede's discourses. Their rejection might have caused the collapse of the research. Berrak then again put me in touch with Dede's grandson in law who himself publishes books. We met at the annual meeting held on the anniversary of Dede's death, and he called over another member who was a sociologist, to ask for his advice. The reactions of the family members and the close disciples were crucial although their reaction was only an ambivalent yes. With some reservations that would only be resolved during the research process, I started my field research in August 2010. I decided I would share the research with the family at the end. One of Dede's grandsons was very supportive and accepted to disseminate a questionnaire among young followers who lived in other cities, whom he was going to meet on a trip. We decided the answers would be sent to

¹² All the names used throughout the thesis are pseudonyms, except for those of deceased members, in order to preserve anonymity.

me via email, but I only received one short answer. A more traditional disciple introduced me to some others in the mosque when I was shy to approach people.

I shared with my key informants my questions, thoughts, aims, the reasons that my professors supported the idea, the reactions to the presentation at the university, and other anthropological works on Sufism I had read. Upon the request of one person I wrote a short paper explaining my aims and methods in Turkish, and this person was then convinced and allowed a recorded interview. The acceptance grew and the research continued and towards the end of my fieldwork there were no more objections left to my knowledge. Now I had to be careful not to hurt anybody because of not consulting them, and I stopped the fieldresearch when I thought I could not manage handling any more data. More contribution became possible when I asked for help from some friends who collaborated both with discussions and mostly on formal issues about the language and the format of the thesis. It seemed to me that without approval of Dede's family it would have been much more difficult but in fact their help alone was not enough.

This is an example of how decisions are made in this acephalous network of people; it is quite organic: a matter of processual, collaborative decision-making with delicate scanning and observation. The attitude of most of the members has been to stay ambivalent and to watch how it develops. The process of approval or disapproval is not over until the end-product is seen. The preservation of support from these people, and any possibility of further research will depend on how far the finished product will be acceptable to the members. In this sense, beside the members of the university, I also have the members of the formation as my examining commission.

3.7 Data Collection and Phases of the Research

I started the field-research for the thesis in August 2010 and felt that I needed to seclude myself to assess the findings I had accrued over four months (up to December 2010). I went back to the field in February 2011 with more focused questions to fill in the gaps of knowledge, and to enrich the variety of responses by talking to different informants. I completed the fieldwork in April 2011 but because I was part of the network data influx and smaller interviews or discussion did not stop until the end of the writing up process in April 2012. In the time of seclusion I interviewed only one person, and went over what I had. I transcribed some parts of the data, made axial coding and started with tentative writing.

I conducted most of the interviews with people living in Ankara meeting them in my or their flats and in cafés mostly around the Çankaya district of Ankara; I also had some contact with

some friends who live in other parts of Turkey or abroad. Dede lived in a flat in Mamak. This is where I visited his son twice whilst he was in Ankara. This flat is now closed most of the time but visitations of Dede took place there. I participated in one annual meeting for Dede when many living outside Ankara were present in the mosque and tomb complex built in the village Kızılcaköy about 15 km outside Ankara, and I visited it three more times to observe and talk to the people. I searched the internet to find internet based interactions between the members and to get an idea of the span of the network and its variety.

I let my main participants decide on the course of their interviews so that they could bring in their own issues. This would be after a very general opening question from me such as: “How was your (first –implicit in Turkish) meeting with Dede? (*Dedeyle karşılaşman nasıl oldu?*)” or sometimes they started telling me anecdotes when I introduced my intention. I was also advised to do some reading, which included some masterpieces of Sufism that were commonly read by the followers, Dede’s books and the Koran. I was an active listener, reacting to what was told and following the interviewee so that s/he became more concrete in what s/he said. I worked with her/his material, asking questions especially about actual experiences beside the deductions and abstract meanings which they preferred to relate at the beginning. Such experiences, which included supernatural aspects, were kept hidden and only revealed when there was enough rapport between me and the interviewee. Beside these interviews, informal conversations and discussions –also about the research– were parts of collecting the data. Some of the spontaneous talks took place in groups where memories, feelings and thoughts were shared and there were also points of discussion. Memories inevitably became a part of the data; I would sometimes recollect a narration of a friend or an experience I had had when I was trying to solve a problem, and these memories enabled me to work with a bunch of data that would have been impossible to collect in five months. During the writing up phase of the thesis there have been some unplanned interviews with some informants. These also added to the data. One disadvantage has been that sometimes the data seemed to be so much that I thought I would not be able to deal with it and that it would take too much time to organise and slow down the writing.

Before the fieldwork, I started reading primary sources intensively; this comprised mainly of Dede’s books, one Sufi in his *silsila* (chain of transmission), Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakkı, Ibn Arabi and Ghazzali to help me to understand the theory of Sufism. Along with the interviews I also started reading secondary sources in anthropology extensively. When I read the history of the Naqshibandiyya, I realised that Dede’s style showed some similarities with the foundation years of the path, which was a surprise to me; the Naqshbandiyya stood against institutionalisation as a reviver movement at the beginning. I carried this information soon to

the field to see what reactions it would bring. Although this was new to the participants too, what Dede did and said, not the tradition, was important to most of them. In the summer of 2011, I concentrated on the theory and literature review.

My research had collaborative aspects: “Collaborative ethnography invites commentary from our consultants and seeks to make that commentary overtly part of the ethnographic text as it develops. In turn, this negotiation is reintegrated back into the fieldwork process itself” (Luke Eric Lassiter 2005). Although I was a relatively short-term and not totally integrated member of the formation (Rayiha¹³ told me: “What do you know of Dede? You have only known him for one year”, and she had been with him for 15 years!), I could not just turn my back on it and leave the field. Some participants also made clear their interest in reading the research once it was completed, and their desire to share it with others and with their children as a physical document of a Sufi praxis. I discussed my analysis especially with four of my informants. One other who was not among my informants helped me a lot especially with the formal and language aspects. I will share it with some more who can read English after I have finished. Some have also expressed a wish that it should be translated into Turkish. All this has shown that bringing my analysis into debate has been complementary for the research. Actually there have been very few points of disapproval, apart from the ones at the beginning when so many were against the idea of research altogether. Yet sometimes even a sign of hesitation or disinterest about the content was a signal for me that I should reflect on the ideas in the text. This mostly brought about an improvement. In short, sharing made me feel more confident.

The process also had effects on the studied –as I was also a part of it- though I cannot assess it fully yet. As some informants put it, it has become a research also for the informants themselves who were happy to find a ground for reflection after going over their experiences. During the interviews two informants mentioned that some previously unconscious aspects of their experiences were revealed to them as they formulated some of their thoughts for the first time¹⁴. They asked for the recordings so that they could listen to

¹³ In an informal conversation in October 2010.

¹⁴ Rayiha on 16 October 2010, and Hurşit on 10 April 2010.

them. One informant brought a diary that she kept during her visits to Dede and said that the research had given her an opportunity to go over them. Some others expressed the joy of intensive occupation with that period of time and with Dede now because of the thesis. One of the reasons why the interviews were so long was of course because they enjoyed relating their experiences. They have integrated their experiences into their daily lives but have also had an urge to do more. It seems to have helped them to be more conscious of this urge, to go through a period of reflection motivating them to be more active. These felt like my reciprocation for what I received from them. A friend who read some parts of the thesis also wrote to me:

It is interesting –like visiting a city I haven't been to for some time. Your metropolis (!) is interesting for me because of its architectural style –the influences that help you construct the narrative at hand, that shape the buildings and vistas; the particular blend of ideas where sometimes, through the words –sometimes because of them, sometimes despite them- we can catch a glimpse of that perfect man we love, beckoning us forth; but always entirely eluding us¹⁵.

3.8 Participants

Quite soon after entering the field I had to change my original idea of interviewing people from various socio-economic backgrounds and concentrate on educated urban subjects. I had hoped to find less educated and more traditional informants in the mosque complex but even there the people I met had high school or university education, though some had more traditional backgrounds. Those wearing the chador or exhibiting other types of a traditional, conservative outlook, whom I had seen by Dede and in the anniversary meeting came apparently mostly from other cities such as Malatya or Konya, as was confirmed by an informant. An attempt to contact the ones in Malatya (Dede's hometown) and in Konya via e-mail with the help of Dede's grandson was also fruitless as only one responded. Although it would have been possible to reach in Ankara other social milieus, I decided to restrict my research to the educated middle class urban, mainly for three reasons: first, they were easier to contact and highly represented in the formation, especially in Ankara where I planned to do my fieldwork, secondly I had to narrow down my research more than the restrictions of the initial research question, and thirdly this milieu was less researched in the area of Sufism.

¹⁵ 31 March 2012.

I concentrated on one network in my in-depth interviews. Most of them knew each other even if some of them did not meet each other anymore.

I conducted in-depth interviews with fourteen people (Berrak, Burcu, Doğu, Hurşit, Irem, Lokman, Nermin, Rayiha, Ruşen, Sadık, Simge, Sinem, Sumru, Tarık –these names are pseudonyms) eight of them women, six of them men. The time they had spent as followers of Dede when he was alive varied between 1, 5 years (two of them) to 20 years, two of them spent almost every day with him and one of them is his son. Six of them had met Dede more frequently than once a week and for longer hours. Two of them are opera singers, one of them is a teacher at the conservatory opera department, one is a violin player, a conductor and a painter, one of them was a ballet dancer and now a choreographer, three of them own their own business, one is a nurse, two are German philologists, one is an archaeologist who works as an English teacher, one is a graduate jurist and one has studied philosophy, both of these work in governmental institutions. Four of the participants refused to be recorded. I met most of them several times, and each session lasted approximately four hours.

In sixteen shorter interviews I dealt only some special issues to check certain points with the findings of the in-depth analysis from other circles of the group, each lasting from half an hour to one and a half hours. Two of them had been followers of Dede over 30 years. Six of them were women, ten of them were men. None of these shorter interviews were recorded. Seven of them took place in the mosque complex, the rest in houses I interviewed one of the participants on Skype, and another one I contacted over the internet and used the material which she had published on the internet. Another one who died in 1998 was represented by some others who mentioned him a lot. I also have indirect data from informants who told about some experiences of their friends.

Eleven meetings were of small groups with people with whom I also conducted in-depth interviews; five of them were recorded. I did nine group observations, and one group discussion.

3.9 Reflexions of an Insider Researcher

Being an insider in my case had bases both in my family background and my own interest in Sufism: I come from a practicing Muslim family in Turkey. Both of my grandfathers had studied in *madrasas*, my father read the Koran aloud on Sundays and my mother told me little ethical stories which I realised much later were *dervish* stories where not the rules but the inner disposition was important, and seemingly small actions could have significance. The first serious book I read when I was thirteen by a Muslim intellectual, Seyyid Kutub was

The Incompatibility of Islam and Capitalism which was given to me by the *mufti* (official in charge of Islamic affairs) for the province Beşiktaş who was a friend of my father. I have been studying Sufi texts for over twenty years, know three other contexts (three orders) of Sufism personally, and besides, I visited Dede for approximately fifteen months two or three times a month and have close friends among his followers.

Having been so grounded in the field, one thinks, one knows a lot and is going to enrich this knowledge with the experiences of the informants. When I started my field research in August 2010, I thought my most difficult problem would be to distance myself –which was true- but there was more that I could not have anticipated: when the process really began, I realised there were so many things that I had not questioned but that I had let pass over me as nice experiences and feelings. But the enigma, attraction and tension was not my problem alone; when I conversed with the participants I saw that they felt the same. Research meant diving in this sphere and trying to understand it with the aid of anthropological methods, and it really helped. It became productive for me especially when I realised that the two discourses could open each other up. Here I must highlight Ewing's and Asad's contributions. I needed a long time and intensive occupation with the theory of anthropology to distance myself enough from the field, only after a critical confrontation with the anthropological theory of Sufism and completing the writing up of it which took me three months have I felt that I have acquired enough distance, even though I had already been out of the field for a few months in order to do the transcription and open coding when I started this phase.

When I attempted to write up the field I had a crisis. I thought I would not be able to finish the thesis. My conviction that such a thesis would be possible and even necessary stopped me from giving up, and forced me to look for solutions. I realised that I was postponing the writing up of the field because of various pressures arising from the discourses both in the group and in the field of anthropology. By some of the members of the group, the veneration towards Dede and his complexity was expressed with the concept of “mystery”; he was a “mystery” and hence indescribable. Besides it seemed to me that everything was related to everything else and I did not know how to write without the feeling that I might be omitting an important part by writing it in a particular way. I had not separated myself from the discourse of the field. I decided to ask for help from three of my friends from the group who had academic knowledge in the humanities. I discussed my problems with them and asked if they would read what I wrote and make comments. Their open generosity to give me feedback was a great relief. The boldness of some Sufis (Ibn Arabi, Ghazzali, Niyazi Mısri) when they were writing about their experiences and their knowledge and the limits of their

knowledge also motivated me to question the discourse of Sufism in the group. The anthropological discourse was also limiting due to its suspicion towards the non-empirical and “supernatural”. I found much courage in Deleuze & Guattari to break with anthropological/sociological discourses and write about such a dynamic ground. Still, what the discipline of anthropology expected from me, the principle of observing an “event” with naked eyes, helped me very much to try to express my findings with clarity and with a strong sense of empirical reality, resisting firmly my own tendency to hide behind nebulous abstractions.

3.10 The Mode of Interviewing

The phenomenological approach is in some respects in harmony with the constructivist GTM; it gives special emphasis to the researcher/researched relationship calling for reflexivity on the side of the researcher. It focuses on the “lifeworld”, which is about such elements as a “person’s sense of selfhood, embodiment, sociality, spatiality, temporality, project, discourse and mood-as-atmosphere” (Ashworth 2003, 2006, in Finlay 2008). Moreover the relationship between the researcher and researched is not hierarchical, rather they are equals, and the researcher tries to develop empathy with the “reality” of the participants. This was appropriate in terms of my position in the field. While technically applying GTM, my approach was in a way “naturally” phenomenological because of my insiderness; I had no difficulty in building empathy and openness and was curious about my participants’ experiences. So I did not confront these experiences with suspicion, even though some of them were “trans-personal”; going beyond the “boundaries of ordinary ego-consciousness” (Laughlin 1996). This created an open, secure and intimate atmosphere. I experienced my being an insider as an opportunity, in having access to rich data, and also in analysing the phenomenon in ways which would be closer to their meanings. Another advantage of being an insider was that I knew whom to contact with what part of the information, and I also had access to gossip where the points of conflict became clearer. Asking specifically about the “taken for granted” Sufi concepts was crucial, as otherwise there was the danger that I would fill them with my own meanings.

Besides these aspects, there were other reasons for the phenomenological leanings of this research: the core concept became clear quite early on, it was Dede, his being the representative of the Prophet and his knowledge, love, openness and inclusiveness –although I had to wait until the writing up stage where I went over the data to understand what this meant in analytical terms. The formation was not considered a community, not a *tariqah* (for which I checked with more informants from other backgrounds, conducting shorter focused

interviews), and it soon became evident that most of the informants did not even consider themselves as part of a group. Yet, as for my observation, it was possible to talk about a shared culture; i.e. a perception and experience of the world and an emotional web connecting them to each other and distinguishing them from others in society. This built the basis of their understanding of each other although they were different and in conflict with each other in many other ways. My aim was a phenomenological researcher's: "to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks" (Merleau-Ponty 1962 [1945] in Finlay 2008) to the "embodied, experiential meanings aiming for fresh, complex, rich description of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived" (Finlay 2009: 6). For this aim I conducted open-ended phenomenological interviews with my main informants, mostly until saturation was achieved on the personal level and the informant began to repeat her/himself, and I also met some in informal meetings. I used theoretical sampling for validation of the data; some of which were shorter, focused interviews, and checked if similar categories were relevant for the others.

Another reason for my inclination towards phenomenology was its emphasis on the individual being embedded in a social context where s/he develops her reality through interaction. According to the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (SEP), phenomenology deals with "the meaning things have in our experience, notably, the significance of objects, events, tools, the flow of time, the self, and others, as these things arise and are experienced in our 'life-world'" (Smith 2011). Here two questions emerged: what about the experiences where the meaning was ambiguous or open, where there was an evident suspicion both towards the sensual and cognitive meanings, and where they were continuously reinterpreted or called upon with new meanings and insights as was the case with my informants? And most importantly, what was the relationship between experience and the doctrine? My data supports what Mark Wynn suggests in the article *The Phenomenology of Religion* in SEP, concerning the second question:

[I]n practice doctrine and experience are likely to be mutually informing, and it is reasonable to suppose that in some cases religious insight involves a kind of amalgam of a doctrinal scheme and associated experience, where these elements cannot in any simple way be separated out. (Wynn 2008)

And the first question –the ambiguity of meaning– can be referred back to the doctrine itself, i.e. Sufism as it is understood and practiced in this formation encourages such an occupation with the meanings.

During the transcription I realised that some of the interviews were more interesting than the others and one of them was quite boring. This puzzled me because it was not because of the

irrelevance of the content, which included important information especially on the organisation of the mosque. I decided that although it was a long interview (eight hours) the informant did not really open up. He was not re-living what he told but telling them from memory. This made me aware of the difference between the phenomenological and non-phenomenological nature of interviews.

3.11 Conclusion

This thesis problematizes the form and the content of a Sufi formation and discusses how they interact with each other. The formation shows characteristics of anti-structure and ambiguity organisationally, and the content is dealt with dynamically where the meanings are being left open to evolve and interpretation is an open-ended process.

The research was conducted in Ankara among thirty people. Although the intensive field research took place in the second half of 2010, the research includes data from a time span between May 1997 - May 2012 because the researcher is an insider.

The research brings insights about a hardly visible form, a kind of “secret” or “veiled” version of Sufism. Secretiveness is a characteristic of the group. In the course of the field research what surprised me most was when an informant told that she had learned the day before coincidentally that one of her oldest and best friends had also visited Dede, and hadn't mentioned of this to her, which surprised her greatly because she thought they shared everything. The invisibility is partly due to its lack of a social institution and its master's refusal of being publicised. The members themselves do not know how many people were affiliated with the master. Moreover the branch of the Naqshbandiyya where the master comes from has not been researched before academically. Another reason of the invisibility is the nature of some of the experiences which take place in mind and cannot be examined empirically. Furthermore it is a form of Sufism which has features that are not typical of many other Sufi groups, such as the non-institutionalisation both when the master was alive and after his death. When this research was carried out the group has been acephalous since August 1998 and consisted of small networks, or group of friends and a mosque and tomb site which was not frequented by large numbers of people except to the annual meeting of Dede's death.

There is a strong awareness of subjectivity and multiplicity of perceptions. The master's position is considered to be between the phenomenal and spiritual planes. He is the archetype of multiplicity united in one person, he is comprehensive and open. The formation is between existence and non-existence. Participants' sources of knowledge include

experiences which take place in the liminal/imaginal world, and which are triggered by the affect of Dede and the Sufi literature. The members are on one hand well embedded in modern life, on the other hand intensively occupied with Sufism although they show no signs of it externally. These characteristics hint at liminality, the in-betweenness which defines many aspects of the formation. The occupation with Dede, the life, the self and God altogether has a deconstructive effect on the previously established perceptions and leads to a perception which understands them as unlimited and indescribable.

The method of data collection and analysis is Grounded Theory Method in its Constructivist Grounded Theory Method (CGTM) and Multi Grounded Theory (MGT) versions. GTM is a qualitative method of data collection and analysis where the focus is letting theory evolve from the data. The aim is to explicate emic understandings of the world and the implicit belief systems. The CGTM emphasises the role of the researcher in data collection and analysis which is marked by intersubjectivity between the researched and the researcher. And MGT advises a critical engagement with the data where a special attention is given to the various ontological categories such as inner worlds, actions, natural environment and symbolic objects.

The mode of interviewing is phenomenological where the focus is on the lived experiences and the interviews are rather unstructured and open-ended. They were mostly directed by the informants themselves to find out what is crucial to them. The participants were chosen among the educated urban milieu of society to restrict the research field and because they are highly represented in the formation. The concentration on the individual, intimate experiences of the participants in the research is in harmony with the characteristic of the formation. And this stratum is less researched in the field of the anthropology of Sufism.

The balancing act of intimacy and reflexivity is crucial for anthropological writing although there is no recipe for avoiding subjectivity. In the period of estrangement or reflexivity an anthropologist's own categories might easily intrude, and in the period of intimacy one's perception will be influenced by one's situated self; emotions and reactions –even by experienced anthropologists. Although it is the task of the anthropologist to take into consideration these thoughts, the collected data and the position of the self, it is generally accepted that an anthropological study arises out of the intersubjectivity between the researcher and the researched. In my case as an insider researcher distancing from the field was especially important and difficult. The theories and literature from outside the field were of great help in creating the necessary distance. They were mainly anthropological ones but

also sociological, historical, and philosophical ones were of great help. On the other hand my insidership enriched the data and facilitated the representation of emic perceptions.

This research is a contribution to the field focusing upon a form of Sufism and religiosity that is not known widely in the anthropological literature. The phenomenological mode of interviewing, and the representation of the emic perceptions by an insider anthropologist with some collaboration from the participants are also among the contributions to the field. On the other hand it is questionable how far the findings can be generalised to the whole formation and to other forms of Sufism, as the research is restricted to a small group. A further research with broader social strata of informants would test how far the findings could be generalised to the whole formation, and verify and enrich these findings.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIELD THEORY

I will argue that Sufism as practiced in this formation is an experiential, deconstructive discursive tradition. The conception of “discursive tradition” belongs to Talal Asad as a sweeping formulation of the various traditions within the Islamic context. I depart from this conception and argue that it is deconstructive. It considers being (existence) as mutable and aims at attaining the immutable through the deconstruction of the mutable. On the personal level it deconstructs the self, places it on the plane of “liminality”; on the organisational level it brings about “anti-structure” and “communitas” (Victor Turner); and on the social level it is inclusive of multiplicity. Where Turner’s theory fails to express the multiple discourses and debates in the field, Foucault’s “heterotopias” is helpful.

4.1 Search for New Theories in the Field

Anthropologists’ consideration of Sufism as a rural, local phenomenon and a form of popular religion has shifted in contemporary studies. Due to the growing visibility and success of Sufi orders, and their spread among the educated urban¹⁶, it has been conceived increasingly as a transnational phenomenon which interacts with the modernization processes. This, then, has brought about a search for new theories in the area. The theories which were based on the hypothesis that modernization would bring about secularization and a decline in religion were reconsidered with a critical eye because there was apparently a “resurgence of religion” towards the end of the twentieth century –also outside of Sufism (John O. Voll, 2007: 282-283). Voll suggests three theoretical approaches to deal with the Sufi orders in our time: 1.

¹⁶ When we consider the history of Sufism, we actually see that Sufism’s premises were mainly developed by the educated urban adherent but that dissemination took place, with some differences, both in the city and in the country.

social movement theory which “examines different types of organizational formats [...] through which people mobilize and engage in collective action” (ibid.: 285); 2. glocalisation theory which suggests that there is a synthesis of “global” and “local”, and that global, cosmopolitan perspectives interact with local identities –as in the case of local living saints now acting in “glocal” contexts (ibid.: 293); and 3. post-modern theory where Sufi orders are considered as spaces in which “reformed lifestyles [are put] into practice”. This theory recognises a “post-materialist”, “spiritual” search for a meaning and purpose of life in “post-colonial New Sufis” where any conflicts that arise are about the “grammar of forms of life”, the pattern, purpose and process of sociality, but not about the distribution of goods (ibid.: 295-296).

Voll’s first suggestion is implicit in this research as the formation does not have the structure to make it a social organisation nor do the people engage in collective action except on a few occasions. The research seeks the rationale and effects of this lack of structure. The second suggestion, the glocalisation theory, would be partly applicable, as Dede’s formation has some elements which would fall within that frame: the leader comes from a small village in the East of Turkey and influences people from various milieus including the urban educated and cosmopolitan types, and there is an interest in global concerns. But on their own these aspects fall too short of explaining the phenomenon. However the formation exhibits quite a few elements which are found in the framework of postmodern theory: a deconstruction on social, cultural, religious and individual levels, the clustering of dichotomies, embodiment, a “post-materialist” search for a meaning for life and lifestyle, an acceptance and embracement of cultural pluralism, a combining of the traditional with the present, and ambiguity.

4.2 Victor Turner’s Anthropology

Victor Turner’s theory of anti-structure consisting of liminality and communitas provides useful explications for the field. The formation promoted anti-institutionalisation which gave way to multiple interpretations and liminality on various levels. Turner called his anthropology the “anthropology of experience” (Turner and Bruner 1986), and it is inspired by the hermeneutics of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who suggests that “reality only exists for us in the facts of consciousness given by inner experience” (Dilthey 1976: 161 in 1986: 4). This anthropology’s concern is about “how individuals actually experience [sense, cognize, feel and expect] their culture, that is, how events are conceived” (ibid.: 4). This approach is in accord with the emphasis of my informants. They find their (inward)-experiences to be most crucial in their perception of reality.

Victor Turner (1920-1983) is a symbolic-interpretivist and processualist. He explores how social change is enacted, and suggests that there is an interplay between structure and anti-structure, where the structure is preservative and the anti-structure transformative. He examined rites of passage, transition rituals in the Ndembu of Zambia, and focused on the middle liminal phase of the rituals which was demarcated by anti-structure.

The anthropologist Graham St John emphasises the interdisciplinary character of Turner's processual understanding of ritual and symbols which are influenced by poetry such as Rilke's, and Kierkegaard's philosophy of paradox (St John 2008: 2). He compares in what ways Turner's approach to ritual is different from that of his forefathers: Turner turned away from structural-functionalism "to embrace more 'intuitive' and processual approach to ritual and symbols" and combined empiricism with hermeneutics (ibid.: 2). He revealed the experiential dimensions of symbolic action where "meaning would be found in temporalized 'structures of experience' [...] rather than formal categories of thought" as against Levi-Strauss's approach (ibid.: 4). Although he agreed with Durkheim that ritual was an efficient socioreligious phenomenon that could transform individuals/groups, he considered religion, symbols and ritual as holistic phenomena where individuals and collectivities engaged wholly instead of accepting a distinction between "profane" and "sacred", and saw an ontological value in them (ibid.: 2).

How far Victor Turner's anthropology is postmodern and post-structuralist is a contested question. His ideas are considered to fit in the framework of post-modernist or pre-poststructuralist paradigms. The sociologist Bennetta Jules-Rosette argues that he is a postmodern: "the unfolding of Turner's theory involves a complex, nonlinear interweaving of multiple voices and influences from [...] the Ndembu of Zambia to Broadway" (Jules-Rosette 1994: 160), while St John suggests that, although for Turner society is an open ended process, forever in becoming, he persisted "an evolutionary dialectical structuralism" which keeps him on the "threshold between modern and postmodern thought" (St John 2008: 12). Turner's theory of social drama and liminality influenced a variety of disciplines from anthropology, cultural and literary studies to performance studies, as well as outside academia.

4.2.1 Liminality and Communitas

According to Turner, societies engage in an interplay of structure and anti-structure, and while the former occasions the preservation of culture, the latter brings about revitalisation, transformation and growth. Liminality and communitas make up the anti-structure. He is

careful not to privilege anti-structure over structure although his analysis is mainly based on the former, and he asserts that they are both necessary (Turner 1974: 269).

He evolved his theory of liminality from Arnold van Gennep's (1909) *rites de passage*, where the liminal period is the second of the three successive phases which mark rites accompanying change –such as change of place, status and age. Turner defines ritual as “prescribed formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs and powers” (Turner 1967: 19 in Deflem 1991: 4). The function of rituals is to compensate for lack of political control and instability, they are the “‘social glue’ that holds Ndembu society together and activate redressive mechanisms” (Turner 1957a: 291 in Deflem 1991: 2).

In line with van Gennep, Turner also determines three phases of ritual, and the middle phase the *limen*, the experiential “realm of pure possibility” (Turner 1967: 97) stands at the core of his analysis. In van Gennep's *rites de passage* the first phase is called “separation”, and in it the group or individual is detached from a fixed point in the social structure or/and cultural conditions. The second phase is the “margin” “limen” or “threshold” and it is marked by ambiguity on the side of the ritual subject as it has characteristics of neither the previous nor the coming state. And the third phase is the “aggregation” where the ritual subject re-enters the structures of the society and gains a relatively stable state. S/he is considered to be able to cope with its obligations and standards through the change which was enacted in the second phase (Turner 1991: 94-95).

Liminality is, according to Turner, confined to the traditional obligatory sacred rituals of premodern societies where rituals serve for collective reflexivity and enact transformation, while the more complex modern societies demonstrate liminoid (liminal like) states in leisure settings such as the arts, theatre performances, concerts, sports and the like which also serve for reflexivity but which are neither related to the sacred nor obligatory. Turner concentrates on the liminal phase and on this builds his concepts of liminal *personae* and *communitas* which is the transient community of liminal people. Besides his own field work with the Ndembu of Zambia, he analyses data from various anthropological studies to draw his conclusions, such as, the millenarian religious movements (Norman Cohn 1961), the Tallensi (Fortes 1949), the Saora of Middle India (Elwin 1955), and the Nuer of the Sudan (Evans-Pritchard 1956) (in 1991: 111-125).

Turner maintains that rituals are both regenerative and affirmative of structure. In the phases of anti-structure the ranks of the social structure are inverted and the individuals and collectivities engage wholly and playfully. The culture is analysed into its factors, that is to

say deconstructed, and recombined “in any and every possible pattern, however weird” (Turner 1974: 255). During the ritual the participants gain insights about themselves, their culture and ontological categories, their intellect is liberated, they produce myths and proto-philosophical speculation, and their bodily energy is heightened (ibid.: 253). “Gnosis, ‘deep knowledge,’ is highly characteristic of liminality” (ibid.: 258). One of the most characteristic features of liminality, Turner says, is that in it symbols accrue various meanings, culture is dissolved into its factors and these are recombined in any and every possible pattern, stripping it of the “implicit syntax-like rules” and “internal structure of logical relations of opposition or mediation” (Turner 1991: 255).

The liminal condition and the persons are;

neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. [...] [L]iminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon. Liminal entities, such as neophytes in initiation [...] [possess] nothing, [...] no status, no property, insignia, secular clothing indicating rank or role, position in a kinship system [...] that may distinguish them from their fellow neophytes or initiands. Their behaviour is normally passive or humble; they must obey their instructors implicitly [...]. It is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life. Among themselves, neophytes tend to develop an intensive comradeship and egalitarianism. Secular distinctions of rank and status disappear or are homogenized. (Turner 1991: 95)

Other attributes are sexual continence, minimization of sex distinctions, disregard for personal appearance, unselfishness, total obedience, sacred instruction, silence, continuous reference to mystical powers, foolishness, simplicity, acceptance of pain and suffering and heteronomy (ibid.: 106-107).

Turner suggests that liminality offers a blend of “lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship”. Liminal rites are “in and out of time and in and out of secular social structure” (ibid.: 96). The individuals who undergo the process of liminality, the “passengers” or the neophytes “must be a tabula rasa, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group” (ibid.: 103). Another important effect of the liminal rituals, asserts Turner, is a psychological one, as what has been repressed into the unconscious reappears in veiled or explicit forms. And when the initiands or “passengers” are reintroduced to the structured order as “twice-born”, they are free from their own “despotic authority” and become “autonomous sources of creative behaviour” (ibid.: 260).

Communitas is the group of individuals who together go through the process of liminality. It is not shaped by norms or institutionalised although it is a product of historical experience

developed in social life. It is “anti-structural in the sense that they are undifferentiated, equalitarian, direct, extant, nonrational and existential” (Turner 1974: 274). The relationships within the *communitas* are “total”, “unmediated” and intimate (ibid.: 274). It has a liberating and revitalising influence on individuals (Turner 1991: 128): “*Communitas* does not merge identities; it liberates them from conformity to general norms” (ibid.: 274). It levels the individuals and strips them of structural status and property, which makes them equals. The levelling effect is found not only among the human beings but also with nonhuman beings, as “man ceases to be the master” (ibid.: 252).

Turner asserts that *communitas* exists on the margins of the society, “breaks in the interstices of structure” and occupies its “lowest rungs” (ibid.: 128). They contain symbols and artefacts that are used metaphorically and take on multiple meanings. They represent the archetypes of the culture and embody their “tacit knowledge” to be activated during the ritual process (Turner 1974: 25).

Turner writes that preliterate and preindustrial societies have clues and indications in their culture about how to live in liminality and about structural inferiority, which lead to the building of normative *communitas* (Turner 1991: 132) whereas in complex and literate societies, there are explicit “utopian formulations” about “how men may best live together in comradesly harmony” (ibid.: 134), which give rise to ideological *communitas*. The latter also maintains the connection between liminality, structural inferiority, structural outsiderhood, and universal human values such as peace, justice, comradeship and social equality (ibid.: 134).

He finds liminal phenomena in some Western literature and art. Here it attains a pedagogical function, shaking up what is taken for granted in the culture and breaking paradigms because the unusual and paradoxical features of liminality stimulate thought and open the perception (ibid.: 256). Another sphere where liminars can also be found, Turner asserts, is in folk literature where it is personified by mystic types such as “holy beggars” or strangers without home or possessions. These restore ethical and legal equilibrium, and are structurally inferior or marginal, or are outsiders. In the same way, *communitas* can be found in Christian monastic life. However, he adds, in practice *communitas* cannot be maintained for very long

and they become institutionalised, as happened with the Franciscan order. Turner maintains that *communitas* represents the “open society” with Bergsonian “open morality”¹⁷ –rather than Durkheimian “in-group solidarity”- and that they are extensible potentially or ideally to the limits of humanity (ibid.: 132), in contrast to a structured “closed society”.

Turner maintains that *communitas* is often considered as a danger to the structure, and a temptation for those –especially those in the middle rungs of society upon whom structural pressures to conformity are greatest- who are involved in “structural role playing” by turning values upside down, creating a “counterculture”, minimizing the outward marks of rank, diminishing differences between the sexes and who show a tendency of approximating “in dress and behaviour to the condition of the poor” (Turner 1974: 243-247). He emphasises the attraction of liminality: “the domain of the ‘interesting’ or of ‘uncommon’” which unlocks

¹⁷ Bergson considers “closed” and “open moralities” as complementary manifestations of life. Closed morality, closed society and static religion belong to the same paradigm whereas open morality, open society and dynamic religion are aspects of the same phenomenon. Bergson asserts that the former puts forward impersonal rules to be obeyed and its function is preserving the individual and society and that it satisfies the need for security. One feature of static religion is its myth-making function, which serves to preserve its patterns. Closed morality is based on “normal emotions”, i.e. emotions that are attached to objects, and aroused by confrontation with these objects or, in other words, representations cause emotions. The “open” or “complete” or “absolute” morality, dynamic religion and open society is, on the other hand, a reversed paradigm. It is personal and “incarnated in a privileged person”, a “mystic” who becomes an example and is followed by people without a feeling of obligation but through a “longing to resemble” (2006: 34-35). This paradigm includes all humanity and seeks something beyond its reach. The source of open morality, according to Bergson, is the “creative emotion”, i.e. emotion that is not stirred through objects to which emotions are attached but rather precedes the representation. The love of such a mystic “has shot beyond and reached humanity only by passing through humanity” (ibid.: 39), and “is no longer simply the love of man for God, it is the love of God for all men” (ibid.: 233). Openness may create fluctuating mental states although this does not mean disequilibrium. Bergson considers the influence of such people as a life stirring force that awakens something we have in ourselves, and he considers genuine mystical experience as resulting in action. He contends that while static religions need organisation and doctrines to stabilise the society, and anticipate resistance, dynamic religions have formulas as expressions of love and creation, no rigid doctrines or organisation and are attractive.

the potential of imagination” (Turner 1997: 68). These features call to mind the renunciatory dervishes who devised “poverty, mendicancy, itinerancy, celibacy, self-mortification” with their “eremitic and cenobitic options” (Karamustafa 1994: 3) as a reaction to mainstream religiosity in the Muslim community. They did indeed attract young people from middle and high social strata, and intellectuals (ibid.: 10). Their communal life in orders was surely a strong form of Turner’s *communitas*. In Dede’s formation, although there are features of liminality and *communitas*, it is not represented in such a strong form, as will be delineated in the description and analysis of the field.

According to Turner there are three types of *communitas*: existential or spontaneous ones, ideological ones, and normative ones (Turner 1974: 169). The former one emerges spontaneously in times of radical social change or in a crisis in society where the established structures and norms are shaken and lose their efficacy. These in time develop a structure in which they organize resources out of the need for enacting social control among its members and become normative. And the third type of *communitas*, which describes the outward form of optimal conditions which would lead to the inward experience of existential *communitas*, is the one he calls ideological *communitas*. Turner says “structure tends to be pragmatic and this worldly; while *communitas* is often speculative and generates imagery and philosophical ideas” (ibid.: 133). In religious *communitas* the charisma of the leaders as well as the first disciples and followers are “routinized”. In case of institutionalisation such groups may become more fanatical and militant than other religious communities as they consider themselves to be the bearers of universal human truth (ibid.: 112). If the *communitas* does not become institutionalised, according to Turner, the members reintegrate into society and “merge into the environing structured order” (ibid.: 129).

4.2.2 Critique

Turner’s ideas have caused reactions varying between enthusiasm and caution, and especially since 1990s his influence on American studies has decreased. A main point of critique is how far the concepts of liminality and spontaneous *communitas* are heuristic devices that can explain contemporary symbolic acts. St John remarks that the global mediascapes which transform the daily lives of populations globally are liminoid, liminal-like spaces enacting spontaneity and transformation. But in the framework of Turner where the liminoid has its roots in the liminality of preindustrial contexts, they could be evaluated as inauthentic or un-real sociality. Other critical points are that his limen and spontaneous *communitas* are utopic descriptions; his pilgrim *communitas* highlight an ideal and homogenous experience while remaining blind to power contestation and complexity. The

apolitical character of his limen and his consideration of marginality as a free option are also contested (St John 2008: 13-15).

4.2.3 Utopias and Heterotopias

Turner himself mentions the utopian character of *communitas* in the modern context. He finds that in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, the character Gonzalo's ideal commonwealth has characteristics of the *communitas*. He discusses the problems which make it difficult to realise this utopia: first, societies have to mobilise resources and people to produce life's necessities through work which calls for social organisation, production and distribution of goods. And these carry the seeds of structural segmentation and hierarchy in themselves which stands in contradiction with *communitas*. Secondly, *communitas* is based on relationships where each person experiences the being of the other in genuine mutuality, in an essential "I" and "Thou" relationship, whereas relationships in structures are impersonal. Moreover the "essential *We*" which is created in *communitas* is only possible among independent and integral selves who have self-responsibility. He emphasises that *We* would not arise when even one person, who is greedy of power, used others for his own end (Turner 1991: 135-137). His idealisation of *communitas* as a space free of contestation and disturbance makes it a utopia, a "site[s] with no real space" (Foucault 1984) in the context of capitalist societies –probably also anywhere else. However it seems that it is exactly this context which gives rise to "post-materialist" searches for a meaning and practice of life, as mentioned by Voll (2008) at the beginning of this chapter.

On the other hand Foucault's "heterotopias", or "places of otherness", seem to be ideal spaces where liminality can find complete expression. St John writes that various social scientists (Hetherington 2000, St John 2001a, Gilmore 2008 in St John 2008: 14) adopted Foucault's "loosely defined heterotopia" as a contemporary site which stands in "problematic or antithetical relationship with structure, although retaining the efficacy/potency inscribed in *communitas*" (ibid.: 14).

Foucault does not describe heterotopias as ideal places, yet they are attractive. He makes a comparison between utopias and heterotopias. According to him utopias are "sites with no real space" where the society is presented in a "perfected form" or "turned upside down".

And heterotopias are “absolutely different places”, “outside of all places” but with a “location in reality”. They are approximations of utopias, where utopias are “effectively enacted”, and where “all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (1984¹⁸: 3). He writes that the heterotopia is a mirror where I am reflected at once as absolutely real and connected with all the space around, and at the same time as absolutely unreal because of the virtuality of the reflection (ibid.: 3) –this reminds one of Lacan’s mirror. Foucault differentiates between various heterotopias: “crisis heterotopias” are sacred places in “so-called primitive societies” which are reserved for individuals who go through a crisis such as adolescence or menstruation (ibid.: 3) –he might have read Turner. Nineteenth century boarding schools, and military service for men are also such places. Foucault asserts that such crisis heterotopias are disappearing, leaving their place to “heterotopias of deviation” such as psychiatric hospitals and prisons (ibid.: 4). “Heterotopias of illusion” are those which “expose every real space as still more illusory”, such as the brothels of the past. “Heterotopias of compensation” are those whose role is to create another space that is other, perfect and just as well arranged as “ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled” such as

¹⁸ This is a seven page article I found in the internet: “This text, entitled ‘Des Espace Autres,’ and published by the French journal *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité* in October 1984, was the basis of a lecture given by Michel Foucault in March 1967. Although not reviewed for publication by the author and thus not part of the official corpus of his work, the manuscript was released into the public domain for an exhibition in Berlin shortly before Michel Foucault’s death. Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec”. <<http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>>. George St John who uses the concept in his doctoral thesis “Alternative Cultural Heterotopia: ConFest as Australia’s Marginal Centre” (2000) has apparently used the same article, as the quotations he gives are exactly as they appear in this article and the title is also the same. But he gives 1986 as the date of publication, and *Diacritics* 16 (1): 22-7 as the publisher. He adds that Kevin Hetherington has developed the idea of Heterotopia further. The definition Hetherington gives is: “sites of alternate ordering ... established by their incongruous condition. That incongruity emerges through a relationship of difference with other sites, such that their presence either provides an unsettling of spatial relations or an alternative representation of spatial relations” (1997: 51 in 2000: 17 of the downloaded version of the thesis).

some Jesuit colonies in Paraguay (ibid.: 6). Foucault addresses cemeteries, and the traditional gardens of the Persians, trains, museums, libraries and festivals as heterotopic sites.

He counts six principles of heterotopias: 1. every society constitutes heterotopias in various forms as in the examples above. 2. “[A] society [...] can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion” in the course of its history (ibid.: 4). 3. Heterotopias can bring several incompatible sites into a single real place. 4. They are “heterochronies”, that is, they link several slices of time. And they function at full capacity when they bring about an absolute break with their traditional time (ibid.: 5). 5. They are neither freely accessible like a public place nor totally closed. There are conditions to be met before attaining permission of access, such as submission to some rules. Even when they seem totally open to everyone, it is an illusion: while one thinks one is in a heterotopia, s/he is actually outside it. 6. They have a function in relation to all other spaces outside.

I find that the main difference between utopias and heterotopias is that the former is based on exclusion and the latter on inclusion. Utopias must be exclusive of “contamination” such as contestation, economical and power relations as in the example of Turner. When the conditions are not “ideal”, they either cease to be utopias or must include suppressive measures. However heterotopias include various elements which disagree with each other and make them the elements of heterotopias. They are in this sense not “ideal” places where there is no contestation. Their heterotopic character is based on these various incompatible elements which yet come together. In this they are not suppressive but forceful. The ones who want to enter a heterotopia are forced to accept the existence of various elements and find a way to deal with them. The force also comes from the elements as they will keep their difference.

Another point is that a heterotopia hides itself to some extent from its elements as these see those aspects of it which correspond with their scope. When one restricts a heterotopia with his/her scope and denies its other elements, the heterotopia is not a heterotopia for him/her anymore although this does not cause the heterotopia to cease to be.

4.2.4 Liminalities of the Present

Turner’s liminality is a break from the structures of the society. The neophytes are obligatorily separated from their previous condition, and guided through a ritual where norms are turned upside down, and knowledge, status and reactions which were good in the old structure do not work anymore. The neophytes find themselves in ambiguity and danger, however their faculties for reflexivity and creativity are activated, “the imaginative

potential” is “unlocked”. The commonsensical in daily life is deconstructed into “cultural units which may then be reconstructed in novel ways” (Turner 1977: 68). The transformation which is enacted during this reflexive period enables the individual or the society to reintegrate in the structured order as transformed individuals.

For Turner’s liminar neophytes the liminality is an experience with a beginning and a rather secure end, between two fixed points in structure. When the passage is consummated, “the ritual subject is in a relatively stable state once more, [...] has rights and obligations vis-a-vis others, of clearly defined and ‘structural type’” (Turner 1991: 95). The liminars are “passengers” only for a while, until they get settled again. Although they are obligatorily ripped out of their status and structures during the ritual, which creates ambiguity, uncertainty, danger and is likened to death, they know that they will go back to their societies as empowered and regenerated individuals after they have gone through the process.

Turner mentions permanent liminality in the context of Christianity and other “great world religions” where liminality is institutionalised in the forms of monastic and mendicant life styles, which are most of the time considered to be optional. These are clearly distinguished from the secular life; people live in a community of the likeminded and devote themselves totally to “God’s service by self-discipline, prayer and work” (ibid.: 107). It seems that in this permanent liminality the aggregation is placed in the afterworld. Turner finds another form of liminality in industrial societies, the liminoid in art and literature, where liminality has no sacred context and is placed in leisure time, and is again optional. These are liminoid because they are also in the interstices of the society, and they break with the commonsensical and enact reflexivity for the society and the individuals who take part in them.

In our time there are many conditions which may be considered as obligatory liminality: rapid changes in many societies and in the physical world, the insecurities in work places, in relationships, transnationalism, marginalisation of some cultural groups, and the global interactions among cultures. These conditions have much in common with liminality: exhibiting ambiguity and a break with norms and structures; and they involve danger and loss of status. But do they bring about reflexivity, transformation and regeneration? In some cases they surely do. Yet in many cases the ambiguity causes subject to hold tightly to norms and structures as in fanaticisms, radical fundamentalisms and nationalisms.

The difference between Turner’s liminality and these appears to be based on the insecurity and indeterminacy of liminalities: how long will it last and to what does it lead? The

conditions of liminality in Turner's sense are the existence of secured structures to return to. But in these cases, instead of leading to the building of *communitas* with open morality, they end may be in closed societies that may also be quite hierarchical and suppressive in themselves, and are based on exclusion. The closed societies, be it ghettos or nationalism or fanaticism provide structures which are lacking in the wider society that represent structure in Turner's model. It seems that one of the challenges of our time is to find ways to cope with this kind of obligatory but undesired liminality.

4.2.5 Relevance for the Field

The concept of liminality, as a realm of "pure possibility", ambiguity, paradox, neutrality, a "neither-nor" or "both and" condition and subversion of the status-quo, and the *communitas* which are temporary communities of liminal persons under an instructor who is himself a liminar and to whom the neophytes show complete submission (Turner 1967: 97-99) are echoed in the interviews I carried out with my informants as well as in Sufi theory. I find that the concept of liminality is more appropriate to the case here than the liminoid –the liminal like circumstances of the modern context- as it includes a "sacred" space and is not restricted to leisure settings.

On the other hand, there are no clearly set rituals in the formation. Confronting Dede, who is the instructor, becomes itself a ritual triggering reflexivity and transformation; so it is then a process rather than a ritual having clear-cut limits in time and space. Moreover the whole ritual pattern consisting of three phases –separation, limen and aggregation- does not seem to apply in the way that it is meant by Turner. Most of my informants did not have a fixed social state before they had met Dede. Some of them were still university students, and all of them experimented with ideas from the East and the West and with the traditional and progressive –which can also refer to the geographical position of Turkey between the East and the West, and the many changes Turkey has gone through in the twentieth century. They had a critical outlook on socio-political matters, and constructed their identities rather in negation, that is, they were rather in a "neither nor" position. This may be called a "liminality of negation".

After meeting Dede the liminality of my informants was intensified, extending itself to their self, and any knowledge they had gathered appeared to them to be lacking or hollow. They entered into a process of deconstruction where they were stripped of their perceptions of identity, society and being. Sufism considers only God as the "necessary Being", while all other things are "possible beings" that are both existent and non-existent. According to this understanding, the liminal characteristic –often called the "sea of possibility" in Sufism and

“pure possibility” in Turner- is actually considered to be a characteristic of the world-space as a whole. My informants can be said to start a process of self-fashioning where liminality is an inherent feature of the world and the self. The process is about developing an “ethic and aesthetics of existence” and spirituality in Foucault’s sense as he writes in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*: “the form of practices which postulate that, such as he is, the subject is not capable of the truth, but that, such as it is, the truth can transfigure and save the subject” (Foucault 2005: 19).

In the formation the emphasis is on the master; the experiences and their understandings are with and through him, he is the embodiment of the teaching and contact with him becomes a transformative ritual. He is considered to be an *Insan-ı Kamil*, or perfected human being. *Insan-ı Kamil* is the vicegerent between the realities of the “Sea of Necessity” which is invisible and the “sea of possibility” which is visible (Chittick 1982: 5). The Koranic concept, *barzakh*, the liminal or intermediate or imaginal world, is the “mysterious eschatological realm of imagination” as understood by Ibn Arabi. It lies between the “purely physical” and “purely intelligible/noetic being” (Morris 1995: 43). *Barzakh* is considered to be the domain of the *Insan-ı Kamil*. When the imagination becomes activated, many experiences are carried over to the *barzakh*, the imaginal world as we will read in chapter 8.

Dede’s presence was experienced as uniting the multiplicity, i.e. the “sea of possibility”, in his body –also the historical past and the present, and the reality of the “Sea of Necessity”. He hence became a mirror where people and the universe were reflected. It seemed that he embraced everything but was none of them. I will call this quality the “liminality of affirmation”. His body in this sense likens a heterotopia, and is deconstructive. Beside the principals of heterotopias Foucault mentions; –bringing several incompatible sites into a single real place, linking several slices of time, breaking with the traditional time, being neither freely accessible nor totally closed, having a function in relation to all other spaces outside– one more is necessary in this context, which is heterotopias connect the physical and the imaginal or noetic realms of being. In Dede’s life time his house, and now the mosque and tomb complex, are also heterotopic places where multiple and at times competing discourses come together. My informants were also encouraged to develop a liminality of affirmation, which is ideally based on the ability to engage with the variety in the world without identifying with any single construction.

The ambiguity of liminality was compensated for by Dede’s presence, Sufi content and practices, especially *namaz*, which is preordained and rhythmical. The practices aim at

cultivating security which is not dependent on “outer” conditions whose continuous flux is emphasised.

The transient liminality of Turner is demarcated by a separation from the everyday world. However my informants were encouraged to continue with their daily occupations, not to seclude themselves from the structure, but nevertheless to remain detached from its categories inwardly. Some *tariqahs* prefer complete seclusion, at least for some time, which would be more similar to Turner’s conception, whereas the Naqshbandiyya School where Dede comes from educates its adherents to remain in a continuous liminal state while being in the everyday social life. In the Naqshbandiyya the principle of “*khalwat dar ancuman*”, solitude in the crowd, or “*içi Hak’la, dışı halkla*” (the inner with the Real and the outer with the created) as it is expressed in Turkish, emphasises the disposition of remaining in society while detaching oneself from it inwardly. Hence the aggregation in the formation does not mean a return to the structures of the society but to a “primordial” state, *Hak*, while liminality on the social level is continuous or, at least, meant to be so.

My informants came together in networks with people who were undergoing a similar process, where they were encouraged to build relationships of equals and comradeship. These networks are quite like Turner’s *communitas*. They have aspects of ideological and normative *communitas* as they are based on a teaching and follow a tradition while the dissemination among my informants who have not been part of the tradition gives them an existential character. The *communitas* as it is lived in the formation is itself a liminal phenomenon; it is indeterminate, in becoming. It has gone through various changes and it seems it is open to new changes. Dede’s death caused a gradual disintegration of the *communitas* while people became diffused in society (ideally) as liminars, although their contacts with former comrades are not completely broken. The contact with both Dede and *communitas* has partly shifted to the imaginal world, the world between the physical and the noetic one. The *communitas* is now neither existent as it used to be nor completely non-existent.

4.3 Deconstructive Discursive Tradition

Talal Asad formulates a general conception to cover the multiplicity of Islam where he determines the common basic denominator in all understandings and practices of Islam as that of a “discursive tradition”:

If one wants to write an anthropology of Islam one should begin, as Muslims do, from the concept of a discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of Qur’an and the Hadith. Islam is neither a distinctive social

structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs, and morals. It is a tradition. [...] A tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because established, has a history. [...] An Islamic discursive tradition is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present. [...] A practice is Islamic because it is authorized by the discursive traditions of Islam, and is so taught to Muslims – whether by an *alim*, a *khatib*, a Sufi *shaykh*, or an untutored parent. [...] Orthodoxy is crucial to all Islamic traditions. [...] Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust *correct* practices, and condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace *incorrect* ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy. [...] Argument is a natural part of Islamic tradition. (Asad 1986: 14-16)

Here we read first, that all traditions of Islam are based on the founding texts of the Koran and the Hadith. Second, that they are traditions which evolve historically and contextually. Third, that they are established. Fourth, that they are normative, i.e. each tradition has a claim of knowing what the correct and incorrect practices are. And fifth, that these traditions challenge the validity of each other's claims. This dialectic of norm and counter-norm is, then, the basis of the traditions' dynamism. In these terms Sufism is one of the discursive traditions, which is again split in itself into various *tariqahs* each having its own established discursive tradition with special doctrines and practices.

Yet this thesis argues that as it is practiced in the formation Sufism is a deconstructive discursive tradition. It is within the conception of Asad in so far as it has a tradition which evolves historically and contextually, and “includes and relates to the founding texts”. But its dealing with these texts is deconstructive. The master of this formation counts three sorts of texts to be read: the holy books, the universe and the self. These texts have multiple layers of meanings and these are unveiled through each. Again according to Sufism the Koran was descended to the body of the Prophet, and he was commanded to “Read” (Koran 96: 1) which is the first revealed verse of the Koran. In this sense the Prophet is not the writer of a book but a reader, and a Sufi adherent also considers her/himself a reader. Sufi education mainly consists of acquiring literacy.

The part of the definition of deconstruction by Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garrat is the nearest to Sufi practice of deconstruction which is expressed as *kashf* (unveiling). Deconstruction is

to peel away like an onion the layers of constructed meanings ... Deconstruction is a strategy for revealing the underlayers of meanings in a text that were suppressed or assumed in order for it to take its actual form - in particular the assumptions of presence (the hidden representations of guaranteed certainty). (Appignanesi and Garrat 1994: 79-80 in Brenda van Rooyen and Lesley Le Grange 2003: 9).

However according to Sufis the ontological status of the Koran and the Hadith¹⁹ cannot be challenged. The suppressions and the assumptions are referred to the reader and her/his epistemological onus, not to the “Writer”. This mode of reading is a means of reading one’s self along with the universe. It is a means of deconstructing the self. The Sufi literature mainly consists of readings of the Koran, the meanings that have manifested themselves through unveilings. They are not intellectual discussions. For someone who has not made the experience her/himself, they are often puzzling and often have deconstructive effect on the ways of rational thinking. An example from Ibn Arabi in his *Fusūs al-Hikam*:

The universe is an illusion
But it is true in reality
Whosoever understands this
Has grasped the secrets of the Way
(*Chapter on Solomon*, tr. by Omar Benaïssa).

Sufism has norms and rules which are basically shared by other Islamic traditions²⁰ as well as the additional ones of each *tariqah* and the branch. But the trick is that the space they cover is small in proportion to the vastness of the non-normative field: “there is only one path for each person, and no path encroaches on another” (Benaïssa 2005).

¹⁹ Though not all the Hadith that circulates among Muslims are found reliable.

²⁰ The six tenets of faith as expressed in the prayer Amentu: “1. I believed in the existence and oneness of Allah. 2. I also believed in the angels of Allah. 2. I also believed in the books of Allah. 3. I also believed in the prophets of Allah. 4. I also believed in the Day of Judgment. 5. I also believed in the destiny, that everything that seems as good or evil to us take place through the knowledge, law and creation of Allah. 6. I also heartily believed in life after death (and resurrection). All of them are true and right. I witness that there is no god but Allah and I witness that Hazrat Muhammad is his slave and messenger (tr. by Mehmet Dikmen, accessed at <http://www.questionsonislam.com/article/what-does-amantu-mean-what-are-fundamentals-belief-included-amantu>). The five pillars of Islam are: 1. to say I witness that there is no god but Allah and I witness that Hazrat Muhammad is his slave and messenger, 2. to perform *namaz*, 3. To give away *zakat* of one’s property (one fortieth) to the needy, 4. to fast, 5. to perform pilgrimage.

4.4 Conclusion

My research represents Sufism as *a deconstructive (unveiling) discursive tradition which is experiential and has implications on the self, organisation, society and materiality*. Asad's conception of "Islam as a discursive tradition" is my point of departure to build this formulation. On the individual level it deconstructs the self, on the organisational level it causes an anti-structure, on the social level it is inclusive of the multiplicity, but it is also inclusive of animals, plants and other materials. Deconstruction has implications for the interpretations of the Koran, perception of the self and the society, being in general -which is understood as a text-, and gives way to "becoming" which can be compared to experiencing the Koranic verse: "Every moment in (new) Splendour /manifestation doth He (shine)!" (55: 29) –a verse that is often recited by some of my informants. There is a reciprocal relationship between the discourse and the deconstruction: the discourse deconstructs the being, and deconstruction gives way to experiencing what the discourse says.

Turner's concepts of liminality, anti-structure and *communitas* point to deconstructive conditions on both social and individual levels where the liminars who are deprived of their habitual perceptions, the categories and structures of the society through transition rituals gain insights about themselves, their culture and ontological categories (Turner 1974: 253). The Sufi formation studied in this thesis demonstrates anti-structure; it is not institutionalised and the teaching is not rationalised. The travellers, the Sufi adherents have been put in liminal condition and they built *communitas*, groups of liminars who are fellows. The deconstruction of the self gives way to continuous liminality. I differentiate between two liminalities: the "liminality of negation" which is based on exclusion where one cannot identify with any one of the structures and categories and excludes them, while the "liminality of affirmation" is inclusive where the occupation with the outer takes place within one's own body.

The space which was created by the master of the formation likens a "heterotopia". Heterotopias, a concept which was conjured up by Foucault, are spaces that are "outside of all places", bring several incompatible sites into a single real place, link several slices of time, are neither freely accessible nor totally closed, and have a function in relation to all other spaces (Foucault 1984). In the practice of the formation the heterotopia also connects the realms of the visible, physical and the invisible, noetic and imaginal. This is the site of the *communitas* in the formation and also the lifeworld of the people individually. Bringing together the visible and noetic realms is additional to the attributes of heterotopias as Foucault lists them although it is implicit in his conception. Just like the heterotopias which

hold incompatible sites and contestation and unlike the more idealistic conception of Turner's *communitas*, the *communitas* in the formation allow disturbances and contestation but also a pleasure of sharing. A body which is in state of liminality of affirmation is also a heterotopic body.

One last remark is that according to Sufism ultimate heterotopic bodies and heterotopic places are not full, they are actually empty of being. They can embrace everything because of this emptiness. They are free of the constraints of being. As it is expressed in Sufism "they are empty of everything and filled with God".

CHAPTER 5

TARIQAHS AND SUFISM IN PRESENT DAY TURKEY

5.1 Introduction

In this section, before commencing a survey of the discussions of Sufism in Turkey in the anthropological literature, it will be worthwhile to give a picture of the historical context beginning with the processes of Republican reforms. The passage from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey meant a radical change in the organisation of Sufi orders after the *shaikhs*²¹ lost their legal status as the leaders of *tekkes* and *dergahs*²² which were also closed in 1925. The Republican era has seen various phases in terms of Sufi organisations which showed a tendency towards reopening after 1950 although the legal prohibition continued. After a period of recession, stagnation and staying behind closed doors, with the Democratic Party regime in 1950 many orders have taken up their activities again, this time as NGOs. There are also others without a formal institution, which meet only in homes and offices; this also seems to be a tradition that has escaped scholarly study. Most Sufi organisations have gone through a series of changes in organisational structure, Sufi practices, master-disciple relationships and various degrees of adaptation to secular culture such as regulation of clothing. Some groups see their roles in society as enabling the adaptation of believers to

²¹ *Shaikh or sheikh*: The leader of a Sufi *tariqah*.

²² The centres where some *dervishes* lived and many gathered for rituals. *Dervish* is the most common term in Turkey for someone who is a follower of Sufism; it is of Persian origin. *Ashik* is also used and is more common among Alawites. *Dede*, the master of the formation, used to address his disciples in both ways. Another term is *mutasawwif*, which derives from *tasawwuf*; Sufism, and means a student of Sufism, and is of Arabic origin. It is a formal expression in Turkey and used seldom in daily language or only among the urban.

modernity without violation of Islamic principles; they are active economically, politically and in identity building. There is competition among these groups which have their roots in traditional Sufi *tariqahs* and as well as the modernist religion based organisations which have been built as an alternative to Sufi organisations.

Anthropological research on Sufism in Turkey is remarkably rare. Although the interest of anthropologists seems to have been growing recently, it is not comparable with the interest in Sufism shown in post-colonial countries. This lack of interest might be first due to the assumption that Sufism in Turkey has declined with the pressure of the modern Republican state, and secondly to a difficulty in recognising Sufism except in its political manifestations, a difficulty which has arisen since the abandonment of the visible *tariqah* institutions with their *dergahs*, *tekkes* and *shaikhs* during modernisation reforms in 1925; and it should also be noted that it has been an inherent aspect of some Sufi schools not to be noticed. The *tariqah* institutions have almost become synonymous with Sufism, to the extent that it has now become difficult to detect Sufism, and observe its practices and rituals without these formal institutions.

Through discussions in anthropology the categories of “Sufi-saint cult”, “classical Sufism”, “traditional Sufism” and newly “Western Sufism” will be dealt with. They can be found all together at one place in different proportions and are not always mutually exclusive.

5.2 The Passage from the Empire to the Republic

Brian Silverstein writes; “It is not the case that participation in Sufi orders is a mass phenomenon in Turkey, unlike, for example, Pakistan, Morocco, or parts of West Africa” (Silverstein 2008: 124). It is impossible to state anything with certainty about the affiliation of the population with Sufism in Turkey for various reasons: first, the borders between what does and what does not belong to Sufism are difficult to draw²³ as in the case of the Nurju

²³ Many faith based organisations with a charismatic leader in the Islamic context are considered to have been influenced by the modes of organisation of Sufism (Weismann 2007a: 116). At least in classical times the most distinguishing feature was the method of acquiring knowledge as emphasised by Ghazzali and Ibn Arabi; Sufis argued that intellect was not enough to interpret Koran and *kashf*, unveiling was necessary to attain knowledge of God (see the history section of this thesis).

movement²⁴ and its follow-up the Fethullah Gülen community. Both of these charismatic leaders are affiliated with Sufism through some aspects of their style²⁵; secondly, many people who are interested and affected by Sufi ideas in their interpretation of religiosity through their families and/or Sufi literature but have no membership of a community are totally invisible to the researcher; and thirdly, some communities are very difficult to detect for outsiders as they meet privately and keep away from the media. I argue that the population which is still affiliated with Sufism in present day Turkey is greater in number than that which is assumed by the anthropologists, although the abandonment of *tariqahs* must have affected a decline. Since the time of liberalisation in the 1950s it seems to be recovering, as we will see in the studies below and in my research. This recovery has remained hidden from outsiders. It should be remembered that although modernity considered science and religion as mutually exclusive, 91% of people in Turkey still consider themselves religious in various degrees (Ali Ulvi Mehmedoğlu 2004: 190).

J. Kingsley Birge writes that when he first visited Turkey in 1913 he was expecting to find an orthodox country²⁶, because he had read so, but he found that an enormous proportion of the people was affiliated with dervish brotherhoods; even the mosque imams popped up as *Shaikhs* in *dervish tekkes*. Although he presumed that the proportion in Constantinople

²⁴ It is a movement founded by Said Nursi (1878-1960) who was a religious activist, and in his books he proclaimed the compatibility of reason, science, modernity and Islam (Aras and Caha 2000). Nursi distinguishes his way from Sufism as the “way of reality”, not of Sufi “contemplative speculation” and emphasises that it is practice oriented (Michel 2010: 62).

²⁵ According to Thomas Michel, Gülen emphasises “such typical Sufi concepts as *ikhlas* (sincerity or purity of intention), *ma’rifat* (knowledge), *sabr* (patience), and *taqwa* (piety)” and departs from Sufism in his “emphasis on communitarian dimension of selfless service. [...] [H]e rejects any spirituality that smacks of an individualistic mystical flight to union with God that characterizes much Sufi theory and practice. He is similarly disinterested in the kind of metaphysical speculation that preoccupied so many of the Sufis” (2010: 63, 64).

²⁶ *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The defence, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* by Elizabeth Sirriyeh (1999) shows that the relations are much more complicated than a simple opposition.

would be less than in other parts of the country, he nevertheless estimated that probably sixty percent of the population were affiliated in *dervish* fraternities “searching for direct knowledge of God” (Birge 1965 [1937]: 13-14). What, then, happened to the *shaikhs*, *tekkes* or *dergahs* and *dervishes*, and to the *tariqahs* which had played such important roles during the Ottoman Empire, both socially and politically?

Klaus Kreiser writes: “It is not very easy to gather information about *tariqahs* in present day Turkey” (Kreiser 2004: 92), and adds that scholarly studies about *tariqahs* during the Ottoman Empire are also rare (ibid.: 104-105). He states that multidisciplinary studies with both topographic and historical data would be necessary to understand the *tariqah* organisations today (ibid.: 115). He supposes that the gap which was there after the abandonment of *tariqahs* has been filled by mainly two of the most widespread communities: the “pan-Islamic” Nurju group whose founder Said-i Nursi had a short affiliation with Naqshbandiyya, although their organisation is very different to that of the *tariqahs*; and the Süleymancı group whose founder had been a Naqshi *shaikh* (ibid.: 101). He summarises the reasons why the *tariqahs* were abandoned as coming from the general conviction of the founding members of the republic that they were already too degenerated although they had played an important historical role in the formation of Turkish civilisations (ibid.: 97).

In the study of Rüya Kılıç (2009) we find discussions of how far the state’s attitude towards Sufi institutions found approval among *tariqahs*. Kılıç examines the reactions of four orders (the Mawlawiyya, the Baktashiyya, the Malamatiyya and the Naqshbandiyya) to the reforms of the republic and to the abandonment of *tariqahs* and their social institutions. She writes that although the reactions are considered mainly under three headings, which are agreement, silence or rejection, it is more complicated than that because the reactions were fluctuating, there were agreement in some points and disagreement in others, and also the reactions changed from *shaikh* to *shaikh* of the same *tariqahs*. She gives examples of these differing reactions from the orders’ various *shaikhs*. For many *shaikhs* the abandonment meant a radical change in their life styles; they had to take jobs or became imams in mosques although they had not worked before. In the Mawlawiyya the *shaikhs*’ reactions ranged from total rejection to approval of the reforms, and to the abolition of *tekkes*. Some *shaikhs* reacted with bitter sadness, some others with total approval; some even took an active role in the new parliament. The Naqshbandiyya played an important role in the modernisation process of Turkey and during the nationalist movement against European troops, but it was Naqshi Shaikh Said’s revolt in 1925 that led to the abandonment of the *tariqahs*. Some Naqshi *shaikhs* left Turkey, some remained silent and went into seclusion but continued their

sohbets, some showed their approval and some others were demonstratively in opposition, resisting the reforms and keeping their chadors or kaftans. There were also some who initiated various uprisings against the new regime. The Baktashiyya which was abandoned already in 1826, had gained some kind of legality after Atatürk's visit to Hadji Baktash Veli's *tekke*, still there were some Baktashi *shaikhs* who were against the new republican regime and some others supporting it. The Malamatiyya had the least problem as they had always preferred not to show off their Sufi identity socially, and one Sufi *shaikh* even claimed to have influenced the form of the reforms (Kılıç 2009: 89-136). Kılıç asserts that the abolishment did not mean that Sufism has disappeared; rather, Sufi groups have carried on with their activities in some ways, privately, and have continued to have influence on the Muslim identity and culture of modern Turkey.

It should also be noted that there was already critique of the Ottoman regime as being too corrupted among some Sufis as early as the 17th century, by those such as Niyazi Mısrı (Terzioğlu 2002). On the other hand the *tekkes* were already seen as degenerated by the 18th century Kuşadalı İbrahim (Öztürk 1982). Both of these critics were influential Sufis.

The republic saw a liberalisation of religious movements in its history. When the Democrat Party came to power in 1950, religious communities gained some freedom and acceptance. Tauseef Ahmad Parry in his review of *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* by Hakan Yavuz summarises the argument of Yavuz, saying that;

Islamic movements have developed four sets of strategies – which gradually became four competing visions about the role of religion in Turkish society – in relation to changing circumstances. These social strategies chronologically are: a “spiritual ethical” (1925–1950); a “cultural” (1950–1970); a “political” (1970–present); and a “socioeconomic” Islamic movement (1983–present). (Yavuz 2003: 9 in Parry 2003).

Although this might apply to some branches of the Naqshbandiyya, many orders which have never been specifically interested in politics just retained their roles, which they considered to be mainly spiritual/ethical. According to an interview with the Qadiri *shaikh* Misbah

Erkmenkul²⁷, his father started *dhikr* ceremonies in the *dergah* in 1953 upon the wish of some governmental officials, and in 1956 the Jerrahi order reopened their *dergah*.

After the 1980 military coup, religious communities were tolerated as a part of a policy against communism, and with Özal's regime (1983-1989 as the Prime Minister and 1989-1993 as the President), though the law was not changed, the *tariqahs* began to reappear in the public space. Especially noticeable was a branch of the Naqshibandiyya –Iskenderpaşa Community- whose members became active in the political scene. The politicians Erbakan, Özal and Erdoğan who have been key members of the political establishment, are all affiliated with the community (Yavuz 2003 in Parry 2003). Although the process of February 28th, 1997 reintroduced some restrictions, with the AKP regime that came into power in 2002 some religious communities have become an established part of the government and of governmental institutions²⁸. The role of these communities in politics is a theme of heated discussion and a source of worry among secularists. The Naqshibandiyya with its sub-branches is known as one of the most widely disseminated *tariqahs* in Turkey beside the Qadiriyya and the Mawlawiyya. It is considered to have a strong orthodox bent and to be often affiliated with politics, in contrast to the more mystical and apolitical Qadiris or Mawlawis (S. Ayata 1991: 223-253).

Apart from these massive organisations, which are discussed especially in terms of their political power, there are many smaller groups of Sufism, whose membership numbers are counted not in millions, but in thousands, and which prefer to keep away from active participation in politics. The journalist Okan Konuralp counted twenty-one *tariqah* networks which are quite introverted and not transparent but nevertheless play an effective role in

²⁷ According to Kreiser (2004) *Shaikh* Misbah died in 1978 but I visited the *dergah* at various times and met him (1992-94), and the interview which is mentioned here was published in *Tempo* periodical in April 2007, (accessed 2 September 2011). <http://seyyahin.wordpress.com/2007/04/30/istanbul-tophanede-374-yildir-yasayan-gelenek-Qadiriler/>.

²⁸ Both the media and people working in governmental offices report this.

social life in Turkey²⁹, and it would not be wrong to assume that there are many more which have escaped the media's notice.

Theologian Halil Ibrahim Şimşek writes that many of the studies conducted about Sufism in Turkey today come from the Sufism Departments of Theology Faculties which were opened in 1992 and employ 70 academicians (stand in August 2011). Until that time Sufism was dealt with by Islamic Philosophy Departments and in the late Ottoman period also in *medreses*³⁰. These new Sufism departments of the faculties have produced over a hundred PhD theses, three hundred master's theses and have been publishing a yearly periodical "*Tasawwuf: İlmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*" – "Sufism: Scholarly and Academic Research Periodical" which started in 1999. These also can be considered as a sign of the popularity Sufism has gained in Turkey especially in the last two decades.

5.3 Anthropological Studies on Sufism in Turkey

The Sufi orders' reactions to modernity and the transformations they have undergone are the main points of discussion when dealing with Sufism in Turkey in existing sociological and anthropological studies. Because the numbers of studies on Sufism in Turkey in the field of anthropology are small, I have had to include unpublished theses in my review. As against this scarcity, the number of publications on the Fethullah Gülen Community is immense, although they are not anthropological, as they are politically and economically the most influential Turkish religion-based transnational organisation and have very effective organisations, schools, hostels, large numbers of members, including business entrepreneurs, academicians, sophisticated public relations and apparently great ambition. The Gülen Community competes for power in Turkey with other religion based organisations and is considered suspicious, especially among the secularists, because although they propagate themselves as not politically engaged but, instead, purely devoted to education and interreligious dialogue especially outside Turkey. Within Turkey they are being experienced as taking strategic roles in government and governmental organisations such as the police

²⁹ *Hürriyet*, 17 September 2006.

³⁰ Doc. Dr. Halil Ibrahim Şimşek: <http://www.halilibrahimsimsek.com/>, accessed 31 September 2011.

and the army, and they have also accumulated great economical and social power³¹. Although Gülen is at times presented as a “hidden Sufi”³² or a “modern-day Rumi”³³, I will exclude the community in my review as it falls outside of the scope of this study to go into such discussions. Moreover most of the studies are not based on ethnographic field research methods, and are about Fethullah Gülen himself taking his texts and acts as their point of departure which must be due to the lack of transparency in the community³⁴.

The examples here are chosen with the aim to give an idea of the variety of Sufi groups in Turkey, and the transformations they have gone through during the republican era. The Iskenderpaşa Community which is a Gümüşhanevi branch of the Khalidi sub-order of the Naqshbandi Sufi order, has various studies which enable me to discuss the community in the most detail. Two other examples are women dominated communities: Cemal Nur Sargut’s *Rifai community* is discussed in terms of “Western Sufism”, and *Mehmed Gönen Foundation*³⁵ is a charity organisation practicing Sufi rituals and creating private space for women. The last study to be reviewed in this chapter focuses on the *Galibi Order*. The reason for its inclusion here, although the research was conducted in a psychology department, is that the researcher used ethnographic and quantitative research methods.

³¹ According to the political scientist at the University of Utah Hakan Yavuz: “It is a political movement [...] and it has always been political. They think power is very important. They want to train an elitist class which will then turn Turkey into a centre of the religious world, Islamise the country” (quoted in a newspaper article by Alexandra Hudson <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2008/05/14/uk-turkey-religion-idUKL0939033920080514>. (accessed 11 September 2011))

³² Thomas Michel, (accessed 05 February 2011). <http://www.thomasmichel.us/gulen-movement.html>,

³³ A series conference speech, entitled ‘From Rumi to Fethullah Gülen’, held in May 2007 in the Netherlands.

³⁴ <http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Muslim-Networks-and-Movements-in-Western-Europe-Gulen-Movement.aspx>

³⁵ I could find only a review written on the book and won’t be able to discuss it in detail.

Brian Silverstein analyses the Iskenderpaşa Community in two of his articles (2007 and 2008). This is one of the most influential faith based organisations in Turkey, and its roots lie in Naqshbandi Sufism. According to Silverstein, the context in Turkey is marked by an acceptance of modernity “as an integral part of the status of the Turkish present” because it did not have a colonial experience (Silverstein 2007: 41). He seeks the meaning and practice of Sufism for the community and finds that the meaning is based on the constitution of a “virtuous self” that is compatible with but not overcome by modernity. The “virtuous self” is attained through *sohbet*, companionship-in-conversation. Silverstein states that as the community was going through a transformation caused by the application of modern techniques and practices –both because the leader moved to Australia and because the reach of the organisation has become quite wide-, the Sufi aspect which was based on face-to face encounter became eroded.

The theory he uses to analyse the community is built upon a conception of Talal Asad, where Islam is represented as a discursive tradition. In *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* Asad proposes an anthropological approach to Islam where it is; “a discursive tradition that connects variously with the formation of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledges” (Asad 1986: 7), where “Islamic discursive tradition” should be understood as “a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present” (ibid.: 14).

The community’s practice of Sufism has undergone transformations with the leader’s move to Australia and growing membership. The practice of Sufism in the Iskenderpaşa Community consists of the practice of *sohbet*³⁶, “a companionship-in-conversation” as translated by Silverstein which is a mark of the Naqshbandi Sufism according to the community. The group members gathered once a week after Sunday afternoon prayers to

³⁶ Charles Hirschkind translates *sohbet* as “ethical listening”. His context of ethical listening is not that of Sufi Muslims and he suggests it has held an important role in Islam from the beginning. It both serves as a means of learning the rules and procedures and “hone those affective-volitional dispositions that attune the heart to God’s word and incline the body toward moral conduct” which is very similar to the function of *sohbet* in the Iskender Pasha Community (2004: 131-132)

attend a highly structured *sohbet* “led by an authorized *vekil* stand-in for the *shaikh*” (Silverstein 2007: 42) –as we will see later this does not include all members. *Sohbets* have a fixed structure of reading some Hadith in Arabic, and presenting an interpretation of them in Turkish, followed by supplicatory prayers and *zikr*. Silverstein notes that the content of the *sohbets* was not specifically mystical, and the classical Sufi themes as known in the West were mentioned neither in the *sohbets* nor among the followers outside the *sohbets*. The Sufi interpretation of the community was that of an “ethical discipline” aimed at the formation of dispositions of “good” and “morality” and avoidance of “sin”. Not *fena* (self-annihilation) but disciplining of the *nafs*, the base self, to be able to perform “good” was the main concern and goal of the group as expressed by its followers. A *shaikh* was defined as an “upright, ‘mature’ guide to train and discipline the self” (ibid.: 45). As common in *tariqahs* they have had a *silsila*, chain of initiation. It is emphasised that the practice of *sohbet* was taken as a *sunnah* (an act of the prophet) by the followers, and Silverstein states it was important in conveying the sense of following a tradition. The love arising in the face-to-face relationship between the “seekers” and the “ethically mature” was considered to be crucial for the successful adaptation of the ethical disposition. The esoteric aspect of Sufism was based upon this relationship (ibid.: 41-45). The *shaikh* was consulted about such matters as how to manage the practical life in order to harmonise with the *sunnah* while remaining competitive in the modern world which is marked by liberal capitalism.

Silverstein writes: “Islam is for its practitioners, and others, a moral tradition, involving the ongoing elaboration of normative judgement about correct practice” and quotes from Asad that discussion, disagreement and dispute are part of the tradition (Silverstein 2008: 127). Yet his articles do not include any description of disputes or disagreements among the members or in the wider society except some annoyance expressed by some of the members at the departure of their leader Esad Coşan to live in Australia.

After the departure of Coşan, the face-to-face relationship shifted to radio lectures. Silverstein explains the effect of this shift from face-to-face *sohbet* to radio broadcast as one from “multileveled, ambiguous discipline into information; the context, reception, and function of the discourse are altered. The specifically ‘Sufi’ quality of the discourse as disciplinary practice is being transformed into generalised Islamic content” (ibid.: 141). This change of content is explained as there being “more emphasis now on ‘service’ to the community through informing, rather than on the old disciplinary functions of restructuring one’s dispositions” (ibid.: 139). He considers the effects of the radio dissemination followed by the Internet, both of which could be voluntarily turned on or off, as a sign of liberation and privatisation; “the temporal heterogeneity of discourses and practices and hence of the

subjects formed in and through them in Turkey suggests the kinds of forms pluralism has come to take in Turkey as well as in Europe” (ibid.: 142). Here he diverges from Asad for Asad suggests that heterogeneity has been a part of the tradition and not an effect of modern liberalism (Asad 1986: 15-16).

Silverstein writes that the formal institution of the community is a *vakif*, foundation, which is governed by a “*Fiqh*”, Islamic legal reasoning, committee in the leadership of Esad Coşan who himself was a professor of the Faculty of Theology in Ankara (Silverstein 2007: 136). This origin might have had some effects on the special interpretation and practice of Sufism in the community and would be worth investigating as Sufism was not integrated in the curriculum in the Faculties of Theology as a mystical-spiritual tradition but was dealt with under Islamic philosophy until 1992 (Şimşek³⁷). A description of the changes the community went through when the *shaikhhood* was taken over from the former *shaikh* Zahit Kotku by Coşan in 1980 would also be an important help to understand the transformations of the community.

Although Silverstein’s study is rich with self-descriptions of the informants, it has a major omission. It seems to represent only one discourse of the community and lacks the combating discussions of various parties in the group. This exclusion represents the community as a monolithic block which does not seem to have been the case. Regarding the fact that the former leader of the group Zahit Kotku (1897-1980) acted as the spiritual guide to three influential politicians Erbakan, Özal and Erdoğan (Yavuz 2003) –although he advised his followers to stay away from politics (Kılıç 2009: 130)- a discussion of the community’s ambiguity towards politics, and the role they play in national economy and in national identity building would bring much insight to the discussion concerning the capacity of the community to combine the elements of religion, economics, politics and the social sphere. It would probably also reveal other discourses in the community which seem to be based on a conflict between tradition and modernity.

³⁷ Doc. Dr. Halil Ibrahim Şimşek: <http://www.halilibrahimsimsek.com/> (accessed 31 September 2011).

Emin Yaşar Demirci's unpublished PhD thesis *Modernisation, Religion and Politics in Turkey: The Case of Iskenderpaşa Community* (Demirci 1996) highlights the function of membership in the community and emphasises its national identity building mission: "The community operates in highly modernised circumstances and performs social, cultural, economic and political functions conducive to national integration" (ibid.: 6). According to Demirci the point of attention in the community is how to adapt to modernism without violating Sufi principles, an interpretation which is also emphasised by Silverstein. He states that the common ground for all members of the group has been the leading of a modest and simple life. Noting a conflict, he adds that this ideal has become difficult to sustain with the entrance of the rising middle class into the *tariqah* (ibid.: 236). The community has developed the concept of "organic development" which means a development rising out of needs, but not out of excessive demands. Accordingly this produced the concepts of "responsible producer", "responsible consumer", "equalisation of consumption levels", and building an "ideal market", which became the ideals of the community (ibid.: 216). Charitable organisations, private schools and health centres are encouraged as a way to balance social-economical inequalities. What the ideal attitudes maybe in the adaptation to various aspects of modernity are discussed in the periodicals of the community which are written by educated opinion builders. Demirci points to the significance of the *shaikh* as the embodiment of the ideal: "Only an enlightened man could act as a responsible producer and consumer and change the course of economy" (ibid.: 217).

Weismann presents Naqshi Sufism as a compatible partner for the modern West against the force of Islamicism, in an article in which he examines four Naqshbandi groups. He defines the Naqshbandiyya as the brotherhood which is "the most capable of adapting to the modern situation" at present (Weismann 2006: 223), and reminds readers of the order's attempts "to set the empire on the course of modernisation in the face of rising Western menace" as a support to this idea (ibid.: 224). The four Naqshbandi groups he studies are the Iskenderpaşa Community in Istanbul, the Abu al-Nur Foundation in Damascus, the ideologist Sa'id Hawwa in Syria, and the Haqqaniyya, a transnational organisation with roots in Turkey and new age tendencies. They were all able to transform their structures "including educational societies, popular associations, economic enterprises and political parties" to their various organisations (ibid.: 221-236). Based upon his research, he claims that the Naqshbandiyya is

the most effective order against both the modern nation state which is suppressive of Sufism and also Islamic fundamentalism which is a modern phenomenon. He adds that these two factors caused the other more quietist *tariqahs* to decline or to disappear while Naqshbandis grew (ibid.: 222)³⁸. Such generalisations are problematic as, for example in the context of Turkey there are also some quite conservative Naqshi groups such as the Ismail Paşa and the Menzil groups, although these are really declining, the concept of being one of the “more quietist *tariqahs*” would not be apt for them.

Azize Aslihan Akman (2007) conducted her research among Cemal Nur Sargut’s group in Istanbul. In her study we witness another group which also broadens its membership, though in other ways than the Iskenderpaşa Community. Sargut has a family tradition in the group, her mother being a close disciple of Kenan Rifai. Rifai was the *shaiikh* of the Rufai order in Istanbul and was known for his positive acceptance of the abolition of *tekkes* arguing that it would not harm Sufism’s aim of cultivating spirituality whose space is the heart and not the *tekke*. Sargut is also a defender of secularism and considers it the ideal regime for living *tasawwuf* (ibid.: 46-47). After Rifai’s death Semiha Ayverdi, who is an author, was the leader of the group which was small, elitist and closed. After her death the group was divided into two, and now they only meet at the annual commemoration of Kenan Rifai’s death. The first group has championed remaining only for themselves and the other for opening to the public, and Sargut is a defender of this second approach. Although Sargut’s group seems quite open to the public there is also a closed group within it which is the *ihvan*, the core group, most of whom having been affiliated with the group since their childhood or at least for three years, and are considered advanced in Sufism. They have their separate *sohbets* where newcomers cannot take part. Sargut’s mother is also a member of the *ihvan* and leads *sohbets*. Although Akman cannot tell much about this core group as she has not been allowed to attend their meetings³⁹, it sounds as though there is not much hierarchy in

³⁸ The historian Weismann in his book on the history of the Naqshbandi Sufism (2007), which is based on a rich primary literature, demonstrates this adaptability of the order. This must be an important factor in its spread to many parts of the world and throughout the years.

³⁹ Although this seems to be due to the lack of rapport between the researcher and the group. Akman writes that there was another researcher from abroad doing her PhD and she was allowed in these

the *ihvan*. Both public and *ihvan sohbet* circles are held in the homes of the members, most of whom are from educated middle or upper classes. Sargut organises lectures and discussions on Sufism based on classical Sufi texts and educates young people. She has followers among both men and women, there is no segregation and none of the women cover their heads. She is also a writer of Sufi literature, appears on television, and attends conferences both inside and outside Turkey. The community's formal institution is "Turkish Women's Cultural Association- *Türkkad*" which was founded at the time of Ayverdi.

Akman states that the group displays considerable similarities with the so-called "Western Sufism" which is considered to be a repackaging of Sufism for the Westerners. "Western Sufism" has such features as egalitarianism, individualism, and universalism; it prioritizes spirituality over religion and attracts Westerners as opposed to the "traditional Sufi movements" which appeal to Muslims in the diaspora (Hammer 2004 in *ibid.*: 78). Akman notes that Sargut's group claims to be based on Islamic premises but to combine them with universalism (*ibid.*: 79) which would fit into the concept of "perennial" movements. These perennial movements emphasise the unity of religions and take more of a "universal wisdom approach to spirituality" (Hermansen 2000: 160 in *ibid.*: 79). According to Hermansen these movements in America are also marked by their fondness for public performance such as Sufi dancing, extensive use of the media, and lectures, seminars and conferences (Hermansen 2004: 45 in *ibid.*: 79). Such activities are also practiced by *Türkkad*, the group's official body, with a strong emphasis on academic quality (*ibid.*: 84).

Akman concludes that the group is perennial and combines the features of Western Sufism with its above mentioned activities and traditional Sufism with its master/disciple relationship and in its critique of the values of modern society which emphasise individuality. Against individuality, the group members desire to subordinate themselves to their *murshid*, the spiritual teacher, and to the Sufi path and are keen on eliminating "worldly passions" (*ibid.*: 132-137). Akman's study shows a maturity well beyond the other MA

meetings; and reports that she attracted some suspicion from the members because she covered her head, and it was once awkward when she put a book of Rumi on the floor and a member picked it up as it was considered as a sign of lack of respect –it is indeed a tradition in Turkey that for example the Koran is put to the highest shelves as a sign of respect.

thesis I have read, especially in her discussion of theories and how they relate to her findings.

Catharina Raudvere's book *The Book and the Roses: Sufi Women, Visibility and Zikir in Contemporary Istanbul* (2003) presents a group of women in Istanbul who have founded the "Sire Mehmed of Gönen Foundation for Learning and Charity" after the death of their *shaikh* Mehmet of Gönen in 1995. They consider themselves to be a part of the Sufi tradition and hold *zikr* rituals. According to the review of Elisabeth Bishop (2005), the foundation has an exclusively female membership, has a pastry shop and accepts donations to finance its activities; it organises trips to various places as well as participation in the Pilgrimage which would otherwise be impossible for women without manly accompany. The women have managed to create a private space where they can unite piety and politics, and Raudvere claims the politics lie therein that the women regard themselves as an Islamic diaspora in the secular Kemalist state (Raudvere in the review of Bishop 2005).

Ömer Recep Aras (1997) conducted his field-research in the *Galibi Dergah* of which he is a member. The group's centre is in Ankara and has branches in other cities. Its *shaikh* Galib Kuşçuoğlu branched out of the Qadiri-Rufai order in 1993 after he had a dream, and now the order is named after him. Kuşçuoğlu took the post from his *shaikh* in 1968, at which time there were very few disciples and the meetings were held in their homes. When there were more followers they began to meet at a carpentry workshop, and representatives of the *shaikh* were assigned for different districts of Ankara. By the end of the 1970s they reached greater numbers and built their *dergah* by a mosque and some disciples and the *shaikh* also built their houses around the *dergah*. According to Aras it is the first order-based settlement in Ankara after the republic where celebrations, collective fast breaking and weekly *dhikr* sessions are held and visitors such as media correspondents are accepted (ibid.: 54⁴⁰). According to Aras's questionnaire, which was distributed among 130 members of the group, the majority have spent most of their lives in metropolises, one fourth are university graduates, another fourth have primary school education, and four percent went to *Imam-*

⁴⁰ Page numbers in this thesis are not reliable because the copy was not PDF formatted and I had to delete long gaps in the paper.

Hatip Schools (secondary schools with a focus of Islamic studies); but among their children this figure rises to 10%, and attendance at Koran courses is 21% (ibid.: 67).

Aras describes *tasawwuf* as the intention to live the “original” Islam, i.e. as it was lived in the “Apostolic Age (*Asr-i Saadet* – Age of Excellence)” according to the *shaikh*, and differentiates mystical Islam from the rest as “having the sight of truth” (ibid.: 55). The organisational goal of the *dergah* is defined by the *shaikh* as “moral and spiritual purification and transformation of its members” (ibid.: 55). The *Shaikh* is “the only authority and decision-maker” and the “ultimate referent as model and mediator in cases of conflict”. There is a hierarchy of organizational statuses delegated by the *Shaikh*, which goes, top-down, *Shaikh*, *Khalifah*, *Nuqabas*, *Naibs*, *Chawushs*, and *Murids* (ibid.: 56). Holding identical collective *dhikr* sessions in all the branches is given great importance and “nobody is allowed to deviate from these standardized procedures”, including *khalifah* (ibid.: 56). There is a strict separation of men and women, and women cannot attain a higher status than *chawush* (ibid.: 57). Joining the *dergah* means “total and unconditional commitment, surrender, and obedience to the *shaikh*” (ibid.: 86). The *shaikh* is said to approve with the principles of the republican state (ibid.: 66) although he doesn’t approve with the egalitarian principles of the republic. After analysing the hierarchical structure and the roles distributed among various positions, Aras concludes that “differences between occupants of high and low status in the Galibi Dergah are similar to those reported for secular organizations” except for the “extremely high level of emotional commitment” among the members (ibid.: 88). The organisation on which Aras made his research shows characteristics of the Werbner’s “regional cult” (2003) which is discussed in the theory section of this thesis.

5.4 Conclusion

Although Sufism might have been in decline to some extent after the abandonment of its institutions in Turkey, it has continued to play an important role in the religiosity of the people and apparently shows a rising tendency. This does not count only for the Naqshbandiyya as Weismann suggests but also for the quietist ones such as the *Qadiris*, the *Jerrahis* or the *Rifais*. In this section I have only focused on Sunni Islam in Turkey although there are also other branches of Islam, such as the Alawites, which have affiliations with Sufism. A discussion that includes all branches of Islam is beyond the limits of this research, but as I will report in my fieldwork, there are Alawites among Dede’s followers.

Silverstein’s conclusion that “Sufism in Turkey” does not have problems with modernity as it does in other parts of the world that have a colonial history seems to be much too generalised and is not supported by the data he presents. Rather it seems that various

positions are taken towards modernity, as has been the case with the abandonment of *tariqahs* (Kılıç 2009). It can also be learned from Akman's thesis (2007) that even among the members of the quite "Western" group she studied; there is a critique of some aspects of modernity.

One difficulty encountered when dealing with Sufism is considered to be the differences between the highly abstract and intellectual Sufi literature on one hand and on the other the highly ritualistic shrine and *pir* tradition which is marked by looking for solutions to practical problems such as illnesses, achieving success and partnership problems. Rozeznal writes; "Typically, Sufism is characterized as one of three things: an abstract mystical philosophy inscribed in "classical" texts; a thinly veiled political ideology; or an ossified relic, a once dynamic tradition now devolved into popular tomb cults" (Rozeznal 2009: 13) which is defined as the "Sufi Saint Cult" by Werbner and Basu (2003). In spite of this categorisation many Sufi groupings combine both "popular" and "non-popular" aspects and also have a political position even if not an ideology⁴¹, and Rozeznal's own description of the Chishti Sabiri Sufi Order in Pakistan indeed displays such combinations (2007). The formation which is the object of my research also entails "popular" as well as "non-popular" aspects of "classical" texts, and has a political position as will be shown.

⁴¹ For further reading: Resul Ay, 2008, *Anadolu'da Derviş ve Toplum:13-15. Yüzyıllar*, Kitap Yayınevi, İstanbul.

CHAPTER 6

A SHORT HISTORY OF SUFISM, ITS CONCEPTS AND THE NAQSHBANDIYYA

6.1 Introduction

This chapter of the thesis seeks to explore the history of Sufism in order to understand the Sufi formation under research, both in terms of its non-institutionalisation and its main concepts which still build the basis of discussions and perceptions. The particularity of the formation at hand is the absence of any apparent sign that would indicate its followers as members of a Sufi tradition. Yet, it becomes evident in the interviews that Sufism is the focus of their life. Dede, the leader of the Sufi formation, comes from the Naqshbandi tradition, but does not show the characteristics of the many other *shaikhs* from the tradition depicted in contemporary anthropological, sociological literature. These obvious differences between literature and observed practices called for a wider study of the literature, including history of Sufism, in order to contextualise the formation and to show how far it represents a modern development and how far these practices are an integrated aspect of the tradition. Studying the history of Sufism and especially Naqshbandi Sufism was fruitful in clarifying some aspects of the phenomenon of Dede's formation.

Some of the still consistent debates among various groups in the Islamic tradition will be elucidated such as the “philosophers”, “orthodox dogmatists”, as well as the various schools of Sufism. Talal Asad (1989) says that discussion has always been a part of the tradition, which arose out of the multiplicity of ideas and approaches. It will delineate some basic approaches within Islam towards knowledge acquisition and relation with God, as well as the perception of time among Sufis as these demarcate the particularity of the Sufi understanding.

Sufism, as individualistic and experiential as it is, entails many points of views. There were compiling attempts to present a coalesced picture in the 10th century when many spiritual teachers or figures had been gathered under the roof of Sufism and commonalities were underlined. The concepts that were raised in the formative periods until the 15th century build the basis of Sufism and the common base of knowledge of my informants. It must be kept in mind that although there is a Sufi jargon, the concepts alone do not say everything about

their perception in various contexts and by various individuals. How these concepts are dealt with will be explained in the description of the fieldsite of this study. Sufis agree mainly on the sources and methods of knowledge acquisition and on the aim, which is a specific disposition: closeness with God. Yet, there are simultaneously differences in aspects of the doctrine. Here the relationship of Sufism to history and the present, its organisation and relations with its historical contexts will be discussed.

There are also clues in the history relating to the question whether Sufism is an urban and intellectual or a popular and rural phenomenon which occupied the anthropology of Sufism especially in the previous generation (Geertz 1968 and Gellner 1981). We see that some movements were widespread in the rural areas and mixed with the local culture; such as the Yasawiyya, and others were urban and intellectual such as the Naqshbandiyya, but it is remarkable that the founders of both ways had their education from the same Sufi teacher. Yet a general tendency in Sufism has been a greater mixing with the local cultures than occurs with more rational normative traditions.

In this chapter another focus of attention will be the Sufis' attitudes towards institutionalisation, ritual, visibility and integration in the society. The history of Sufism evidences its institutionalisation as a historical process. Along with the institutionalisation there was critique to it by the Malamatiyya and the early Naqshbandiyya. The Naqshbandiya will be presented in more detail but the Malamatiyya is also given some space because of its similarities in approaches towards institutionalisation and avoidance of rituals and any other visible sign of adherence to a Sufi group. The historian Hamid Algar writes: "The Naqshbandi path can be regarded as a crystallization of the particular traditions of Khurasanian Sufism, the concepts of the original Malamatiyya playing an especially important role" (Algar 1991: 1).

One last but important point which will be given attention to in this section is two different approaches to history. The historical sources I use to develop my arguments are such that make use of Sufi self-descriptions as point of departure, an approach which I also opted for in the discussion of the theory of anthropology. Towards the end of the chapter an example of another type is included, where the social theory is given precedence, releasing very different results about Sufism.

6.2 Introduction to the Research Field

This formation does not have a formal structure and Dede's teaching and practices bear rich mystical and spiritual aspects combined with social responsibility. An assumption might be

that this formation was at least partly dictated by the laws of the Republic which prohibited the Sufi institutions. Another assumption might be the modern paradigm which places religion in the private sphere and is suspicious of any interest in Islam, particularly in the well-educated and well off milieu of many of my informants. But there were no findings that would support the first assumption. On the contrary it was emphasised by various informants that Dede showed a clear approval of and respect towards the Republican laws. The second assumption was partly justified for my informants, still not relevant for the other milieus in the formation which are not interviewed for this study. There was critique of Dede's style from various circles: One informant for example told me that a group of traditionalists thought that he departed from the path of the Naqshbandiyya and took the path of Ibn Arabi⁴² and left Dede. Another informant told me that a friend looking for guidance had preferred Gülen's organisation because for him some of Dede's followers were too marginal, having "suspicious" backgrounds such as drug abuse and use of alcohol⁴³. Finally another reported that a *shaikh* had criticised that Dede "had gathered too many women in his circle"⁴⁴.

Naqshibandi Sufism is known for its political engagement, its activity in the social mobilisation of Muslims, its orthodox bent, discipline, and formal institutions. Some of its *tariqah* orders were replaced by foundations in the Republic –of which we saw an example in the Iskenderpaşa Cemaat in chapter five. It is also argued that it lacks Sufism's esoteric aspect. This is the case especially in Turkey, as is expressed by Şerif Mardin:

If Sufi means mystic, Islamic mysticism, whether ecstatic, spiritual, poetic or cosmic, whether induced by rules of mortification or framed by theosophical speculation, does [sic.] not fit well with the sober, inwoven, inwrought, disciplined spiritual practices of this order, which also have had a major role to play in its viability. (Mardin 1991: 123)

Dede neither emphasised his Naqshi origin, nor denied it; he said he was from the Samini branch (Mahmudi Samini d. 1895) of the Naqshbandiyya. This branch has apparently

⁴² Interview with Sadık on 14 August 2010.

⁴³ Interview with Berrak on 17 December 2010.

⁴⁴ Interview with Ruşen on 5 November 2010.

remained hidden from the sociological, anthropological and historical literature because the only sources I was able to detect were either informal or local publications⁴⁵, which will be described in the section about his spiritual roots. Dede said it would be apt to call this formation the *Muhammadiyya University*: “We asked Efendi⁴⁶ what we should say to the people who ask what this is. He said ‘you can say it is the ‘Muhammadiyya University’”⁴⁷. When we study the history, we come across with the concept of *Tariqah-i Muhammadiyya* first used by Ahmad Sirhindi (known as Imam Rabbani in Turkey) (1563-1624) who was one of the most prominent *shaikhs* of the Naqshbandiyya –and he is included in the spiritual pedigree of Dede. It then meant a return to the teaching of the prophet which included both the spiritual and socio- political spheres (Schimmel 2011: 387).

In one of Dede’s books *Ruh ve Beden* (The Spirit and The Body) there is an article entitled: *Muhammediyet Üniversitesi* (Muhammadiyya University) that says that this university is the path of the prophet and that it aims to prove the doctrines of faith as they are given in the Koran with a method which is based on reason and transmission, and Sufism is a religious science dealing with the philosophy of divinity (Kayhan, no date: 106). An informant told me that once Dede was asked by a visitor, who seemed to be suspicious of Sufism, what Sufism was, he answered that it was one of the characteristics of Hz Muhammad⁴⁸. The same informant also told that Dede said Muhammadiyya meant giving. And the article continues, the *madrasas*, the religious schools, are distinguished from the *tekkes*, the dervish lodges, and a dervish deals with his own rescue while the learned (*alim*) deal with everybody in the

⁴⁵ These sources include WebPages, and books that are published in the geographic area and disseminated among the followers.

⁴⁶ This is a title in Turkish which is polite and respectful. Dede signed the texts he distributed “Dedeniz” which means your grandfather and emphasises an intimate informal relationship based on love. Especially after his death most of the people said “Efendi” when they talked about him. I chose to address him as Dede in this thesis but keep the informants’ own address forms when I quote from them.

⁴⁷ In an informal meeting with some friends in 2009.

⁴⁸ Interview with Sumru on the 19 October 2010.

society (ibid.: 108). Another informant reported that she wanted to be taught according to one tradition:

I asked Efendi what our *tariqah*⁴⁹ was. Our *tariqah* is the Koran. He said this was his *tariqah*. ‘I cannot give you a *tariqah*. Why do you desire to satisfy yourself with just one piece of the cake asking for a *tariqah*? (There was a piece of round cake on the table which I had brought). Take the whole, he said.⁵⁰

And his books are indeed collections of texts from various Sufis, and methods and rules of various *tariqahs* –I will go into more detail about how the books were composed and what their contents are later. Dede defined his aim for these books as:

Islam and Sufism is an endless garden of wisdom. There are flowers and fruit there for all to enjoy. Everybody has different taste, yet this garden is so vast and so rich in variety that everybody will find something right for them in it. We gathered a bouquet, a basket from this garden for you, although it might not be exactly what you desired, we tried to give something that you would feel close to. Our wish is for your improvement in knowledge and wisdom, what a delight for us if we are able to contribute to it⁵¹. (Kayhan 2009: back cover)

These statements could be considered sufficient to explain the phenomenon which makes his approach idiosyncratic in the field of Sufism but a study in the history proves that there are other examples of such an approach. The history of the early Naqshbandiyya revealed that his style could be categorised as the “ecumenical Naqshbandiyya” (Weismann 2007), as we will see below.

6.3 Debates about the Faculties of Knowledge Acquisition, and Access to God

There are three main approaches in the Islamic context to the union of man with God, and to the exegesis of the Koran and the Hadith. The philosophical approach departs from reasoning and suggests that, while the essence of God is transcendent and beyond human

⁴⁹ It should be kept in mind that *tariqah* means the path and also refers to the institutionalised orders of Sufism which were named after the founding figures, mostly after their deaths.

⁵⁰ Interview with Meryem on 14 November 2010, in the Hadji Ahmet Kayhan mosque.

⁵¹ Translation by the researcher and Amy Sevil.

reach, the attributes of God can be understood, and the doctrines have a logical order. Orthodox dogmatism takes the literal meaning of the scriptures as its point of departure and provides norms, rejecting the idea of any union with God. Sufism does not reject these two approaches but attests that they are restricted in which they rely wholly on reasoning. It departs from the idea that the creation is continuous and entails paradoxes which a rational mind could not resolve. For Sufis uniting with God is within the human capacity through intuition and God's blessing for which they bring proof from the Koran⁵².

In the intellectual history of Islam, philosophy and religion have been intertwined; it is not uncommon to find Sufism being called Islamic philosophy. On the other hand both philosophers and Sufis have often felt an urge to differentiate themselves from each other. In the Sufi literature the most famous figure is Ghazzali, who addresses this issue after having studied philosophy thoroughly. He notes that reasoning, which is the faculty the philosophers use, cannot penetrate into the knowledge with which Sufism deals. This kind of knowledge calls for another faculty which is called *qalb*, the heart of the mind as Dom Sylvester Houédard (1990) translates it. Aziz Esmail and Azim Nanji (2010) in their article *Philosophy in the Islamic Context* explain the similarity and distinction between philosophy and religion from the point of view of philosophers in the Islamic context: Both religion's and philosophy's aim is "true knowledge", and "virtuous conduct in the world" which has an ontological reality, and will bring "happiness" where happiness is understood as an effect of the perfection of the soul. They argue that according to the philosophers there are two different modes in advancing towards this goal: philosophy through demonstrative reasoning and religion through the faculty of imagination. Yet, imagination does not exclude intellect and is but distinct from fancy. Imaginative knowledge lends itself to symbolic expression and is derived from cosmic "Active Intellect" (in Sufism it is called *küllî aql* and is attributed to the archangel Gabriel, who brings revelation). The intellectual faculty in man

⁵² Koran72: 26, 27: "He [alone] knows that which is beyond the reach of a created being's perception, and to none does He disclose aught of the mysteries of His Own unfathomable knowledge, unless it be to an apostle whom He has been pleased to elect [there for]: and then He sends forth [the forces of heaven] to watch over him in whatever lies open before him and in what is beyond his ken" (translation by Muhammad Asad).

(*cüzi aql*⁵³) on the other hand is “available to any maximally developed human mind and free of such supernatural mystery as would preclude giving a rational account of it” (ibid.). In this way Islamic philosophy acknowledged a role for non-rational modes of knowledge and perception, and, itself being meta-religious and based on reason, held the non-rational modes “amenable, ultimately, to rational explanation” (ibid.: 72, 73).

The religious discipline called *kalam* (translated as discourse or theology) dealt with rationalisation of the revelation and had important impacts on philosophy. The rationalists predicted a natural order accessible to human reason, and claimed the essence of God, which was inaccessible, was distinct from his attributes as the attributes were anthropomorphic. It is also necessary to note that for the Sufis *Insan-ı Kamil*, the Completed or Perfect Human Being, is the manifestation of the cosmic essence or reality of Muhammad and unites the One and the many (Morewedge 1971: 468).

Sufism is itself based on the idea that there are multiple points of view towards the “Real”, though in itself immutable. The perception changes according to the perceiver’s spiritual level or from what level of spiritual experience it is revealed and through which attributes the Real is witnessed. A student of Sufism is aware of the fact that s/he understands something different by the “reality” than her/his teacher does. *Rab* which can be translated as the personal God has attributes which become manifest through oneself. The *Rab* is attained when one goes beyond the conditioned and constructed self. According to his/her *Rab* one person can for example emphasise the love and another the knowledge. The infinity of God implies the infinity of creation, and the infinity of viewpoints. In terms of variety of manifestations the highest level is considered to become someone without attributes or empty of attributes, who can then embrace all attributes and manifestations (Benaissa 2005). As we will see in the field description, this is the level which is attributed to Dede by my informants because he was extraordinarily inclusive, and not judgemental. This basic understanding of plurality enables many Sufis to embrace multiplicity and to apparently go against normativity. This makes it difficult to utter anything absolute about Sufism and its doctrine.

⁵³ These concepts in brackets are my insertion into the text of these authors.

Sufis interpret the Koran according to their “unveiling” or vision and believe that the text has several layers of meanings, from *zahiri*, outer or literal to *batini*, inward or spiritual, and its interpretation will differ depending on the level from which it is interpreted. They mostly include in their books several of these interpretations which can be very different from each other. Some of the Hadith (Prophet’s saying) which are referred to by Sufis may not be points of attention in other traditions, or may even be refuted by these other traditions. One such is “God was a hidden treasure that was not known so He loved to be known. Hence He created the worlds” (italic added) which is an essential Hadith among Sufis and is considered to be in accordance with the Koran where God is represented as both *zahir*, seen, and *batin*, unseen: “He is the First and the Last, and the Outward as well as the Inward” (Koran 57: 3⁵⁴). The extra-Koranic “holy utterances”, *Hadith-i Qudsi*, of the prophet have the same value as the Koranic verses according to the Sufis (Burckhardt 2008: 31). God is represented in the Koran both as transcendent, incomparable, ineffable, and the almighty other, and as similar, immanent and near. He is both *zahir* and *batin*: The transcendence is the base of the negative or apophatic theology *tanzih*, and the immanence is part of *tashbih*. As explained by Ibn Arabi, *Tanzih* emphasises the indescribability, the impossibility of knowledge of God while *tashbih* leads to finding him in oneself and everywhere: “We are closer to him than his neck-vein” (Koran 50: 16), and “Whithersoever you turn, there is the face of God” (Koran 2: 12). Sufi teaching aims at cultivating a disposition where both of these aspects are perceived at the same time which is called “seeing the unity in the multiplicity”, and ecstatic states exist when the consciousness of multiplicity disappears.

The idea of *tanzih* and *tashbih* is also related to the *aql* the reason, and *qalb* the heart or heart of the mind. *Aql* is found lacking of capacity to know God because it delimits while God is not delimited. But *qalb* is open to fluctuation and transmutation, i.e. unstable, as is God himself in his manifestations, for he changes all the time. Chittick explains this theme which has a special place in the thought of Ibn Arabi: “One of the attributes of time is transmutation and fluctuation, and God is Time” (Chittick 1989: 107) according to a Hadith. So the *qalb* can adapt to these changes and can know God while “Reason strives to define and delimit God, but that is impossible”. He adds: “The heart frees God from all constraints and absolves

⁵⁴ Koran translations are by Muhammad Asad.

him of all limitations. The heart alone is able to perceive God's disclosures through the faculty of imagination" (ibid.: 107). So *tanzih* alone is a work of *aql*. Ibn Arabi argues that God's nondelimitedness necessitates the possibility that He can delimit Himself, which He does in His self-disclosure and self-transmutation (ibid.: 109).

6.4 History and Metahistory

In an introduction to the history of Sufism one should include that temporality in the Sufi tradition is not linear but multi-dimensional. Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (1994), in an article exploring temporality in the Sufi *Qawwali*, the devotional music of South Asia, notes that "The musical idiom [...] acts as a catalyst for the separate, yet simultaneous apprehension of different kinds of time into a synthesis". Furthermore, it resonates with an "ideology of time that is frankly homocentric" (ibid.: 526). It seems not only the music but also the poems, anecdotes, textbooks –the Koran being the best example– are all experienced in fresh immediacy and can have an effect similar to that of a piece of music. This nonlinear perception of time invites the argument of the metahistoricity of Sufism which many of its concepts are related to, and calls for a universal symbolic reality (though according to the Sufis this world is the symbolization, the "token" of the other, yet this does not implicate that it has lesser value). Henri Corbin in his *History of Islamic Philosophy* suggests that:

The religious consciousness of Islam is meta-historical [because] philosophical thought in Islam moves in two counter yet complementary directions: issuing from the Origin, and returning to the Origin, issue and return both taking place in a vertical dimension. Forms are thought of as being in space rather than in time. [...] evolving in a horizontal and rectilinear direction. [...] From this axis stem the meanings of the divine Revelations, each of these *meanings* corresponding to a spiritual hierarchy, to a level of the universe that issues from the threshold of metahistory. Thought can move freely, unhindered by the prohibitions of a dogmatic authority. (Corbin 1964: 4, 5)

Titus Burckhardt writes, based on the meaning given to *Surat al-Qadr* (Koran 97) by the Sufis, that "the Koran 'descended' as a whole during the 'night of predestination' as an undifferentiated state of Divine knowledge and was 'fixed', not in the mind of the Prophet, but in his body" (Burckhardt 2008: 33). This was the cosmic potentiality which would manifest itself or be "read" according to the given circumstances. In the same way Sufis in the face of the Koran and the Hadith reach at this undifferentiated knowledge which includes all the knowledge, and they read it according to their time and circumstances. Accordingly it is emphasised that the Koran, coming from this knowledge, entails all knowledge or is an intermediary to the knowledge. When the self dissolves or is detached from its historical, contextual construct, it can find itself on the metahistorical plane. In this frame of mind the undifferentiated knowledge is "not of the world" whereas time and many manifestations are

“of the world”. Both are from the Real, *Haq* or aspects of the Real; “not of the world” being *batin*, the unseen, and the world being *zahir*, the seen or the phenomenal. The Koran is also understood in the same manner when its “inner meaning” is considered by the Sufis. The “inner meaning” is its reality *hakikat*. One of Dede’s books *Ruh ve Beden* (The Soul/Nafs and Body) says that the books (referring to the holy books) with their form are *La ilahe* (not God), and with their Reality they are *illallah* (but God) (Kayhan no date: 214). The form becomes an idol when Reality is attached to it. In other words when one signifier is attached to one signified, the signifier becomes idolised, for the signified should be free of being attached to only one signifier. In that, Sufis see God i.e. His attributes in all His manifestations. It is therefore an essential practice of the followers of Dede to repeat and meditate on the attributes or names of God which are known as the ninety nine (essential) names of God, and which are the archetypes of the creation. This practice is called *dhikr*. Here we should also note that the creation according to Sufis was not sometime in the past but is a continuous flow, or God perpetually manifesting himself, which is the reason why the knowledge has no end –which also means no satiety.

In the same manner, the concept of *Nur-u Muhammad*, the light of Muhammad or the reality of Muhammad, refers to Muhammad not as an historical figure but to a cosmic entity, and is based on a Hadith which says that the first creation was the light of Muhammad and everything else was created out of it. A Sufi following this light travels to the origin. The historian Karamustafa suggests that Tustari (d. 896) was the first to conceptualise it (Karamustafa 2007: 42), and Schimmel writes that Hallaj (d. 922) also operated with the concept and it was Ibn Arabi who systematised it (Schimmel 2011: 243).

Accordingly Sufi *silsilas* start with the Prophet Muhammad who is followed by either Abu Baqr (the first *khalif*) or Ali (the Prophet’s son in law and the fourth *khalif*). In *Irfan Okulunda Oku* (Study in the School of Wisdom), the poem quoted below is said to have been one of the first examples of Sufi poetry and was attributed to Hz. Ali:

Your remedy is in yourself but you don’t know it,
You are your own affliction, but you don’t see it.
You are that Mighty Book,
What you seek is not out there,
It is in you but you don’t contemplate.

You are inscribed with letters that seem hidden, yet are apparent
You think you are an insignificant being, a small fault
Still the Macrocosmos is folded up in you.⁵⁵ (Kayhan 2009: 238)

6.5 The Rise of Sufism

Leonard Lewisohn describes mysticism as an integral element of Koranic studies and that it enjoyed a high respect during the High Caliphal Period (c. 692-945), and adds: “But this union of jurisprudence and Sufism was unfortunately short-lived –fanatical exotericism being a better ideology for blood-thirsty empire-builders than tolerant mysticism of an anti-sectarian and ecumenical nature” (Lewisohn 1999: 20). Already in the ninth century there was a cleft between “dogmatic clericalism” and Sufism or an exoteric/esoteric controversy which led to persecutions of the many Sufis then and afterwards. Many Sufis were bold in their critique of rationalists and traditionalist such as Bayazid Bistami (d. 875) who said about the traditionalists: “dead people narrating from the dead” (ibid.: 19) as against himself who took the knowledge from “the Living who does not die”. It can also be deduced from the poem above that Sufis turned their gaze to themselves to find the reality, *hakikat*, and to create an inner disposition able to realise the potential of the human being as hinted in the Koran and the Hadith.

Karamustafa (2007) mentions Rabi’a of Basra as the first Sufi who taught the “doctrine of Pure Love, the disinterested love of God for His own sake alone”, and who combined it with the “doctrine of *kashf*” (unveiling or insight). Through activation of “Pure Love” human subjectivity would be erased, and through *kashf* knowledge would be attained through immediate finding or seeing. Reasoning was not an instrument to this kind of knowledge rather it had the function of “exposing the tricks of the lower self or *nafs*”⁵⁶ through

⁵⁵ In this thesis all translations from Turkish into English are by the researcher unless otherwise stated.

⁵⁶ *Nafs* which is translated as soul or self has seven stages: The Commanding Self (*nafs al-ammara*), The Blaming Self (*nafs al-lawwama*), The Inspired Self (*nafs al-mulhimah*), The Satisfied Self (*nafs al-mutmainnah*), The Consenting Self (*nafs al-radiyah*), The Consent-Given Self (*nafs al-mardiyyah*), The Purified Self (*nafs al-safiyah*). When it is used alone as *nafs* as here, the first stage is meant.

intellectual meditation on the Koran and the Sunnah, and thus orienting the heart to God” (Karamustafa 2007: 4, 5).

The mystical movements which rose in Basra, Khurasan, Transoxania⁵⁷ and Bagdad in the eighth and ninth centuries spread to other parts of the Islamic world. They stood in contrast with the rigid legalism of the *ulama* (the scholars of religion), and the politics and socioeconomic ambitions of the empire. Karamustafa emphasises the conscious self-marginalisation of the Sufis in these centuries: The word Sufi referred to some renunciants and pietists who wore coarse wool to demonstrate a form of “self-deprivation and self-marginalisation as moral and political protest” (ibid.: 6). It was then adopted by the Sufis in Bagdad to denote the “new cultural development” of a distinctive form of pious living which was not restricted only to these renunciants by the end of the ninth century (ibid.: 7), and it did not take long for renunciant communities to form around prominent renunciants (ibid.: 1, 2).

Karamustafa lists three types of people who could be considered as the fathers of Sufism in the eighth century; the renunciants and pietists, some of whom had a “radical aversion” to mainstream social life; the scholar-ascetics; and the scholars who gave up scholarship and became renunciants.

As Karamustafa writes, the Sufis turned inward and developed discourses of spiritual states, practiced a “rigorous examination of the conscience and the soul”, searched for “the other world within the inner self” (ibid.: 2). As a part of self-knowledge they practiced detailed psychological analysis of egoism, delusion, attachments, and strived for complete inner

⁵⁷ “An ancient region, this was the home to one of the oldest series of states in Central Asia and was situated in and around the river basin of the lower Amu Darya where it empties into the Aral Sea, and north-eastern Persia. Its territory varied greatly depending who was ruling it, but at its height it stretched into most of Afghanistan, eastern Persia, central Turkmenistan and southern Kyrgyzstan, plus central and southern Uzbekistan and all of Tajikistan (which together made up ancient Transoxiana). The name now belongs to a province in modern Iran and a region in north-western Uzbekistan. Transoxiana, the crossroads between Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, was located around the southern coast of the Aral Sea, and in the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand”. <<http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsFarEast/AsiaKhwarazm.htm>> (accessed 24 March 2012).

detachment from everything other than God. The *Vali*, the friend of God,⁵⁸ is a term used in Sufism for those Sufis who have attained God's companionship and it is considered to be the goal of the path. Karamustafa writes that Tirmidhi (d. 905-910) in Khurasan, the *hakim*, the sage, who combined in his person both scholarly knowledge, and 'experiential' spiritual knowledge was the one who "gave the most systematic treatments of the concept of 'friendship with God' (*walaya*⁵⁹) in Islamic thought" (ibid.: 44), and he considered them as successors of the Prophet (ibid.: 46). Tirmidhi also remarked that "God was unknowable by His essence but could be known by certain created beings through His attributes and His names" (ibid.: 47).

6.6 Khurasani Mystical Movements in the Ninth Century

The origin of the word Sufi is contested but Karamustafa's approach is the most commonly accepted origin: the ascetics and renunciants who wore coarse wool as a sign of self-marginalisation were called Sufi and the term was then adopted by Baghdad mystics (Karamustafa 2007: 6). Corbin claims that the word was first applied to a Shiite *Shaikh*, Abdak the Sufi in Baghdad (d. 825), but his contemporary eighth imam was severely critical of Sufism, and Shiite Sufism vanished until its reappearance in the 13th century (Corbin 1964: 189).

Corbin considers Khurasan as the "fruitful land" of Muslim mysticism; even Junayd Baghdadi (d. 909) had originally been from Persia (ibid.: 194). The mystics in Khurasan were not called Sufis until the 10th century when there were attempts at compilation among Sufi schools. There were various mystical groups, ascetics, pietists in and around Khurasan.

Sara Sviri (1999), in an article where she examines the Malamati movement, notes that the Malamatiyya was born in Khurasan as a "reaction against movements known for their

⁵⁸ Referring to the Koran, "Who is better in religion than he who surrendereth his purpose to Allah while doing good (to men) and followeth the tradition of Abraham, the upright? Allah (Himself) chose Abraham for friend". (Koran 4: 125 tr. by Picktall)

⁵⁹ The concept of "vali/wali" (sing.) and "evliya/awliya" (plu.) which is usually translated into English as Saint are derived from "*walaya*".

extreme asceticism which had a tremendous following especially among the lower classes in the ninth century”, and especially against Muhammad ibn Karram who established the *Khanqah*, the first “quasi-monastic institution” in Khurasan. The ascetic group was pietistic, God-fearing, and their leader Karram claimed to answer the questions addressed to him according to “divine inspiration”. Karamustafa (2007) writes that the Malamatiyya “The Path of Blame” placed special emphasis on showing no difference from other Muslims externally but being in continuous contemplation of God inwardly. The Malamati groups⁶⁰ did not have any distinct public rituals, no *sama* sessions, and they practiced silent *dhikr*. “Blame” meant that the human being would always be apt to be flawed and hence should “remain vigilant at all times against the lower self and its guiles”, and the Malamatis maintained “a healthy suspicion against all claims of personal spiritual achievement and miracle mongering by mystics; all talk of high spiritual states and miraculous feats reeked of the deception wrought by the lower self” (ibid.: 48-49). According to Sviri (1999) the Malamatis were nonconformists. *Malamat al-nafs* meant incurring blame on oneself in that they concealed the praiseworthy in themselves against hypocrisy, presumption, vanity, and they emphasised sincerity to become free of the contamination of the ego, the lower self or *nafs*, where the aim was to become indifferent towards blame and praise. They insisted on showing no external signs of spirituality⁶¹, and criticised audible *dhikr*. This was at a time in Khurasan when extroverted asceticism and pietism was widespread. They criticised asceticism because they thought it “brought about an inflated hardening of the *nafs*”.

⁶⁰ Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı suggests that the Malamati teaching was disseminated especially among Turks and widely influenced Sufism especially the Mawlawiyya (1992: 14) whereas Trimmingham says that the Naqshibandiyya is the order which has been associated most with the Malamatiyya because of its strict no public *dhikr* rule and the principle of solitude in the crowd (1998: 266). Gölpınarlı brings also Ibn Arabi in association with the Malamatiyya because of his high estimation of this teaching in his *Futuhât-ı Mekkiye* (ibid.: 19).

⁶¹ There is a *Hadith-i Qudsi* that such Sufis refer to:

(God said:) ‘For Me, the most blessed of My friends is the person of faith who is unburdened by possessions, who takes pleasure in prayer, who carries out well his devotion to his Lord and eagerly serves Him in secret. He is concealed among the people; no one points him out. His sustenance is barely sufficient, and he is content with that. [...] His death comes quickly, there are few mourners, and his estate is small. (in J. Morris 1993: 1)

Another movement was spiritual chivalry, youthfulness and extreme altruism among some professional guild societies. The Malamatiyya identified with their altruistic attitude with an interpretation of their own. For the Malamati *Shaikh* Abu Hafs, altruism meant that “[o]ne should conduct oneself according to what is right and just without expecting to be treated according to what is right and just”. The method of Malamatiyya is named as the “science of the self” by Sviri in comparison to the method of the “science of God” of Tirmidhi, again in Khurasan, who criticised the excessive attention paid to the *nafs* by the Malamatis, which could become a barrier to the divine revelations through which the heart would be revived with no blemish remaining. There were also relations and dynamic dialogue among the various circles of *shaikhs* in Baghdad and Khurasan in the ninth century. They and their disciples visited each other; there was also correspondence on matters of mystical psychology. After the death of the prominent Malamati teacher Abu Uthman (the student of Abu Hafs), many of his disciples went to Baghdad to Junayd (Sviri 1999).

6.7 Sufism as a Uniform Spiritual Tradition and Alignment with the Ulama

Sviri (1999), in the same article, writes that in the tenth century Sufi groups lacked any consistent system or clear principles. It was from the end of the tenth century onwards that they tried to present a picture of a uniform spiritual tradition and reconciled the “normative extroverted religious aspect of Islam (*sharia*) with the individualistic, experiential vision of its Reality (*haqiqa*). In this endeavour [...] the compilers have deliberately ironed out the dynamic multifaceted dialogue between various centres and teachers”. It was in this century that various mystical schools began to be mentioned as Sufis (except the Karamiyya movement which, according to Sviri, is not included in the early Sufi literature), and the word *tasawwuf* is used in some of the literature for both Baghdadi and the Khurasani schools of mysticism as a comprehensive term (Sulami’s *Tabaqat al-sufiyya*, later on Qushayri’s *al-Risala fi ‘ilm al-tasawwuf* and Hujwiri’s *Kashf al-mahjub*, all of which date back to 11th c). The common characteristic of these mystics was “a direct numinous experience and the psychological transformation which this experience entails [which] is the end and meaning of their lives and teachings” (ibid.).

Karamustafa (2007) writes that there was discontent about the disappearance of “true” Sufism already in the second generation (ibid.: 100) along with a concern for the drawing the boundaries of normative Sufism (ibid.: 87). Books were published on Sufi terminology and conduct such as Qushayri’s *Treatise* which has remained a widely read piece of Sufi literature up to the present. Hujwiri (d. 1073-1077), in his book *Uncovering the Veiled*, vindicated an “ecumenical approach” comprehending various groupings and practices in his

book and uniting them under the name of Sufis. However he argued that true Sufi practice could not be standardised or formalised. He named for the first time twelve different groupings, naming each group after a major Sufi and including the *Malamatis* and *hakims*. He wrote about Sufi terminology and “delineated the boundaries of normative Sufism without, however, homogenising or levelling significant differences of opinion current among Sufi masters” (ibid.: 102-103).

The common practices were *dhikr*, recollection and invocation of God’s attributes, and *muraqaba*, hearing and vigilant observation. Karamustafa suggests that for many, also, asceticism was among the common practices of Sufi students who started a *suluk*, journey towards God, especially in the founding years. He writes; “The journey was normally envisaged as a path (*tariq* or *tariqa*)” but there was no agreement on the stages and destination as it was very difficult to encounter God’s presence. On the path the self would go through a series of deconstructions and reconstitutions (Karamustafa 2007: 19).

Many Sufis had studied religious sciences which did not satisfy them, and considered the Sufi way of attaining knowledge as being further advanced. There was competition over authority on religious matters. Karamustafa lists the camps in Baghdad and Khurasan at that time as “mainstream intellectual elites”, “conservative traditionalists” and “rationalist and semi-rationalist legalists theologians” along with Sufis, and he claims that Sufis took a “centrist orientation” in social and political matters in the tenth century, Hallaj (d. 922) being an exception⁶² (ibid.: 26). The two branches of Islamic teaching were *fiqh*, jurisprudence, which dealt with the observance of rituals, morals and social legislation, and *kalam*, theology or discourse, which defined the contents of the faith through the rational, and sought theological knowledge through debate and argument. These scholars were called *ulama*. The Khurasani Sufi Qushayri (d. 1072) argued on one hand that the goals of *ulama* and the Sufis were the same but on the other hand he declared the superiority of Sufis in this goal: “People cultivate either received knowledge or knowledge based on reason. The masters of this group

⁶² Actually Bayazid Bestami (d. 877) is known as the first example of intoxicated Sufis because he often made ecstatic utterances, *shath*, “I am I; there is no God but I; so worship me!” Such Sufis attracted sharper critique by the *ulama* even if they were not openly critical of social and political matters as Hallaj was.

have risen above both these options. [...] They are people of attainment, (while) everyone else is (still) seeking proof” (Qushayri, *Treatise*, in 2007: 99). Ghazzali (1058-1111), who is known for his success in aligning Sufism with the scholarship of the time, was a reputable scholar in Baghdad until he fell into a spiritual crisis. He left Baghdad, wandered in Syria and Palestine for about two years and went on the pilgrimage to Mecca. He became a Sufi, lived in Tus and wrote many books.

6.8 The Institutionalisation

Both Weismann (2007: 4, 5) and Trimmingham (1998) describe the history of Sufism as a four stage development from the informal small groups of spiritual masters and their disciples towards consolidation and systemisation of teaching, thence to broader institutes of Sufi brotherhoods, and lastly with reformation movements towards orthodoxy in the face of modernity in the nineteenth century. Trimmingham also emphasises that all types also existed contemporaneously (Trimingham 1998: 102). He defines the features of the early period as comprising groups that were loose and mobile, where people visited and stayed around one master for some time to go on their search with another or were being sent to another master, which was also common. People stayed in rest-houses (*ribat* or *khanaqah*) or at the retreats (*zawiya*) of a spiritual guide (ibid.: 5). The local communities which were formed around charismatic masters did not last longer than a few generations after his death. Already in the beginning of the eleventh century some Sufis ran lodges which functioned mainly as charity centres for the destitute and travellers but they did not become spiritual centres of long prevalence (Karamustafa 2007: 115-116). The earliest example of *silsila tariqahs*, the chain of transmission from master to master showing a spiritual heritage, was in the second half of the tenth century and these became more important in the eleventh century when the Sufi master’s role changed from giving instructions to training (*shaykh al-tarbiya*), and where the *shaykh* was considered responsible for the spiritual progress of the aspirants. Meetings were held in the *shaykh*’s house or in mosques, some Sufis becoming well known for their ability in teaching. The emphasis on training by a master brought about “special multi-purpose gathering spaces and hostels for the novices” and the “Sufi lodge grew into a more durable institution” (ibid.: 121). This process empowered *shaikhs* with authority;

[A]’Director-novice’ relationship, often known as *suhba*, was increasingly solemnised through initiation and graduation ceremonies. These involved elements such as the oath of allegiance (*bay’a*) and the handclasp during the initial instruction of the *dhikr* formula, as well as the bestowal of a ‘certificate of graduation’ (*ijaza*) accompanied by special insignia, most notably a cloak (*khirqah*) when the novice attained his goal. (Karamustafa 2007: 120)

Alongside this institutionalisation with its special dress, communal *dhikr* sessions, “‘formulaic’ prescriptions for spiritual exercises issued by autocratic masters who resided in lodges”, there was a critique expressed by Qushayri, Hujwiri and the Malamatis who saw this as exotericism and formalism (ibid.: 121). At the same time the popular “saint cult” where the saint “acted as a patron and an intermediary for the broad community of his devotees arose and Sufism became a very widespread phenomenon in all milieus of the society” (ibid.: 134).

With institutionalisation Sufism was often blended with mainstream religiosity and could not serve as a possibility to absolute renunciants (Karamustafa 1994: 30). By the thirteenth century a new renunciatory type which was marked by social deviance had appeared on the Sufi scene⁶³; “its various manifestations forged the features of poverty, mendicancy, itinerancy, celibacy, self-mortification, [...] with varying degrees of emphasis on the eremitic and cenobitic options” (ibid.: 3). They refused to take part in society’s reproduction and its norms altogether. There were two wide-spread movements of this type; the Qalandariyyah “which flourished in Syria and Egypt under the leadership of ethnically Iranian leadership, and the Haydariyyah which took shape in Iran” and spread to India and to Asia Minor (ibid.: 3). Karamustafa includes Abdals of Rum, the Baktashiyya and Shams-i Tabrizis (Shams-i Tabriz was the renowned teacher of Rumi) in the groups of deviant or wander dervishes which appeared during the following two centuries (ibid.: 4). He adds that this movement was not restricted to “lower” social strata as sometimes assumed but also frequently recruited from the middle and high social strata and intellectuals (ibid.: 10) “in reaction to the rising tide of this-worldliness in the Muslim community” (ibid.: 27).

Lewisohn remarks that “[t]he 13th through the 15th centuries saw the appearance of major Sufi Orders, and of great intellectual figures among the Sufis”, and that the era was considered to witness “the revival of Sufism” (2003: 25). Among these figures were Rumi with his poetical mysticism and Ibn Arabi with his philosophical Sufism, and most of these

⁶³ J.T.P. De Bruijn dates the beginning of the Qalandariyya back to 11th century and defines it as the extreme malamatism –blame to the point of “destruction of conventions”– referring to the Sufis Hujwiri and Suhrawardi, although the basic rules were written in the 13th century and can be summarised as “irrevocable divorce from all values of earthly existence” (2003:76).

Sufis were again of Persian origin (ibid.: 33). He asserts that this development owed a great deal to the patronage of the Seljuqs in the Asia Minor, for they supported Persian culture (ibid.: 29). By the end of this period “Sufism became the dominant cultural and intellectual current”, the *tariqah* orders gained authority on religious matters over the *ulama* (ibid.: 35) and Sufism “came to dominate the religious conscience and the popular piety of the entire Islamic world” (ibid.: 36). Lewisohn refers this success to a tolerance towards popular spirituality, and towards diversity in points of view, forming a “counter-culture” minimising the influence of the amir’s court, anti-sectarianism, the emphasis on direct experience, and love of beauty and aesthetics (ibid.: 38-43).

Trimingham (1998) notes the effects of the Seljuqs in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries on the establishment of Sufism: they reorganized *madrassa* schools as official institutions in the 11th century and recruited masters in Sunni tendencies⁶⁴. The *tariqahs* developed with their various forms of practices during the Seljuq period and they emphasised different aspects of attaining gnosis; such as the Suhrawardiyya, the Qadiriyya, the Rifaiyya, the Yasavviya, the Chishtiyya, the Shadiliyya and the Mavlawiyya. These *tariqahs* were established by their followers according to the teachings of a Sufi master mostly after his death. Only towards the fifteenth century did the *tariqahs* become more rigidly institutionalized, becoming hierarchical associations as orders or brotherhoods. *Zawiyas* and *khanaqahs* (also *tekke* or *dergah* in Turkish) became the centres for meeting, training and hospitality; they also played an important role in spreading and stabilizing Islam (Trimingham 1998: 2-30). Trimingham claims that whereas the earlier Sufis were interested in ascetic-mystical theory, the popularisation and institutionalisation of the orders in the 15th century turned Sufism into a kind of “Sufi cult” and the individual was asked for subjection “to the arbitrary will of the *shaikh*” (ibid.: 103).

⁶⁴ The *tariqahs* played a central role during both the period of the Seljuks and that of the Ottomans, as social organizations, in their relations with the central power and islamisation of some folks. Certain orders or branches were supported by the central government and the general attitude was positive towards Sufism. Many sultans had affiliations with some orders or special teachings of some *shaiks*.

6.9 Controversy in the Nineteenth Century and Onward

The nineteenth-century saw much revival within and outside Sufism in the Islamic context. According to Trimingham there were two developments which led to an “intensified Islam” with roots in the eighteenth century: the revival of the orders and the Wahhabi movement. They were not “in response to the Western menace”, rather they came out of the “need for reform and for countering the lethargy which had overtaken the Arab world under Ottoman rule” (Trimingham 1998: 105). The former set out to restore the deformed orders, to purify Sufism and become active in reconstructing Muslim societies socio-morally and along traditional or reformist lines. The traditionalists enlivened the emotional fervour and contemplative life, and the reformists had a tendency towards orthodox activism, maintained liturgical and ethical Sufism, and rejected esoteric teaching (ibid.: 106, 107). The Wahhabi “stressed a return to the simplicity of a mythical, unadulterated Islam, and interpreted the *jihad* against unbelievers as war against those who [...] had compromised its purity”, and refused “any idea of intermediaries between himself and God since with his view of transcendence no relationship [was] possible”. The Wahhabis went even so far as to destroy the tombs of saints, where they could (ibid.: 105).

Weismann considers the idea that Sufism entered into a prolonged period of decline and decay following the formative and classical periods as an outcome of two modernist paradigms; the Orientalist and the fundamentalist, the former “by essentialising Islam as the (inferior) Other” to justify the Western colonial enterprise, and the latter by depicting “latter-day Muslim tradition as a deviation from the exemplary model of the forefathers and a principal obstacle to the renewal of Islamic vigor in the face of the West”, and asserts that critics and reviver movements have never been absent within and outside Sufism in the Islamic context and that an orthodox bent and sociopolitical activism which were considered “new” by these paradigms have always been part of the Sufi tradition (Weismann 2007: 6). He considers the ultra-orthodox Wahhabiyya of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as an exception in its total rejection of Sufism although the other revivalist movements themselves had roots in Sufism (ibid.: 8).

Elizabeth Sirriyeh analyses the affects of modernity on the apprehension of Sufism, and her book puts forward the view that:

Often the European values of the age in the nineteenth century seemed directly opposed to those of the Sufis. [...] Western observers of Sufism in this period often highlight the irrational and visibly bizarre [...] Sufis, or rather the abusers of Sufism, make an excellent target to contrast with the reasonable civilisation of

Western Europe, [...] the living embodiment of Occidental fantasies of the Orient. (Sirriyeh 1999: 55)

In a similar way there has been a growing critique of all religion as a barrier to “development”, to the promised power and emancipation of modernity in the twentieth century. The Wahhabi and the Salafi movements arose and grew within that context, and criticised Sufism because of its acceptance of intercession, of visits to Sufi tombs for blessings, and of the attribution of mystical powers to the *shaikhs*, which they claimed weakened the activism and dynamism of Islam. They claimed that these practices were derived from non-Islamic traditions such as Hinduism (Qamar-ul Huda 2004: 467), and being themselves the most orthodox believers, they saw themselves as capable of carrying Muslim societies further, as in the “Golden Age”. The *ulama* were considered to be more compatible with modernity, with their method of attaining the truth through intellect and proof derived from the Koran and Hadith studies (Clark 2003).

Talal Asad suggests that the dichotomisation of orthodox and nonorthodox Islam is partly a construction of Orientalism:

One way anthropologists have attempted to resolve the problem of diversity is to adapt the Orientalist distinction between orthodox and nonorthodox Islam to categories of Great and Little Traditions, and thus to set up the seemingly more acceptable distinction between the scripturalist, puritanical faith of the towns, and the saint-worshipping, ritualistic religion of the countryside. (Asad 1986: 6)

The heterogeneity according to Asad comes from the “different Islamic reasonings that different social and historical conditions can or cannot sustain. [...] [W]idespread homogeneity is a function not of tradition, but of the development and control of communication techniques that are part of modern industrial societies”. He asserts that “argument in terms of formal debate, confrontation, and polemic” is part of a discursive tradition not “a symptom of ‘the tradition in crises’”, and that the idea of a “normal” tradition which “excludes reasoning and requires unthinking conformity” was “introduced into sociology by Weber” (ibid.: 16).

6.10 The History of Sufism based on a Misplacement of the Premises of Sufism

Before moving to the history of the Naqshbandiyya I find it useful to include another approach to the history which will be represented by the anthropologist Charles Lindholm (2002) with his socio-historical account of the rise, development and decline of Sufism in the Middle East. The historical sources reviewed until now in this history chapter were mainly based on the self-descriptions of Sufis and explain the emergence of Sufism in an inclination towards esotericism, spirituality and mysticism as against exotericism and rational and

traditional approaches. They delineate the movement not as monolithic, and the changes it goes through are considered as arising both in reaction to the context and from Sufism's own dynamics.

Lindholm predicates the rise and the institutionalisation of Sufism on a psychological need, with reference to a human subject that seeks one simple truth to feel safe in the face of an ambiguous God. He categorises Sunni Islam as “the purest case of what Max Weber called emissary religion; that is, a religion in which God is utterly omnipotent and transcendent, but nonetheless active and moral, ordering humanity onto the right path. In this type of annunciation, any claim to union with the deity is an unforgivable sin”, as against the “exemplary religion” which is “the natural home of charisma, since it rests upon the recognition of a spiritually gifted individual's oneness with the sacred” (2002: 210). He finds a seeming paradox that in such a religion as Islam charismatic Sufis could become so central. The Islamic God could be compared to the God of Calvinism: “utterly transcendent, unpredictable and indeterminable, bound not even by His own Words” (ibid.: 211) and this characteristic put people in a quandary as to whether or not they were on the right path, for “only God knows the state of a human soul”. The necessity of charismatic leaders among Muslims was due to the ambiguity of the text, the Koran. Due to the characteristics of the Islamic God, there were various different interpretations of the Koran by respectable religious scholars. Muslims were confused by this as to how they should behave to stay on the right path. Out of this dilemma, the prophet's life and his sayings as the only example of the right behaviour became the focus of attention. The prophet's charisma which was based on his character and the love he generated among followers was the core of emotional devoutness and served as an example to the charismatic leaders following him (ibid.: 211). Hadith transmitters were the first Sufis. They emulated the selfless habits of Muhammad and the first Muslim community. In this endeavour book learning was not enough, rather a “transformation of the devotee through strict discipline in channelling and controlling the passions (*nafs*)” was necessary (ibid.: 213).

According to Lindholm, institutionalisation occurred for similar reasons as the emergence: the Sufi saint knew God intuitively and was beyond rules and acts of piety. The devotee found himself in a much stronger quandary and needed the protection of a communal life in the community of brothers. The orders acquired a hierarchical structure in time. They claimed a spiritual genealogy traced back to Ali or Abu Baqr, and the founding *pir* who validated their authenticity. This system stood as an alternative to the mostly corrupt government. Through confrontation with modernity, “the debunking influence of Western

rationalism” (ibid.: 216), Middle Eastern Sufism declined (ibid.: 209- 216), but the *tariqahs* were able to adapt to the liberal economy;

A charismatic leader can make unilateral decisions, [...] paying little attention to the restrictions of traditional law, and because he can then mobilize the labour of his dedicated followers, [...] charismatic groups can, in principal, respond rapidly yet in a unified, organised fashion to opportunities arising in the fast-changing modern setting. Muhammad, the perfect man, was, after all, a highly successful entrepreneur, and Muslim doctrine has always been resolutely this worldly. (ibid.: 217)

Lindholm argues that the modern West with its virtue of rationality was a better alternative to the egalitarian Middle Easterners. Beside Western influence and state control, he claims, “the compulsive tendency of Sufi sects to exaggerate the powers of their founders, which led them to set themselves at irreconcilable odds with the ascetic and egalitarian principles that animate Middle Eastern society” (ibid.: 219) was a reason in itself why Sufism could not sustain its place.

He gives examples of the “arrogance of Sufi saints” and their “braggadocio” collecting examples from historical figures such as Abd al-Qadir Geylani, Rumi, Bistami and Hallaj, who all claimed union with God, which “scandalized the orthodox since they are in direct contradiction to the Muslim doctrine of the irreducible gap between an unknowable supreme God and his fallible human creatures” (ibid.: 220). He concludes that the Wahhabi movement with its anti-Sufi doctrines, the pressures of colonialism and “unprecedentedly omnipotent central states” together caused the decline of Sufism in the Middle East (ibid.: 218).

Lindholm’s point of departure, the “utterly omnipotent and transcendent” God, and Islam as an “emissary religion” does not represent the Sufi understanding, although it might be apt to an understanding of Wahhabism. Hence Lindholm’s conclusions are very different from those of the other sources which were reviewed here. Sufism could find a wide acceptance due to its ability to reconcile various approaches within Islam, and it would be wrong to equate Islam with the understanding of the Wahhabiyya with its “emissary religion” or any other traditions. As a discursive tradition in debate Islam is heterogeneous as Asad (1986) argues, and understandings of it as “exemplary religion” or “emissary religion” are part of this tradition.

6.11 The Naqshbandiyya

According to Weismann (2007) who has carried out a thorough study of the origins of the Naqshbandiyya using primary literature, the foundation of the order is mostly referred back

to Ghujduwani (d. 1179 or 1220). Hamadani (d. 1140) was the teacher of both Ghujduwani who laid the grounds for Naqhbandi Sufism which was urban and intellectual, and Ahmad Yasawi (d. 1167) who mixed with the local cultures and their religious beliefs. Yasawi educated itinerant dervishes who disseminated their ideas in rural areas⁶⁵. Hamadani was the first spiritual master entitled *khwaja*⁶⁶, a title which referred originally to the upper stratum of Turkish nobles and later to these mystical religious men. Ghujduwani was considered the founder of the Khawajagan tradition (ibid.: 19-20).

Khwajagan groupings formed and disbanded in quick succession in the Bukhara oasis during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, [...] the status of each *khwaja* was less secure than was customary among the Sufi brotherhoods: his disciples were always free to leave for another master or even follow the path on their own, while he lost all authority over them when they completed their training. Conducting a spiritual centre *khanaqah* was also frowned upon. (Weismann 2007: 21).

Ghujduwani addressed the urban people where Iranian culture was dominant whereas Yasawi addressed the Turkic elements in the steppe. They became originators of distinct ways, Ghujduwani was a “reformist” criticising the popular practices of Central Asian Sufism whereas Yasawi was part of it. Ghujduwani introduced the silent *dhikr* (hidden recollection) when the common sessions of Sufi brotherhoods included vocal *dhikr*, mystical music and dance, *sama*. He also formulated eight principles which form the basis of the Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya. The historian Alexei A. Khismatulin (2005) suggests that eight principles of al-Ghujduwani were apparently adopted from al-Ghazzali’s (1058-1111) famous and well read book *The Alchemy of Happiness* which was written in Persian. He

⁶⁵ Ahmad Yasawi (d. 1167) is the founder of Yasawwiyya tradition. Although the order did not establish as a distinctive tradition in Anatolia, it played a central role in the adaptation of Islam among Turkish tribes, and the pilgrimage to the tombs of certain *shaikhs* became a tradition during this time. Many of them were itinerant *dervishes*, the most famous being Yunus Emre (d. 1339). Hadji Baktash (d.1335) after whom another influential tariqah was founded with the name of the Baktashiyya and disseminated also among Janissaries during the Ottoman Empire is also attached to the Yasawiyya by Weismann (2007) and to the Malamatiyya by Trimingham (1998).

⁶⁶ *Khwaja* in Persian, and *Hodja* in Turkish.

compares these principles⁶⁷ with al-Ghazzali's, and finds remarkable similarities, and notes that they appeared in the same Central Asian region within a short time, and these principles are in Persian although he otherwise wrote in Arabic. Al-Ghazali, when he describes the principles of the spiritual-religious life, states that they were attained by mystics, "people who possess inner vision" before him (Khismatulin 2005: 252-253). Also the Malamatiyya was born in the Khurasani town of Nishapur in the ninth century and practiced "self-scrutiny", "self-criticism", silent *dhikr*, a "strict adherence to the Islamic *sharia*" and abandoned "any outward marks of distinction or any inward claim to spiritual superiority" (Sviri 1999: 2) which are very similar to Ghujduwani's principles. When we consider these, the Naqshbandi principles which are the basics of the path whatever form its organisation takes, or rather refuses organisation as it was the case in the beginnings, are a cumulation of principles from the ninth to fourteenth centuries in the area of Khurasan, Nishapur. Weismann writes that the phase from Ghujduwani to (Baha'uddin) Naqshband (1318-1389) whose name was given to the *tariqah* is sometimes referred to as the proto-Naqshbandi phase.

When we read further in Weismann's book, Bahauddin Naqshband was among several Khawajagan teachers in Bukhara. After the Mongol invasion of Bukhara (1220) the

⁶⁷ In the list here it is notable that the first eight principles are in Persian while the last three which were added by Bahauddin Naqshband are in Arabic: 1. *Yad Kard*: Remembrance, or making mention, *dhikr*. 2. *Baz Gasht*: Restraint. The person saying the *Dhikr*, when engaging in the heart-repetition, keeping one's thoughts from straying. 3. *Nigah Dasht*: Watchfulness. 4. *Yad Dasht*: Recollection. Concentration upon the Divine Presence in a condition of *Dhawq* foretaste, intuitive anticipation or perceptiveness, not using external aids. 5. *Hosh dar dam*: Awareness while breathing, the technique of breath control. 6. *Safar dar watan*: Journeying in one's homeland, an interior journey. 7. *Nazar bar qadam*: Watching one's steps. 8. *Khalwat dar anjuman*: Solitude in a crowd. The journey of the *salik*, though outwardly it is in the world, inwardly it is with God. 9. *Wuqf-e zamani*: Awareness related to time, keeping account of how one is spending one's time. 10. *Wuqf-e adadi*: Awareness related to number, checking that the heart *dhikr* has been repeated the requisite number of times, taking into account one's wandering thoughts. 11. *Wuqf-e qalbi*: Awareness related to the heart, forming a mental picture of one's heart with the name of Allah engraved thereon, to emphasize that the heart has no consciousness or goal other than God. This is the meaning of the word "Naqshband". (Trimingham 1998: 203, 204).

“learned” of Islam weakened in the cities and more popular forms flourished in small towns and villages. Most of the Khawajagan themselves had abandoned Ghujduwani principles. With the reinstatement of Muslim rule in the area, Bahauddin Naqshband who also attended Turkish Yasawi masters together with his disciples re-established the “reformist” tradition of the Khawajagan in Bukhara. They adopted the silent *dhikr* of Ghujduwani together with some Malamati characteristics; namely mistrust in miraculous deeds and avoiding wearing special garments or living in hospices. They neither practiced the seclusion *khalwa* (spending commonly forty days in isolation), remained attached to their worldly occupations and were socially and politically involved. Though some disciples of Naqshband (the most famous being Muhammad Parsa d. 1420) made way also for vocal *dhikr* as a sign of an “ecumenical” approach, silent *dhikr* was seen as one characteristic of the Naqshbandi path in general. Parsa also wrote a commentary on Ibn Arabi’s “*Fusus al-Hikam - Bezel’s of Wisdom*”, a book that was controversial because of its doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*, the unity of being, and also included other classical Sufi authors in his writings such as Ghazali, Qushayri and Hujwiri. Especially from then on the *tariqah* had an “intellectual streak”. Family succession crept into the order when Parsa’s son and grandson became important figures spreading the order in the major cities of the Timurid state (Weismann 2007: 21- 31).

Weismann suggests that the path’s achievement as the revival of the Khawajagan tradition was the work of Bahauddin Naqshband’s disciples Alauddin Attar (d. 1400), an ascetic who was recognized as his successor and who moved to today’s south Uzbekistan after Naqshband’s death, Muhammad Parsa who provided the intellectual and literary foundation of the movement, and Yaqub Charkhi who moved to northeast Afghanistan where he came from and who was both a scholar, and a mystic. The latter educated Ubaidullah Ahrar from Tashkent (1404 -1490) who then gave the path a distinct structure and had followers among Iranian and Turkish people (ibid.: 18). All three had a different emphasis; Weismann comments: “[a]s befitting a living mystical tradition, none of the foundational principles and practices of the Naqshbandiyya were fixed and unequivocal” (ibid.: 30).

The Naqshbandi groups spread to India in the sixteenth century, and from the borders of China to the Balkans. They were decentralised; branches co-existed even in the same city, mixed with traditions of the locality and combined with other Sufi traditions. The introduction of the Naqshbandiyya among the Ottomans was through Bayazid I (the Sultan in 1389-1402) in the late fourteenth century who searched for “an orthodox alternative to the unruly dervish fraternities that had accompanied the conquest of Anatolia [...] [and] drew Khawajagan masters to his court”. They were also supported by Mehmed II (the Sultan in 1451-1481) and they had become the second most influential order following the

Khalwatiyya, especially in Istanbul and Bursa, by the seventeenth century, but less successful in the provincial towns, according to Weismann (ibid.: 44, 45).

Although Naqshbandis did not retreat from the society and politics in general, with the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi (revivalist) branch which was founded by Ahmad Faruqi al-Sirhindi (1563-1624) in India (becoming the strongest of the Naqshbandi branches), they gained much influence on politics. This branch also supported the Ottoman reform politics in the eighteenth century but because of their desire to keep the reforms within the bonds of *sharia* many were put to death. In the nineteenth century they united with the Khalidiyya branch (a *khalif* of Dihlawi) and worked together for the reform of the Ottomans against the threat of the Wahhabi movement and the West. They also encouraged the abolishment of the Bektashi order and the Janissaries. The emphasis on “inner” aspects of *sharia* had been changed to jurisprudence and theology which were appropriate to their orthodox, activist character. With the transfer of power from the Sultan to the Sublime Court in 1850, they lost their influence on politics and played a leading role in resistance against the government and also influenced the oppositional Young Ottoman movement. When the power shifted again to the palace in the late 1870s, they regained power and supported the modernisation movement of the empire, though some branches remained in opposition (ibid.: 77- 94).

Şerif Mardin (1991) emphasises the role of Sirhindi in turning the followers’ attention to their “task” towards society; namely “establishing Sunni morality”. He quotes from the historian Yohanan Friedmann (1966) that Sirhindi stressed two aspects of the prophet Muhammad, one being his human aspect which was directed to the community to care for its well-being, and the other the divine aspect. Sirhindi found that there had been an imbalance between the two after the Prophet’s death and this balance had to be re-established. Khalid Baghdadi (1776-1827) became influential among the Ottomans and spread the Naqshbandiyya (ibid.: 126-127).

The anthropologist Bruinessen (1998) asserts that Sufi orders and *madrasas* were an integrated and important part of society in their roles of social integration and overcoming segmentary division in Kurdistan. The *shaikhs* “are consulted on moral and political matters, act as healers of mental and physical illnesses, pacify quarrelling relatives. Their very presence is believed to convey blessing, and they are believed to have the power of intercession with God”. Only the most advanced *murids*, disciples, can get an *ijaza*, a written certificate from their teacher to become *shaikhs*. There was a hereditary tendency in *shaikhhood*. According to Bruinessen the most widespread *tariqahs* among Kurds were the Qadiriyya and the Naqshbandiyya, and in the nineteenth century the Naqshbandiyya

expanded at the expense of the Qadiriyya. In another article Bruinessen writes that the Naqshbandiyya's rapid expansion in Kurdistan in the nineteenth century was due to the unrest and insecurity in the region and the *shaikh* Khalid's personality. His brand of Sufism also gained support from other *tariqahs*. Bruinessen notes that there are several indications that there were other Naqshbandi branches in the region for at least three and a half centuries but the success of the Khalidis must have put them in the shade (Bruinessen 1990: 2-4).

Dede's *silsila* (spiritual chain) includes both Abd al-Qadir Geylani (1078-1166), the patron saint of the Qadiriyya, and Bahauddin Naqshband, the founder of the Naqshbandiyya (1318 - 1389), as well as other Sufis which have remained local although they come after Khalid Bagdadi who is also included in the *silsila*.

6.12 Conclusion

These historical sources represent Sufism as a branch of Islamic tradition which was based on the need to understand and experience the knowledge transmitted in the Koran and the Hadith. The most distinctive feature of Sufism is its method of acquiring knowledge, that depends not on reason but *kashf*, the unveiling or immediate finding and seeing. It is also marked with the idea that the creation is a continuous act of God as a manifestation of God. So Sufis claim *Haq*, the Real can be found everywhere, the self being the main place of inquiry. They retreat to their insides to practice vigilant observation, to get rid of both attachments and egoistic wishes which would cause a manipulation and hence barrier to see what really is there. The reality changes according to the level of observance or point of view and they try to get at the point where everything is seen in unity, i.e. in God. Theoretical knowledge is here of little help because they value experiential knowledge which has a transformative effect. Although the point of departure is texts of the Koran and the Hadith, their findings enable them to understand these texts in ways very different from that of a literal understanding. The understanding and realisation of the doctrines outreach the discursive sphere in their "inward meaning" through experience and unveiling. In other words they capture the meanings before they appear in the world where they take many forms which are bound to the context. The self is deconstructed through self-scrutiny and the discourse is deconstructed through insight and experience. Sufism posits the relationship between the unity and multiplicity and suggests that the multiplicity, what the world entails, is manifestations of the Real One, the origin, and seeks the connections. The self is its point of departure both as a tool to experience and as a barrier to experience. The work on the self aims at making it able to experience the Real.

The institutions of Sufism are not an innate aspect of Sufism but a historical process partly due to social and political conditions: the followers and disciples gathered around the *shaikhs* distinguished themselves from the others and compilation attempts as a movement to become authoritative in the society seem to effect institutionalisation. From early on there were two main tendencies in Sufism: some distinguished themselves from others with special clothes, seclusion, communal rituals and a claim of higher spiritual states while others preferred to distance themselves from such claims and extroverted forms. The latter was represented in Khurasan by the Malamatiyya and later also by the Naqshbandiyya. They were also critical of institutionalisation. Yet the Naqshbandiyya seem to have been more flexible about including also other forms. The insistence on remaining an active member of the society must have influenced the adaptability in the circumstances of the Naqshbandiyya which Weismann asserts.

Before I started reading the history I assumed that the non-institutionalisation was a very special feature of the formation at hand because many Sufi formations had clearer organisational structures at present. My informants told me that it was not a *tariqah* but above *tariqahs*, a kind of “supra-*tariqah*”. Yet looking at the similarities of Dede’s style with the founding years of the order, one might also suggest that he is an “ecumenical Naqshi” probably out of considerations similar to those of the founders. In *Irfan Okulunda Oku* (Study in the School of Wisdom) it is stated that although in the history of Sufism institutionalisation was not uncommon, because societies show a tendency towards institutionalisation, it was counterproductive for the aim. The spiritual schools needed the flexibility to be able to act out the kind of education they aimed at. Institutionalisation would mean a form and a structure while the aim of such an education would be to move from form to content, from outer appearance towards meaning (Kayhan 2009 [1994]: 285). In many of his talks Dede emphasised his disapproval of factionalism which is an acute problem in Turkey among various religious groups and disseminated texts of various Sufis. Here, factionalism includes differences between “Muslim” vs. “non-Muslim”, “sinful” vs. “faithful”, and “high culture” vs. “low culture”. He encouraged his visitors and followers to be active, productive and bold members of the global society.

CHAPTER 7

THE *SILSILA*, THE LINE OF SPIRITUAL DESCENT, AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PATH

This chapter includes information about the Sufis in Dede's *silsila*, with a focus on the later figures because there are unclear and unknown gaps in our knowledge of the early part, and Dede's life. The point of attention will be to demonstrate Dede's brand of Sufism in those aspects that are reflected in other Sufis of the *silsila*. Beside the historical information there will be examples of little stories, just as they are remembered and used by the Sufi followers to transmit ethical teaching.

7.1 Introduction

The *silsila* of a *tariqah* (order) shows the line of transmission of spiritual knowledge from master to master. Bruinessen writes:

Usually the *silsila* reaches back from one's own teacher up to the Prophet, with whom all *tariqahs* claim to have originated although there have been modifications along the way. A Sufi's *silsila* is his badge of identity and source of legitimation; it provides him with a list of illustrious predecessors and shows how he is related to other Sufis. (Bruinessen 1995: 177)

Here it will be helpful to recall that history marks the beginning of the tradition of *silsila* as the second half of the tenth century, becoming more important in the eleventh century when the Sufi master's role was described as the training of the aspirants and some Sufis got known for their ability as teachers (Karamustafa 2007: 121). At present most *tariqahs* have written down a *silsila* from generation to generation without a gap, beginning from the Prophet Muhammad and continuing until the living *shaikh*, and most of them include 40-45 generations. They have apparently been worked out sometime in the history by the members of the *tariqahs* when the idea of a *silsila* gained in significance both for legitimation and to mark the tradition a *tariqah* follows.

The *silsila* we have from Dede has not been completely worked out in this way. Apparently it is not formalised, which conforms to the non-institutionalised characteristic of this formation. How it came about is not clearly known, and according to some of my informants it was figured out by a disciple of Dede. Dede consented to it, but with some reservation. Some others think it is completely reliable because it was approved. There are two versions of it: While one includes Abd al-Qadir Geylani –this is the version distributed among the old disciples of Dede, and also given to me by one of them- the other does not.

There are four books which were edited and published by Dede in his lifetime –*Adem ve Alem* (1989), *Ruh ve Beden* (1991), *Aradığımı Buldum* (1992) and *Irfan Okulunda Oku* (1994), and the *silsila* is found in one of them (Kayhan 2009 [1994]: 145). According to the article the daily practice of the Naqshbandiyya included the compulsory five daily *namaz*, an additional four *namaz* times, the reading of the Koran as often as possible and in communal meetings with close disciples. There were recitals of the *hatm-i hadjegan* (the *zikr* collection in the Naqshbandiyya) followed by the *silsila* which begins with the Prophet, the four *khalifa* and the other names in the *silsila*, and some more *suras* from the Koran. All of this was meant to be practiced with a special disposition, such as one imagines might be the case if one was by the Prophet (*rabita*) and as if one were presented to the *umma* (the community) of the Prophet, *ehl-i iman* and *ehl-i ihsan* (these can be translated as the “people of faith” and the “people of benevolence”). But Dede did not apply these to his disciples; he advised night prayers as often as possible and called his way the “University of Muhammadiyya”.

Nobody among my informants refers to *hatm-i hadjegan* specifically in their prayers, nor was this practiced by Dede in the meetings, unlike in most *tariqahs* where a *wird* is presented. A *wird* is a collection of Koranic *suras* and verses which were chosen by the founder of the *tariqah* and which might have gained some additions in later generations, and which are recited daily privately and also communally in weekly meetings by the adherents of a *tariqah*, usually followed by the names in the *silsila* to whose souls and to the souls of the whole *umma* of Muhammad the prayers are presented. Although this was not practised in Dede’s meetings, various *suras* out of the Koran were read from time to time by him or by a visitor.

Some of Dede’s visitors did not even know or care about the *silsila* and although all of my informants knew about it, they did not think it carried much weight in terms of their relationship with Dede –yet they found it was important to know which tradition Dede followed. Dede did not privilege the Naqshbandiyya over other *tariqahs* in his talks and did not mention his *silsila*; he only mentioned his masters. He placed a special emphasis on Abd

al-Qadir Geylani, distributed and published Geylani's prayers in Arabic with Turkish translations and interpretations (ibid.: 96-102), and a disciple published a book about him which he approved to be published under the name Hadji Ahmet Kayhan.

It is reported that Dede called attention to the geographical movement of knowledge from Mecca to Medina and then to Khurasan –through the disciples and family of the Prophet- and from there to Anatolia, and he marked his line as the Samini branch of the Naqshbandiyya. The *silsila* I was given begins with the Prophet, who is followed by Abu Baqr, and after that there is a gap until Abd al-Qadir Geylani in the 12th century. After him comes Bahauddin Naqshband from the 14th century, and he is followed by Imam Rabbani (Sirhindi) (1563-1624). The following Ismail Fakirullah lived in 1656-1734 in the East of Turkey. Only with him does the *silsila* follows from generation to generation without any gaps.

Historically the origins of the Naqshbandiyya go back to the Khawajagan tradition in the 12th century and the period until Bahauddin Naqshband (1318-1389) is called the proto-Naqshbandiyya; it was a time in which the groups were not stable: “Khawajagan groupings formed and disbanded in quick succession in the Bukhara oasis during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries” (Weismann 2007: 21). According to historical sources, institutionalisation entered the Naqshbandiyya following the era of Bahauddin Naqshbandi.

Tayfun Atay writes that the Naqshbandi *silsilas* follow the same line in Turkey and they change after Khalid Baghdadi because this branch of the Naqshbandiyya spread in Turkey through Khalid Baghdadi's disciples, and they are known as the Khalidi branch of the Naqshbandiyya (2011: 68)⁶⁸. According to historical sources, Naqshbandiyya entered Anatolia in the 15th century through Abdullah Ilahi (d.1491), a *khalif* of Ubeydullah Ahrar, and Mujaddidiya in the 17th century through Muhammad Murad Buhari (d. 1720) (Şimşek: 2011: 28), and Khalidiyya in the 19th century with approximately sixteen *khalifs* of Khalid Baghdadi. Through them most *shaikhs* of other branches joined the Khalidi branch (Memiş,

⁶⁸ Atay's research was about the community of *Shaikh* Nazim in Britain which was followed by Ziyaeddin Gümüştanevi after Khalid Baghdadi.

2011: 68) and we will see below that Ali Septi (1777-1873) in Dede's *silsila* was also marked as a *khalif* of Khalid Baghdadi.

Abd al-Qadir Geylani (1078-1166) after whom the Qadiriyya is named was born in Iran, moved to Baghdad where he got formal and Sufi education, spent twenty-five years as a wanderer in the desert regions of Iraq as a recluse, and when he came back he started teaching. He had a lodge for his disciples in Baghdad and the Qadiriyya *tariqah* was founded after him. Abd al-Qadir Geylani has a special place in Sufism. Osman Bedrettin, one of Dede's masters, referring to Sirhindi (the founder of Mujaddidi branch, and known as Imam Rabbani in Turkey) relates that the prophet Muhammad had transmitted the special knowledge, *ilm* to Ali, his son in law and it was transmitted to Abd al-Qadir Geylani from him, and Geylani is the mediator of this knowledge for all times (Osman Bedrettin 2009: 26). Remarkably Dede distributed the *wird* and prayer of Geylani with explanations of the meanings to most of his followers, rather than a Naqshibandi *wird*.

The other two Sufis in Dede's *silsila* who came before Khalid Baghdadi are Ismail Fakirullah and Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakkı who are also mentioned by Bruinessen, the only anthropologist known to me to have made a thorough research in the area (*The Kurds and Islam*, 2007a). I was not able to find any sociological or historical literature about the Sufis after Khalid Baghdadi in the *silsila*. In my investigation of sources about these I found three books which were published in Elazığ privately and only locally attainable: Günerkan Aydoğmuş's *Harput Kültüründe Din Alimleri* (1998) (only attainable in fragments on web pages about these Sufis), Süleyman Yapıcı's *Palu: Tarih-Kültür-Idari ve Sosyal Yapı* (2004) and Bünyami Erdem's *Şeyh Musa Kazım Efendi: Elazığ Evliyalarından* (2011). The latter is the most in-depth research conducted on this topic using ethnographic research methods and it includes some analysis.

We are apparently confronted with a branch of the Naqshbandiyya which has not been researched academically before. This can be referred to the characteristic of the branch which is not easy to detect because of its lack of visibility, a lack of activity as a community in the public space, and also due to the reservations of followers to talk about it, which is also mentioned by Erdem. On the other hand his book is also difficult to detect; I came across it only by coincidence as I was writing this chapter because a friend had been to Elazığ to visit the adopted son of Musa Kazım and found the book there (there is no mention of the book on the web except in an entry in a local newspaper).

Erdem's book was important in clearing the doubts I had about how far the characteristics of Dede's formation were peculiar to itself and how far they were part of a tradition. This

directed my attention towards the similarities shared by the previous Sufis of the branch, and demarcated the *silsila* not as a “tool to validation of authenticity” (Bruinessen 1995: 177 and Lindholm 2002: 214) but rather as a tradition of a specific school which can be recognised through its common features. When we compare the styles of the Sufis of the Samini branch, we determine distinguishing characteristics that partly go further back than the time of Mahmud Samini. These include the form, the master/disciple relationships, and the content.

In terms of form, it is not institutionalised or ritualistic, there are no special garments or any other signs which demarcate the followers from others, and no formal initiation ritual applied by at least some of the *shaikh* according to the information we have of them. The hierarchy and succession are ambiguous. The character and width of the community is not clearly framed; the number and the characteristics of the adherents are not wholly known to the members, and there are no political or economical covenants or cooperation amongst them. It is non-sectarian, inclusive of various *tariqahs* as well as people from various cultures. According to the sources I found, many Sufis of the *silsila* had received authority to teach in four other *tariqahs* and yet the Naqshbandiyya methods were given priority due to their efficiency in accompanying the disciples through their *suluk*, spiritual journey. Dede’s visitors and apparently also the others’ in the *silsila* were not restricted to Naqshbandiyya followers, and included members of other *tariqahs* –such as the Qadiri, Jerrahi and Mawlawi- who also consulted him.

Educated urban members are represented in large numbers. There is an intellectual bent, and an emphasis on both exoteric and esoteric knowledge, experience and practice. The classical Sufi texts are studied intensively, including the controversial Ibn Arabi⁶⁹. The leading masters have close relationships with the followers, and the followers become convinced of the knowledge and ability of their masters through experiences which can be called cognitive and emotional openings, and they believe that these are able to know things beyond the average human capacities.

⁶⁹ He was considered to be the greatest theorist of Sufism but was also one of the Sufis who had been criticised the most and found to be “dangerous” by some Sufi adherents and religious scholars because his ideas shake the dogmas and might have an uprooting effect, especially on novices.

The contents of the *sohbets* –I rather call them events as they are experiences including bodily, cognitive and emotional levels- which are the main communal practice are not structured; rather they are spontaneous and situational, and consist of interpretations of the Koran and the Hadith, anecdotes of Sufis, and the questions and problems of visitors and of society. Spontaneity is brought in with the master’s ability to know intuitively what is in the minds and hearts of his disciples, his understanding of what they need in order to develop, and the wider socio-political context which is not neglected, either.

7.2 The Origins and Meanings of Sufism according to Dede

Dede’s *silsila* begins with the prophet Muhammad followed by Abu Baqr, the first *khalifa*. Atay writes that most orders’ *silsila* go back to Ali, the son in law of the prophet and the forth *khalifa*, and that it is a specialty of the Naqshbandiyya that they refer themselves back to Abu Baqr (Atay 2011: 69). Although Dede’s *silsila* does not include Ali, he has a special place as the threshold to *ilm*, knowledge, relying on a Hadith: “I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate”. In Sufism it is believed that Muhammad transmitted his esoteric knowledge to him and a Companion of the Prophet is also reported to have said: “If I told you what I knew, you would call me infidel and behead me”. The Sunni- Shia difference may be quite blurred, as Gölpınarlı also states, and a similarity with Shia Islam can be observed in every *tariqah* because of the love of Muhammad’s family (1992: 197). John Kingsley Birge also observed this lack of demarcation with awe when he visited various *tekkes* in Istanbul in 1913: “During Muharrem, the month Shi’ites especially remember the death of Hüseyin [...] the writer visited tekke after tekke, and found all dervishes passionately mourning the death of Hasan and Hüseyin”. He concludes in the face of the norms he had learned from the literature that “the Turkish people while outwardly Sunni were, under cover of their dervish brotherhoods, partially Shiite” (Birge 1965: 14).

Dede also emphasised his love of the family of Muhammad and the twelve imams:

I am neither a *Baktashi*, nor a *Hanafî*, nor a *Shafî’i*, neither a *Maliki* nor a *Hanbali*⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Various schools of Islamic law except for Baktashi which is a Sufi order widespread among Alawites.

I am just a follower of the twelve Imams,
The lover of Muhammad and Ali
The garment of the ones under the garment⁷¹
The lament of the fourteen innocents⁷²
With the love of Imam Hasan and Imam Hüseyin,
I am in love with the family of Muhammad (Kayhan 2009: 471)

In Ferideddin Attar's (d. 1220) *Tezkiretü'l Evliya*, a book which is also widely read among my informants, Jafer-i Sadık (d.765) who is from the family of Muhammad, is the first *veli* who talked about the Sufi way and transmitted the *ilm*, knowledge of Ali. Veysel Karani (d. 657) who is a contemporary of the Prophet but never met him is also considered to be a *veli* and Muhammad left his mantle to him. In Sufism, inheriting the woollen mantle has become a symbolic action of taking over the knowledge, which is still in use among some Sufis. Hasan-ı Basri (d. 728) who was a famous Sufi was raised by Umm-i Seleme, a wife of Muhammad (Attar 1991: 53- 69). These examples emphasise that *Tasawwuf*, Sufism, is not extrinsic to the Koran and Muhammad but is a special kind of approach to what they transmit. This emphasis is also demonstrated in Dede's answer to a visitor's question about what Sufism meant: "*Tasawwuf* is an aspect of Hz. Muhammad". Some other definitions of *tasawwuf* in Dede's books are: *Tasawwuf* aims at spiritual awakening leading to see the face of God which is veiled by the continuous creation wherever one turns (Kayhan 2009 [1994]: 10-12). "The *Veli* knows God. The only way of knowing God is to uncover the secret of *wahdat* [i.e. finding the unity in multiplicity and the multiplicity in unity]. *Tasawwuf* is devoting oneself wholly to find out the secret of *wahdat*" (Kayhan, 2006 [1989]: 157).

7.3 Some of the Features of the Path based on the Clues in the *Silsila*

According to the *silsila* we have at hand, the chain follows: the Prophet Muhammad, Abu Baqr, Abd al-Qadir Geylani, Bahauddin Naqshband (1318-1389), Imam Rabbani (1564 - 1626), Ismail Fakirullah (d. 1734), Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakkı (1703-1780), Hodja Bekir – about whom I found no information, Abdallah Dihlawi (d.1824), Khalid Baghdadi (1776-

⁷¹ The ones under the garment: Hz. Ali, Fatma, Hasan, Hüseyin (the son in law, daughter of the prophet Muhammad and their sons).

⁷² Fourteen innocents: Hz. Muhammad, Hz. Fatma and the Twelve Imams who were killed.

1827), Ali Septi (1786-1870) and Mahmud Samini (1812-1895) after whom Dede calls the branch. The chain needs further research. That we have other Sufis in Dede's *silsila* who are not included in other Naqshi *silsilas* supports Bruinessen's and Weismann's claim that a mixing of the Qadiri and the Naqshi paths in this area took place (Bruinessen 1990, 2007 and Weismann 2007). Dede's *silsila* might be an example of this.

Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakkı (1703-1780) who was a disciple of Ismail Fakirullah (d. 1734) writes that his master was from Arab descendants of religious scholars, from the Shafi'i school of Islamic law, taught religious sciences in Tillo⁷³, and lived from the wheat and grapes he planted. He used to sleep little, eat little and talk little, a practice which was emphasised by the following Sufis and also by Dede. Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakkı does not mention about any Sufi masters educating Fakirullah but an experience of his master after which he started to teach: He went into a spontaneous seclusion for eight years which began with falling into a dry well, and when he was brought out, he hardly had any wounds but wanted to be left alone and said he had nothing more to do with this world. He had contacts with *evliya* during this time, and after that he opened his house to visitors (1993: 1102-1106). This kind of acquisition of knowledge, where the previous Sufis are met in the "liminal-imaginal" world, is called *uwaisi*⁷⁴ in the Sufi tradition –Veysel Karani whom Muhammad left his *khirkah*, the woollen coat although they never met, is known as the first *uwaisi* Sufi. This theme of departing from the normal way of life and existing in a state of unattainability and returning back as *veli* to serve people resembles the explanations of the *fanafillah*, losing oneself in God. In this period one is not able to carry out one's duties towards the

⁷³ A small town with an old history of Syrian Christians and Muslims which came under Ottoman rule in 1541. Tillo means in Syrian "high spirits" in Arabic, Til means the enlightened and Tillo "welcoming the enlightened" <http://tillom.com/tillo-tanitim/siirttillo-aydinlar.html> (accessed 8 February 2011).

⁷⁴ "In Sufi tradition, al-Khidr is the hidden initiator of those who walk the mystical path. *Uwaisis* are those who enter the mystical path without being initiated by a living master. Instead they begin their mystical journey either by following the guiding light of the teachings of the earlier masters or by being initiated by the mysterious prophet-saint al-Khidr" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khidr> (accessed 11 February 2011).

others and after returning it is only through the *baqabillah*, existing through, with, and for God, realising that only God exists, that one becomes a *kul*, servant.

Bruinessen writes in a footnote that:

The *alim*, scientist and mystic Isma`il Faqir Allah is best known as a Qadiri *shaikh*. The biographical notes in the *Ma`rifetname* [...] are, however, preceded by a lengthy exposé of the Naqshbandi path, which strongly suggests that the murshid-i kamil [the accomplished Sufi teachers] were also associated with this order. (1990: 21)

Bruinessen states that in the region the Qadiriyya was a widespread path and the Naqshbandiyya and the Qadiriyya were mixed there (1990: 338-339). It seems though that the Qadiriyya is represented in Dede's *silsila* mainly by Abd al-Qadir Geylani and the affiliation with the order as a formal institution is dubious, as there are no such sources. Besides, as Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakkı reports concerning the meeting of his master with a *dervish*, Ismail Fakirullah advised him to fix his (Ismail Fakirullah's) image in the middle of his forehead (1993: 1117); this is a common practice among Naqshis to bond with the master, and is called *rabita*. Considering these and the repeated theme that the masters of this branch get initiated in other *tariqahs* beside the Naqshbandiyya as we will see below, we are led rather to the conclusion that the other *tariqahs* were embraced but the Naqshbandiyya was considered to be the most mature.

Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakkı from the eighteenth century is the next Sufi in the *silsila*. He was interested in natural sciences as well as religious sciences. He is well known as a scientist and a productive author of Sufi themes –thirty-six books are attributed to him⁷⁵- but not as a *shaikh* of an order. His book *Marifetname*, which includes astronomy, astrology, anatomy, Sufi psychology, Islamic and Sufi principles and *marifet*, gnosis, is considered to be quite an advanced scientific source for its time. It is still well read for his description of the Sufi way which he calls *Irfan Yolu*, “the way to wisdom” where he describes at length the principles of the Naqshbandiyya and warns readers not to leave the rules of *sharia* reflecting the “orthodox” bent of the Naqshi path. He also describes the characteristics of the *evliya*, as it has always been an important subject in Sufism that the Sufi follower should be able to

⁷⁵ There is a list of them in this webpage: <<http://www.hikmetler.com/erzurumlu.html>>

differentiate between the “non righteous” master and the “righteous” master. It was also a practice of Dede that he sent some of his disciples to various *shaikhs* so that they could learn to discriminate.

Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakkı came to Tillo at the age of nine following his father who was a disciple of Ismail Fakirullah and he went to Istanbul in 1742 to study further. Dede’s books include some parts of his works. The attitude towards institutionalisation of the “spiritual schools” is expressed in an article on the spiritual journey of the Naqshi which is based on the *Marifetname*, and shows that the attitude has a longer tradition in the branch:

There is a good reason for these schools not to be official. Institutionalisation would bring results which are in contrast with the aim. An institutionalised university is formed and structured. Here the aim is just the opposite; it aims at moving from form to essence, from outer appearance to the inward meaning [...] But people have such a strong natural inclination towards organising themselves and institutionalisation that we see examples of ossification of these flexible and loose structured schools which obstructs the kind of education they are supposed to give. (Kayhan 2009: 285)

In the *silsila* Ibrahim Hakkı is followed by Hodja Bekir Efendi about whom I found no information. Abdallah Dihlawi (d.1824) was actively engaged in the politics of his time, like Imam Rabbani (Sirhindi) who had founded the Mujaddidi branch of the *tariqah* at the beginning of the 17th century. Dihlawi supported the Muslim community against the British invaders and the government. Besides, he was a powerful spiritual teacher and drew disciples from the Islamic lands outside India and sent them back to their home countries. He had about eighty eight *khalifs* who contributed to the spread of the order, Khalid Baghdadi the following *shaikh* in the *silsila* is one such example. Weismann writes that “his power of attention was of such great effectiveness that it became the equivalent of formal initiation” (Weismann 2007: 66-67). Formal initiation was not applied by Dede, either, although my informants did not bring it in connotation with Dede’s power; rather they interpreted it simply as part of his style which did not carry any characteristics common in the *tariqah* organisations, and which was free of formalities and rituals. It is reported that Dihlawi asked

that two poems be read in his burial ceremony, one by Bahauddin Naqshbandi and one by Ibn Arabi,⁷⁶ which reflects the special interest in Ibn Arabi in the branch.

Khalid Baghdadi (1776-1827), named as Hz. Mawlana Mehmet Halid Zülcenaheyn in Dede's *silsila*, was born in Shahrizur and was of Kurdish extraction. He came from a scholarly family, had had affiliations with the Qadiriyya which was widespread in the area and had already been well educated when he went to Delhi to study with Dihlawi. In a narration it says that he was made to clean the toilets of the *dergah* while he was in education there. One day Satan whispered in his ear: "How can a man of such high virtue and knowledge as you be made to clean the toilets of some sluggish dervishes?" He answered; he would do it with his beard if necessary. The narration continues, when he completed his education after ten months and was about to leave for Baghdad, Dihlawi helped him to get on the horse and held his stirrup to serve him. Baghdadi wanted to stop him but he answered: "While at the beginning we were assigned to make you clean toilets, now we are assigned to hold your stirrup. Go and enlighten the regions and the souls who are waiting for you in hunger and thirst. Now you are higher than all of us"⁷⁷. This narration features the fight against one's own conceit which is considered to be one of the biggest barriers on the spiritual journey, from the ethical point of view, and it also demonstrates the fluctuating nature of ranks and hierarchies which is a common theme in Sufi stories and anecdotes where, while a simple act of selfless service to people or animals can cause a higher spiritual rank, a small disrespectful act can hint at a lower spiritual state.

Abdurrahman Memiş writes that Dihlawi is the most renowned figure of the Naqshbandi *silsila* following Ubeydullah Ahrar because he reconciled the understanding of Sufism and scholars giving an end to the conflicts between them, and had a deep insight about the sociological context of his time. He had about eighty eight *khalifs* (Memiş 2011: 69). The Khalidi branch supported the reform policies of the Ottomans, but became distanced and critical when it took a turn towards westernization in the twentieth century. Some of his disciples joined the Mujaddidiyya branch in Istanbul to help with "supporting Sultan

⁷⁶ <http://www.gonullersultani.net/AR/AltinSilsile/30.html> (accessed 31 October 2011).

⁷⁷ <http://www.gonullersultani.net/AR/AltinSilsile/30.html> (accessed 31 October 2011).

Mahmud II's effort to revitalize the Ottoman Empire and re-establish law and order in its provinces" (Weismann 2007: 85). The Khalidis also made alliances with the local Sufi lineages of the Qadiriyya brotherhood (ibid.: 86).

There is no information about the following *shaikhs* in the *silsila* neither in the historical texts I was able to find nor in Bruinessen, nor do they appear in other *silsilas* of the Khalidi branch. Günerkan Aydoğmuş's *Harput Kültüründe Din Alimleri* is out of press although parts of it can be read from the web-pages about the *evliya* of the area. Süleyman Yapıcı's⁷⁸ book, *Palu: Tarih-Kültür-Idari ve Sosyal Yapı* (2004) includes similar information to Aydoğmuş's and is my main source about the other Sufis in the *silsila*.

Ali Septi (1786-1870) was a teacher in a *madrasa* in Kirkdirek village of the province Diyarbakır –the village is now within the borders of Mardin. According to Yapıcı, Khalid Bagdadi came to the village of Ali Septi as he was on his way back from India upon the instruction of Abdallah Dihlawi to take him to Damascus. Ali Septi accepted the invitation and became a disciple of Khalid Bagdadi and stayed with him in Damascus for eleven years then settled in Palu, Elazığ to teach. In one of the narrations about Ali Septi in Yapıcı's book, he proves his deep knowledge against an *alim*, religious scholar who thought *shaikhs* were uneducated people. Ali Septi asks the *alim* about a book which was studied in the *madrasas*, who in turn says what he had learned from the book. But upon hearing Ali Septi's interpretation of the book he feels that he does not know anything. Ali Septi tells him that "My dear Hodja, in the time of such and such *alims* there was a *shaikh* of such greatness as Imam Rabbani, and in the time of such and such *alims* the *shaikh* Muhyiddin Arabi. In a time when the *alims* are like you, even a *shaikh* like me is too much" (Yapıcı 2004: 215, 216). This narration is significant for three reasons: Imam Rabbani (Sirhindi), who is included in the *silsila*, is known to be a very orthodox and knowledgeable Sufi who wrote important works among which was a critique of Ibn Arabi's conception of *wahdat-i vücud*, unity of being, and both of these Sufis, who contradict each other in some points, are equally respected. Secondly the coming to being of knowledge is considered in interrelation with the

⁷⁸ He studied theology and is a municipality official in his hometown Elazığ in Educational, Cultural and Social Concerns.

context, i.e. as part of the general atmosphere of a given time. And it demonstrates the quick wittedness of the Sufis which is expressed in various narrations such as the one given here, the stories of Hodja Nasruddin being the best known examples, and which at times attracts the enmity of others. There are parallels to these aspects in my field. Both Imam Rabbani and Ibn Arabi are read and respected although the occupation with the texts of Ibn Arabi is more intensive. My informants told that when they met Dede they understood that they knew nothing not only in religious matters but in general. There are also stories of such quick wittedness: a *shaikh* who visited Dede was boasting because he dreamt of Muhammad the night before –dreams including the prophet are considered to be a sign of high spiritual status. Dede told him, “How can you find time to sleep while a thousand people depend on you, to say nothing of dreaming”⁷⁹? Another anecdote related by Doğu (Dede’s son) is that he was completing the noon prayer when a visitor came and sat in front of him although it is a common rule not to pass in front of a praying person. After the prayer was finished the man sarcastically said: “I have become your *qibla* [the direction of Mecca Muslims turn to when they pray and it symbolises a turn to God]”. Dede answered: “Come and be my *qibla* again in the afternoon prayer”, pointing at the impossibility of him being the *qibla* all the time. Such kind of energetic reaction is considered to be possible when the intellect is at its full capacity because the ego does not interfere by getting hurt, angry or flattered which would cloud the observation and thinking capacities.

The next Sufi in the *silsila* is Mahmud Samini Efendi (1812- 1895) and Dede refers to him to name his branch of the Naqshbandiyya. In Yapıcı’s book Mahmud Samini Efendi is mentioned as a *khalif* and successor of Ali Septi (ibid.: 215). When Ali Septi settled in Palu he founded a *dergah* (lodge), which was taken over by his elder son *Shaikh* Muhammed Nasih (ibid.: 211- 214). It is to be noted here that although Ali Septi’s *dergah* was run by his son after his father’s death and was obviously frequented by the community, the son is not considered to be Ali Septi’s successor. Yapıcı lists thirteen *khalifs* of Ali Septi and the name of his son is not among them; and still the life, teaching and acts of only two of them, Sayyid Ahmed el-Kürdi and Mahmud Samini, are explained (ibid.: 214, 215). These two are the ones who were accepted as the following *Murshid-i Kamils*, the accomplished Sufi teachers

⁷⁹ Narrated in an informal conversation.

of the path. Apparently the branch resisted the tendency to become hereditary and routinized which is seen in some Naqshi orders, nor does it attach sacredness to places.

Mahmud Samini was originally from Mardin but settled in Palu, Elazığ. He was educated by Ali Septi for thirteen years. He had a period of such seclusion that there was gossip about him because he did not even visit his master. Yapıcı writes that, Mahmud Samini said that at night in the realm of *mana* (spiritual meanings), he was sitting with the prophet Muhammad and many other *evliya*, and he got initiation also from the Qadiriyya, the Suhrawardiyya⁸⁰, the Chishtiyya⁸¹ and the Kubrawiyya⁸² –which means he could also teach according to the methods of these *tariqahs*- yet the Naqshbandiyya method was privileged. In a local web-

⁸⁰ Shihabeddin Sühreverdi (1155-1191) is also called Martyr Sühreverdi because he was executed in Halep for blasphemy. He went to Konya upon the invitation of Kılıçaslan II, in Diyarbakır and Mardin. He is also mentioned in Dede's books, and known as a philosophical Sufi who was a contemporary of Ibn Arabi and influenced him. Although he had a short life he wrote over a hundred books and most of them have survived until now in the libraries of Tehran and Istanbul.

⁸¹ The Chishtiya is now a widespread Sufi order in Pakistan but it is not known in Turkey. As I was looking for the connection, an explanation as to why it was entailed in this path, I found a webpage which points at its Damascus origins, which could explain why it was included in this branch. The pronunciation in Turkish sources is *Ceşdi* which is similar to this source:

Many people think that Khwaja Mo'inuddin Chishti is the founder of the Chishti order. [... But] The Chishti order of the Sufis derives its name from Chisht (pronounce: Chesht, hence Cheshti). Chisht is a small town near Herat in Afghanistan. [...] The first one to call himself Chishti was Abu Ishaq Shami. As the name Shami implies he came from Syria or even from Damascus (ash-Sham). He met a Sufi who directed him to settle in Chisht and from that day on he is known as Abu Ishaq Shami Chishti. He died in 940 C.E. in Damascus and lies buried on mount Qasiyun, where later on also Ibn al-'Arabi was buried. Looking at the date of his death we can say that the Chishtiyya order is one of the oldest, if not the oldest now still existing Sufi order". (http://www.chishti.ru/order_of_sufis.htm, accessed 5 November 2011).

⁸² "The Kubrawiya Sufi Order –originating [...] in Central Asia– was named after Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 618/1221) [...] known as the "saint-producing (lit. "sculpting or chiseling") shaykh" (shaykh-e vali tarash), since a number of his disciples became great shaykhs themselves. [...] Some of the more historically significant Kubrawi shaykhs were 'Ala al-Dawla Simnani (d. 736/1336) and Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh (d. 869/1464). The Nurbakhshi Kubrawi lineage embraced Shi'ism" (Dr. Godlas: *Sufi Orders and Their Shaykhs*, <http://islam.uga.edu/sufismorders.html#Kubrawi>), accessed on 5 November 2011).

page⁸³ Khalid Baghdadi is mentioned in the same way, in that he got initiated in these four *tariqahs* by Abdallah Dihlawi. According to the *khilafatnama*, the document of khalifahood, published on this webpage, Khalid Baghdadi was given *ijaza*, the authority to teach, in the Qadiri, Suhrawardi, Chishti and Kubrawi *tariqahs*⁸⁴. And according to the same web-page Khalid Bagdadi had been a Qadiri with Malamati behaviour before he met Abdullah Dihlavi.

Mahmud Samini had been a merchant but left his job when he began *irshad*, acting as a guide and companion in the spiritual path. He began teaching upon the request of some of his fellows before the death of Ali Septi, from whom he received the *ijaza*⁸⁵. He first used a mosque then built a house and a small mosque where he taught and also acted as the imam. We learn from the *Sohbetname* of his successor Osman Bedrettin that Mahmud Samini did not consider himself a *shaikh*, and was too humble to attach to himself any greatness, yet he was very impressive (in Kayhan *no date*: 406). Mahmud Samini's speeches mainly consisted of explanations of meanings of the Koran and the Hadith, and it was said that he never repeated himself, for his knowledge was so vast. He could answer the questions which people had in their minds (Yapıcı 2004: 221-223), an ability which is also reported by all my informants about Dede.

Osman Bedrettin from Erzurum (1858- 922) is a disciple of Mahmud Samini. He was also known as Imam Efendi because he worked as an imam for the third battalion. He had already had a good education when he met Samini as he had studied with prominent scholars in Erzurum. One of his teachers Ahmad Merami from Bukhara said that he should find another

⁸³ <http://www.gonullersultani.net/AR/AltinSilsile/29.html>, (accessed 31 October 2011).

⁸⁴ These four *tariqahs* and four more are also mentioned by Esad Coşan who was the leader of the Iskenderpaşa Community, the Gümüşhanevi branch of the Khalidi-Naqshî suborder (<http://www.iskenderpasa.com/B3D41F31-F992-460D-A857-E2E4BAE9DD0A.aspx>, accessed 31 October 2011). This seems to be a tradition of the order and complies with Weismann's claim that Naqshis have easily mixed with other *tariqahs* and had an ecumenical character (2007).

⁸⁵ *Ijaza* or *icazat*, proficiency paper was given by the *shaikh* of an order to the disciples who have completed their *suluk* and showed that they could act as a *shaikh*. This was ordained by the Ottomans in the 17th c. to hinder the degeneration of *tariqahs*.

master as he had already taught him everything he knew. He heard about Mahmud Samini from a friend when he was in Diyarbakir. But when he saw Mahmud Samini, he found him not confirming to the picture of a *shaikh* as he knew it: Mahmut Samini did not have an impressive appearance; he was a smoker, he had lost many of his teeth, was very humble and very tolerant. Yapıcı writes that Samini knew what was in Osman Bedrettin's heart about him and had to apply some *karamat*, wonder to convince him (ibid.: 241). Osman Bedrettin completed his *süluk* in eighteen days, staying in the *dergah* in Palu with him. Osman Bedrettin had approximately 200 000 followers from various parts of Turkey (ibid.: 242). His poems, a *Sohbetler- Gülzar-ı Samini* and his letters have been published; Dede's books include some parts of the *Sohbetler*.

The following two Sufis in the *silsila* were mentioned as the teachers of Dede. According to my informants Ahmet Kaya (d. 1944) who follows in Dede's *silsila* was the most important of his teachers. He was a relative of Dede. They first met when Dede was six years old. He lived in a nearby village to which Dede would go on foot to visit him, climbing over the hills. It was reported that when Dede asked him who would follow him, he gave an ambiguous answer and said that someone from the mountains came and took away all the knowledge. There is an ambiguity about him because he is mentioned as Ahmet Kaya (Kaya is the surname, and the surname law was legislated in 1934) or Keko (meaning father in Kurdish) by my informants as they heard from Dede. Further investigation about his life would be necessary.

Musa Kazım Efendi (1896-1966) is the last Sufi in the *silsila* and Henry Bayman⁸⁶ writes that he is one of the two teachers of Dede besides Ahmet Kaya. The recently published book on Musa Kazım by Bünyami Erdem (2011), a journalist and writer, is the only source I was able to find by coincidence as I was writing this chapter, and it has a great value because it is based on research using ethnographic methods and includes some analysis. Musa Kazım studied at the French School in Elazığ, and became a French teacher. He was not interested in Sufism when he was young. He could speak various languages fluently –beside French,

⁸⁶ Henry Bayman was a close disciple of Ahmet Kayhan from 1978 until the master's death in 1998. He publishes books about Dede and Sufism. http://hbayman.blogspot.com/2010_11_01_archive.html (accessed 21 August 2011).

Ottoman and Arabic which he learned at school, he learned the Persian, Armenian, Kurdish and Zaza languages (Erdem 2011: 29), which enabled him to converse with people from various cultures when he started teaching. He was interested in sciences, arts and poetry throughout his life. His first teacher in Sufism was Mehmet Efendi, and then he met Osman Bedrettin.

There are many points in his style which are similar to Dede's: he was respected and visited by members of other *tariqahs*, and he accepted and did not criticise people whose way of life was not in conformity with the norms of Islam, and he effected a change in them. Musa Kazım was able to “read what in one's heart like a book” and approach them accordingly in their own situation (ibid.: 56). Erdem writes that according to his research findings Musa Kazım had more female devotees than male (ibid.: 70), and most of the followers were of urban origin and educated (ibid.: 11). In the annual meeting I attended, I also observed that approximately sixty percent were female and as I was in search of informants most of the people I came across were of educated urban strata. Erdem writes that Musa Kazım was different from other Naqshbandi *shaikhs* because his community was open, and no rituals were applied (ibid.: 12). Sleeping little and *namaz* were the practices he emphasised the most.

Erdem names the path as the Khalidi branch of the Naqshbandiyya, and considers the teaching of Musa Kazım to be in accordance with the doctrine of Ibn Arabi which was summarised as *wahdat-i vucud*, the unity of being (ibid.: 42-57). He writes that Musa Kazım was initiated in five different *tariqahs* like his predecessors without naming those or describing the kind of initiation (ibid.: 215). He also notes that Musa Kazım did not name a successor, and is addressed as the “last castle of the Naqshbandiyya” by some (ibid.: 70). Erdem lists the names of some of his disciples –among whom is also Hadji Ahmet Kayhan– and adds that it is not known how many disciples he had. He was told that Musa Kazım had authorised five of his disciples to teach, but who these disciples were is not known to him (ibid.: 188).

Although Musa Kazım was pro-republican, he was arrested because there was an accusation against him that he influenced people's political opinions against the regime and that he acted as a *shaikh*. He refused these accusations with a defence paper that he wrote himself (ibid.: 88). According to Erdem, *Shaikh Said* –who was known for his revolt against the new regime which caused the prohibition of the *tekkes* in 1928– had sent for Mahmut Samini to support him, but Samini answered that he supported the new government (ibid.: 89). It was mentioned by some of the followers of Dede that Ahmet Kaya was quite influential in the

East of Turkey and had many followers, and he was among the religious leaders who was in approval of the new Republic and the abolishment of orders and *tekkes*. Berrak⁸⁷ reported that the dress code, especially the obligation of a hat for men, had caused much dispute, and Ahmet Kaya once went to the mosque and prayed with the hat on and when people asked what he was doing, he said he had converted the hat to Islam.

Erdem notes that in his research he was not able to interview the community members because Musa Kazım's closer community had reservations and mistrust about the research because of the media representations of the religious communities which they did not want to be affiliated with. So he restricted himself to the city of Elazığ and talked to people outside the close community as there were people from various *tariqahs* and cultures among Musa Kazım's followers (ibid.: 9-10). Erdem adds that another reason for difficulty in his research was that the members of Musa Kazım's community were split, and so very diverse in ways of life and attitude that they did not really appear to be following one path. He concludes that *tariqah* doctrines are effective only when the leader is alive; these problems arise because this community did not have a *tekke*, a lodge with their subsequent *shaikhs* who have the authority to give *ijaza*, which he implies has to do with the law (ibid.: 10-13).

The reservation was an issue I also had to deal with in my research although I do not agree with Erdem that having an institution would hinder splits and would erase the reservation of the followers. Such splits are not uncommon and have been the case in two communities recently after the death of the previous *shaikhs*, because their successors were not accepted by all of the members. Moreover I consider non-institutionalisation as a characteristic of the path –as we have seen- and it will be analysed in the next chapter in more detail.

7.4 Dede's Life

Ahmet Kayhan, addressed as Dede (Grandpa) or Efendi (especially after his death as a title of respect), was born in Malatya Pötürge, Aktarla village in 1898. According to Bayman⁸⁸, Dede lost his father when he was one and his mother when he was 14 years old and was

⁸⁷ Interview on 30 November 2010.

⁸⁸ http://hbayman.blogspot.com/2010_11_01_archive.html, (accessed 10 January 2011).

raised by his aunt. He spent most of his youth in poverty. He settled in Ankara in 1936 but shuttled between Istanbul, Ankara and Malatya for some time. He married⁸⁹ in 1937 in Ankara and had two daughters and two sons. After having several odd jobs and running three shops, he became a government employee at the State Waterworks, from which he retired, after which he was able to devote all his time to his students and visitors until his death on 3rd August 1998. In contrast to most of the Sufis in his *silsila* who were well educated before they became affiliated with Sufism, he had no schooling until his military service where he learned reading and writing when he was in his 20s.

Dede was known by a small circle and became more widely known after 1975, and especially after the 80s he was frequented by many visitors, although it is not known how many people were affiliated with him. He met Musa Kazım more frequently in the last ten years of Musa Kazım's life, as he had to come to Ankara because of health problems. An informant⁹⁰ told me that after the death of Musa Kazım in 1966 there was some confusion about the following and Ahmet Kaya's son and relatives came to Ankara in the seventies and found him and declared that they considered him as the follower of Ahmet Kaya and Musa Kazım –the oldest disciple of Dede I met, had met him in 1971. After his death Dede was accepted as the successor of Ahmet Kaya –also by his son- and of Musa Kazım. In Erdem's book, as we have seen, the succession of Musa Kazım is not clear. Hadji Ahmet Kayhan (Dede) is mentioned as one of the disciples of Musa Kazım and it is said that Musa Kazım authorized five of his disciples to teach (ibid.: 188) but we cannot learn from Erdem who they were or what Musa Kazım's followers' attitudes were, as the writer was not given access to that information. When we consider the multiple attitudes of the followers we can deduce that some of them turned to Dede while some others did not. Since Dede's death in 1998 there has been no succession. When he was asked who would succeed him, he said that he was leaving 1000 successors on various occasions, and according to Bayman he also mentioned 10 000 successors. The formation is acephalous since his death. I was also told

⁸⁹ Dede's wife was addressed as Hadji Anne (anne meaning mother) by his followers.

⁹⁰ Interview with Berrak on 17 December 2010.

that his son left Ankara because there was a tendency by some people to put him in Dede's place.

Dede related his experiences with Ahmet Kaya and venerated him very highly, yet according to my informants (Berrak, Hüseyin and Burcu) he said that his master's education was so strict and hard that he could not apply it in the same way to his students –Ahmet Kaya was known as quite strict whereas Musa Kazım was milder. Sinem said that, “He said that love did not always mean caressing, sometimes loving should have included a harder stroke but he saw that we wouldn't bear it”⁹¹. Sadık⁹² reported that Dede said that he himself had gained his learning via a difficult way, though the books which are available now everywhere make it much easier for the present generations. He had various health problems especially his back and stomach. He spent long hours on the praying carpet with his legs tucked under him, with very little eating and sleeping.

When we look at the narrations of my informants, we can conclude that Dede went through various phases in terms of his understanding and experience of spirituality. Berrak reported that Dede told her he was very prudish at the time that he became affiliated with the Naqshbandiyya. He had difficulties when he heard Keko, his master say: “people would ask for ‘blessing’ (*lütuf*), ‘benevolence’ (*ihsan*), ‘consent’ (*rıza*) and ‘providence’ (*himmet*)” from their master because for him these were asked only from Allah. The following day his master added that “they ask for it with the consent and permission of Allah”⁹³, which was a relief to him.

One book which Dede regarded as important was *Forty Hadith* by Sadreddin Konevi –who is considered to be the most important disciple of Ibn Arabi. It is among the books Dede had republished in more contemporary Turkish. Berrak and Hüseyin reported from Dede that after Keko's death in 1944, he nearly became a *majzup*, completely carried away, for six years until he came across the book *Forty Hadith* by Sadreddin Konevi in a bookshop in

⁹¹ Interview on 28 November 2009.

⁹² In an informal conversation with him.

⁹³ Interview on 5 November 2010.

Hadji Bayram. The first page of the book brought him to his senses. This page said: “from his *Zat*, Essence, to his Essence, with his Essence and for his Essence”. This process of losing the sense for the reality, being followed by a coming to senses with a realisation of Being is in accordance with the states of *fana* (loss of self) and *baka* (unification) as was explained above in the experience of Ismail Fakirullah.

Niyazi Mısri’s *Diwan*, a collection of poems, was the second book which had a special place for Dede. He often cited his poems and some of them are included in his books. Niyazi Mısri lived in the 17th century, and was affiliated with the Khalwatiyya, the Malamatiyya and Ibn Arabi School⁹⁴. Dede also said that Hermeticism was very close to him⁹⁵, and he put an article on Hermeticism, *Hermeticism: The University of Spiritual and Material Sciences of its Time* into one of his books (no date: 205-212) and also published it in the form of a booklet.

In his books the methods and teachings of the Naqshi, the Qadiri and the Khalwati paths as well as various Sufis such as Abd al-Qadir Geylani, Ghazzali, Ibn Arabi, Mawlana Jalaladdin-i Rumi, Yunus Emre, Hadji Bayram Veli, Niyazi Mısri and Aziz Mahmud Hudayi are included, and his followers believe that he was to be considered as beyond any *tariqahs*. He was visited by people who have been affiliated with other *tariqahs* such as the Qadiri, Mawlawi, Nurju and Jerrahi as well as graduates of the Faculty of Theology, Alawites and others with a Christian background or a strong interest in Hinduism. Erdem writes that Musa Kazım did not privilege one of the schools of Islamic law over the other overtly (2011: 84), and this can also easily be said for Dede.

Dede lived in a period during which Turkey underwent wars and radical changes. He was a defender of Atatürk in his role of founding an independent republic, said that Atatürk acted upon the calling by God⁹⁶, yet criticised the republic for its neglect of religious education⁹⁷.

⁹⁴ For further reading: Rya Kılıç, 2007, *Osmanlı Sufiliğinde Ibn-l Arabi Etkisi: XVII. Yzyıldan ç Sufi*, <http://yayinlar.Yasawi.edu.tr/files/article/67.pdf>.

⁹⁵ Interview with Burcu on 11 September 2010.

⁹⁶ Interview with Burcu.

He encouraged his followers to study history and I heard him talking about the history of the West with a critique of the colonial period. A totalising critique of the West and its morality either by participants or by Dede is not to be found. He criticises rather his followers and Muslims in general because they are not as studious as Europeans and because Muslims have lost the ethical stand (ibid.: 375).

7.5 Conclusion

From this chapter following the traces of the life stories and narrations of the Sufis in Dede's *silsila* we can conclude that non-institutionalisation, anti-structure, lack of rituals and ambiguity in hierarchies and succession and non-sectarianism are the main characteristics of the branch. There are no material clues that someone is a member of the community either through initiation or through apparent shared characteristics in behaviour or appearance, and the network is diffuse also for the members as they don't know it to its full extent. This equivocalness can also be observed in the language of the master as we will see in the next chapter.

There is an intellectual bent where knowledge acquisition in all areas of life is valued, and the works of older Sufis are widely read. There are references to Abd al-Qadir Geylani's core knowledge and Ibn Arabi's doctrine as well as to other Sufis from different eras.

The multiplicity of followers is not foreign to the Sufi scene in general, especially in terms of social strata, but the Samini branch seems to be different in attracting people from non-conventional and marginal groups who would be excluded from most religious communities because of their way of life which is outside the scope of traditionally accepted norms. The masters themselves are also not conventional in behaviour and self-representation. Another common feature is that the majority of the followers are from the educated urban strata of society and women are highly represented.

On the other hand what seems like an anarchic form of Sufism at first sight, encouraging multiple interpretations and ways of life, and resistance against institutionalisation and

⁹⁷ Interviews with Burcu and Hurşit.

tangibility, reveals similarities with the Naqshbandiyya in its founding period when looked from the historical perspective –even if it does not fit into the present perception of the Naqshbandiyya order- and a continuation of the style found in preceding historical times draws us to a conclusion that it follows a tradition.

This chapter also offers clues about the Sufi perception of life. When we look at the main theme of Sufism we find that it is ontological, and this ontology is based on experiences which arise through an intensive occupation with the Koran, the Prophet and the other Sufis under the guidance of a master who has himself gone through this process. The concepts of *fana* and *baqa* which are at the core of Sufism hint at the cycle of perception where being is perceived in its multiplicity which is the common perception; this is followed by the state of *fana* where the multiplicity disappears along with the self, to be found again in *baqa* where multiplicity is experienced in its Unity or as Being and the self becomes all-embracing. It is belief in the doctrine of Unity before the experience and the desire to attain it which leads to the experience. This realm/world where we are normally in is considered to be the surface of Reality. The surface perception becomes fissured through practices mainly consisting of the recitation of the names or attributes of God (archetypes), contemplation, eating, and sleeping little, and the acts, sayings and affect of the master resulting in the opening of the liminal realm/imagination which is between this realm and the other realms. When the liminal realm becomes activated, many experiences are carried over to it. The Sufi going through this process/journey, experiences a loss of self, *fana* where the connection with this world is suspended. This state is followed by a return, *baqa* where the multiplicity is experienced as having one single cause and Being which is called God. The Sufi then becomes a master who is willing to serve others to make the journey or to lighten their burdens in life.

Many of the characteristics mentioned about the Sufis or *Insan-ı Kamil* here bring to mind Weber's concept of "pure charisma". According to him this kind of charismatic authority can only exist in the initial phase and "becomes either traditionalised or rationalised or the combination of both" when a succession is sought because of the ideal and material interests of the disciples to maintain the community. The succession is sought on the bases of either distinguishing characteristics of charismatic qualities, or revelation, or designation by the charismatic figure, or by heredity, or by designation of the administrative staff, or by transmission of the charisma through rituals. This leads to the routinization of charisma which is an oxymoron of pure charisma leading to contamination and hence the loss of its characteristics (Weber 1978: 246-247). Weber writes that the source of charisma is regarded to be of "divine origin" and is "not accessible to the ordinary person" (ibid.: 241); in this it is

not transmittable or teachable. Yet we see in this path an emphasis on education by “charismatic” masters –dead or alive- and practices which are aimed at activating a talent or what might be called “spiritual intelligence” that might draw the individual to go through such an education. Here it seems that through anti-structure, migration, diffusion and the ambiguity of succession the branch has resisted routinization as against the institutionalised orders where succession is important for the continuity of the community and ideals. The maintenance of a community built around a charismatic leader through successive leaders who are chosen or designated according to rationalised features of the initial charismatic figure calls to mind the order organisations which are found after the death of the leading Sufi, whereas here the community and the succession are diffuse.

The reason why this branch of the Naqshbandiyya has remained out of the scope of scholarly work can be its tendency to non-institutionalisation, invisibility and its followers’ reserve. Another reason might be that the followers were not affiliated in political or economical activities as a community, as were the other branches of the Naqshbandiyya –although there are individuals in various political parties some of whom have been in leading roles. It can be said that the members do not behave as a community but as individuals and build political, economical or marital partnerships with various individuals or groups –such as political parties- outside the formation. On the other hand the facts that it had remained out of scholarly work and popularity in the media, and the reservation of the followers about this, must also explain –at least to some extent- why the formation was not rationalised for the aims of justification.

CHAPTER 8

A CONTEMPORARY DISCURSIVE TRADITION

8.1 A Heterotopia from Outside – Plurality and Anti-Structure

Visiting Dede meant entering a “different place” where various kinds of people with various cultures, historical times and spaces, the past, the present and the future were intertwined. There and through him human and non-human were conflated, the dream and wakefulness were blended, sacred and profane were united. Meeting Dede was similar to liminal rites as described by Turner, which are “in and out of time and in and out of secular social structure” (Turner 1991: 96). His person and his living room are heterotopias, “absolutely different places” where “all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault 1984: 3). In this section I will present how these were realised and what the rules and practices of entering this “heterotopia” were.

8.1.1 A Heterotopia, and Its Rules and Practices

Sitting in his living room mostly meant to be surrounded by 30-40 people of all sorts; men and women, young and old, urban and rural, modern looking or conservative; a palette of visitors ranging from black chador to miniskirts and even, I was told later, various political figures from left to right, some of whom held high positions in parties or governments. Various professions were represented, from academicians in the humanities or positive sciences, workers, farmers, artists, theologians, imams or merchants. Some people were also affiliated with other *tariqahs*; Qadiris, Mawlawis, Jerrahis and Nurjus. Visitors were also from various religious backgrounds; Alawites, Sunnis, Christians or sceptics. However these affiliations were replaced by a non-sectarian understanding of Islam in the course of visiting Dede, through his influence. When one was with him all these differences of age, gender, culture, ethnicity, socio-economical class and various affiliations lost their weight, or at least one saw that these did not change Dede’s attitude towards people. Still people were not reduced to homogeneous beings deprived of their individual differences. Ruşen explained that this was possible when everything was considered in its own right, not in relation to others. He recounted that Dede said “I have considered everybody who enters this room as

Haq (the Real). For the ones who know, everything is *Haq*”⁹⁸. This disposition marked Dede’s liminality; a blend of “lowliness and sacredness”, and of “comradeship” (Turner 1991: 96), he did not impose himself on others, he recognised and respected them in their uniqueness as *Haq*, and he was their comrade.

One could go to visit him at practically any time of the day. He was almost always available except if he was very ill or was out to visit others as he used to do before his leg was broken. People stayed mostly for one hour or two, but shorter if Dede’s health condition was very poor. On Fridays after the noon prayer his living room was the most crowded. He advised his followers to go to a different mosque each time so that no mosque would be identified with the formation. The visits would occur at very different frequencies; a few people went there almost every day, some weekly, but many irregularly, especially the ones coming from other cities or countries. Some people stayed in Ankara for some months or years, visited him frequently during that time and then went back to their hometown, or moved to other countries. Those who had an interest in Sufi teaching continued their occupation with books and practices. Miriam is an example of this: she stayed in Ankara for some time and turned back to her own country from where she writes about her experiences and the teaching and she makes translations and disseminates them on the internet. There were also some others who had met Dede only a few times or even only once. There are people I know in this category for whom Dede’s personality retained a strong memory but who are not practicing Sufism, as well as others who are intensively occupied with it. There were, of course, also some who were not impressed by him.

The events were not structured and the subject matters were chosen spontaneously. The topics were mostly about the prophet Muhammad, his love, his light, his ascension, stories from other prophets from Adam to Jesus Christ, tales of Sufis, relations with God, with the environment, the knowledge of self, interpretations of *suras* in the Koran and the Hadith, the necessary practices especially the meaning and importance of *namaz*⁹⁹ prayer, the

⁹⁸ Interview on 5 November 2010.

⁹⁹ I will keep the Turkish word *namaz* instead of the common Arabic term *salah*: structured prayer which is practiced five times a day.

experiences and insights of Dede or the visitors. He advised some prayers or some *zikr*¹⁰⁰, sometimes to the whole group of visitors, sometimes to individuals. He sometimes let people discuss matters or commented about people around. Sometimes people asked questions. He also let someone read out of the pamphlets or articles which were always laid out on the table in numbers. These reproduced or commented on parts of the contents of the books. Most of the time he commented on the context or told related stories, sometimes he asked someone for a comment.

He always asked his visitors if they had questions or wishes before they left and most of the time he sent people away after some time so that new comers could find a place. People lined up in front of him before leaving, kissed his hand and asked for his advice on personal matters. He was consulted in matters of health, education, profession, private problems, and important decisions.

The text had a very central place in the formation. Dede said every piece of writing was valuable. They were the ideas of the human being which were valuable. One should read everything, and if one saw a piece of newspaper or any other piece of writing on the street one should pick it up so that it would not be damaged. Dede encouraged his followers to read, write, interpret and share them with each other. He always said that his visitors should take the articles and pamphlets on the table and distribute them friends and family members, read them and come again. While he advised some to study Sufi literature, to some others he said they should not deal with it as they did not understand it.

He emphasised the importance of “bringing it closer” to the present, to the body. This meant that Adam, a prophet, a story, an experience of someone were to be found here and now, and first of all in the self. Most of the texts or stories were old but they were understood as addressing to the present. Reading meant a confrontation with the text; “read and come and tell us what you have found” (Sumru¹⁰¹). Ruşen recounted:

¹⁰⁰ Commonly written as *dhikr*, recitation.

¹⁰¹ Quotations from Sumru are all from the interview on 19 October 2010 in this section.

I had read something and was talking about it at home, there were also some guests. My wife criticised me saying I was not telling what the text said but my opinions. The next day I went to Efendi, he gave me the same text and said “read”, I started reading, but he said again “read”, I did not understand and continued reading, he said again ‘read’ then I started to talk about my understanding of the text as I did the night before¹⁰².

Namaz was the most crucial of the practices. Other than this he invited his adherents to follow more general ethical rules: “Leave the illicit *şehvet* [avarice and lust] and illicit *menfaat* [gain and interest], practice *namaz* and be the cure for the troubled” he said repeatedly (Sumru, Berrak and Burcu¹⁰³). “Do these things instead of dealing with *tariqahs*. Eat and drink and do everything but leave the way of the *nafs* and the Devil. This is enough for you actually, enough for a life time” (Sumru). The most perfect example of the human being was Muhammad and one of the definitions of *Muhammadiyah* according to Dede was “giving” (Sumru).

He also advised his followers to take: “Be like bees. Go about the flowers and gather honey” (Rayiha¹⁰⁴). He himself did not hesitate to take and integrate and distribute what he found beneficial and beautiful, as exemplified in his books which are collections of Sufi learning. They came about through some disciples compiling them. He also sometimes gave topics to research and write about. Then he let them read the texts out and made some corrections and additions. The most circulated prayer among the members and on the web is Saint Francis of Assisi’s *Peace Prayer* as modified by Dede, and its theme is giving:

My God, in every place that we go, favour us that we may be: not a war-monger, but a reconciler. Oh Lord, favour us that we may be a sower: of love, in place of hate; of forgiveness, in place of suffering; of hope, in place of despair; of enlightenment, in place of darkness; of joy, in place of sorrow.

Help us to be: not of those who focus on faults, but those who kindly veil them; not of those who seek consolation, but those who console; not of those who expect

¹⁰² Interview on 27 August 2010.

¹⁰³ Interview with Berrak on 30 November 2010, with Burcu on 15 August 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Interview on 9 November 2009.

to be understood, but of those who show understanding; not only of those who want to be loved, but also of those who love.

Like the *rain* which bestows liveliness without discrimination upon every place it falls, like the *sun* which enlightens all existence with its light, without discrimination; like the *earth* which bestows its blessings ungrudgingly upon everyone who tramples it; and like the *night* which blankets faults and mistakes: favour us that we may be among those who prepare for the purification of faith while the world rests.

The givers, not the takers; those who are forgiven because they forgive; those who are born with Truth, those who live with Truth and those who die with Truth and are re-born to eternal life: destine us to join their ranks! Amen". (Translated by Marnie Tunay)

Dede commented:

Let's try *inshallah*¹⁰⁵, let's acquire the ethics of water, the soil, the sun and the night, *inshallah*. Amen. These are *azim* (great) ethics; the sun, the water, the soil and the night. [...] Whatever people do to them, they don't complain. These are the four great poles¹⁰⁶". (*Sohbetler*¹⁰⁷, 2011: 295)

One's state always changed for the positive; if s/he had worries or problems they were gone and a feeling of relief took over. When people visited Dede with lots of questions in mind, sometimes they asked their questions directly but most of the time they got an answer to their questions in the course of the encounter. One way of answering was indirect, giving examples of other people, telling stories about people; it is a sort of anonymous answering. Another way was speechless, one went to him with questions and went out with an insight about the question; "I was a bundle of questions and confusion. I visited him, he was too sick

¹⁰⁵ As God wishes.

¹⁰⁶ In the spiritual hierarchy of Sufism *Gavs* literally meaning 'diver' is the highest rank a human being can achieve. He is the 'master of the age,' 'world-displaying goblet,' 'universe-displaying mirror' (tr. by Marnie Tunay). Abd-al Qadir Giylani is considered the "Gavs-ül Azam" the greatest *gavs* of all times. The four poles, *kutb*, come after the *Gavs*. Dede takes this concept of *kutb* and uses it in a different context.

¹⁰⁷ This book was published by a disciple thirteen years after Dede's death under Dede's name. It is a transcription of some of Dede's audio-recorded speeches.

to talk, there was nobody else, I just kissed his hand and went out, totally freed from the questions which I couldn't even articulate in sentences. My mind became quite calm and clear" (Simgé¹⁰⁸). No matter how many people were there at the moment everybody left with the satisfaction to have been addressed personally.

Friends who had been there together often talked about the topics which were addressed afterwards, and often found out that they had heard slightly different things, remembered different aspects; or one person heard something which no others heard. This was interpreted as the multiple layeredness of Dede's speech and it is understood to be related to the different questions and perceptions people had or to their preparedness for the piece of information.

The relation with Dede was not restricted to meeting him or sharing experiences about him, it was rather a full time occupation, encompassing one's sleep. Dreams and visions were important fields of experience and valuable tools of understanding Dede and Sufism as we will see later in the section *Making Sense of Dede and Creative Imagination*.

8.1.2 Plurality, Individuality and *Sharia*: Oxymorons?

Burcu¹⁰⁹ reported that once a priest from England came to visit Dede. He was well read in Ibn Arabi. There was also an imam among the visitors. Dede told him; "Look, you are the leader of the Christians", turned to the imam and said "you are the leader of Muslims". He made an all embracing movement with his hands and said "I'm the sun". It was this inclusivity that made it possible for people from various cultures to come together on the principles which lay beneath the culture, and made institutions, norms and identities which were exclusive in nature incompatible with his formation.

Plurality was at the heart of the formation. In the living room of Dede strange kinds of combinations of people came together. It was always a source of awe how people who were so different in many ways came together in his room and also sometimes outside only with

¹⁰⁸ Interview on 4 February 2011.

¹⁰⁹ Interview on 11 September 2010.

small frictions that Dede always put down. Dede did not consider people at face value, according to their social identity and did not allow people to criticise each other because of differences in culture and personality. The cultural embeddedness of people and their personal differences were taken into consideration. There was an awareness of the individuality both by Dede and by the group. People felt individually accepted with their different ways by Dede. Everybody was seen as embedded in a culture and unique.

The aversion to imitation is a striking and common aspect of all of my informants which became apparent in their language and ways of life and interpretations. Berrak¹¹⁰ considers that shared traditions or culture made people similar and the religions came to break with the tradition, and she even scorns people in the network who just repeat what Dede said and means. She thinks “we have to speak from our own understanding, say something new”. Ruşen¹¹¹ said: “Dede used to warn us not to put on someone else’s shoes by mistake when we were leaving him¹¹². He meant don’t imitate each other”. On the other hand he advised his followers to be in harmony with the culture that everybody was in. But this had to do rather with appearances: when it came to thinking he asked for individuals to have courage and remain wakeful.

He sometimes took sides when there were disputes among the visitors. Sadık¹¹³ reported from a disciple of Dede:

She was a bold woman. She was wearing a mini-skirt. There came some conservative men with those traditional beards. When she saw them she felt their critical look but didn’t care. But then they started to mutter: how dare she dress so in the presence of a *veli* of such high rank. She answered “how can you turn your eyes from him and see me in the presence of a *veli* of such high rank?” Thereupon they turned to Dede asking for support and he said to them that they had already received their deserved answer.

¹¹⁰ Interview on 5 November 2010.

¹¹¹ Interview on 27 August 2010.

¹¹² It is a custom taking off the shoes when entering a house.

¹¹³ In a casual chat in December 2009.

On another occasion he soothed a disciple when he noticed that he became uneasy when a woman came and sat and talked in a manner which was considered insolent, whispering to him that he should not worry as she would begin practicing *namaz* soon¹¹⁴. And indeed most of my informants said that they started practicing it before they knew it.

How Dede regarded people's disposition, intention, circumstances, social environment and advised them to do different things accordingly are among common narrations of my informants. That someone was conscious about his/her circumstances, his/her possibilities and restrictions both culturally and individually, or in other words the awareness of one's "reality" was an important aspect of knowing oneself. Kamran¹¹⁵ recounted: "Two women were sitting side by side; one was apparently from conservative Islamic surrounding and the other was European. The European woman was wearing a scarf and the other one was not. Dede asked her to take off her scarf and give it to the woman next to her". Hurşit's father, who lived in the East of Turkey and had a long beard marking his religiosity and *tariqah* attachment, came to visit Dede. He advised him to shorten his beard when he was in Ankara¹¹⁶. He also advised some other *tariqah* members who wore special garments to put on ordinary clothes. Irem came from a social environment where people were highly individualised and like to demonstrate their differences from others. She explained her experience concerning difference according to what she had learned from Dede:

If you are very different, you will attract much attention. If you highlight your difference in a society I take this as going against courtesy. This is what I understand of the Sufi concept "*edep*", decorum. If you ignore people and act very differently disrespecting their norms –some might even envy this difference, but it doesn't matter. [...] Decorum means being invisible, disappearing.¹¹⁷

Many questions about norms were addressed to Dede, such as whether some professions were allowed or what was the right way of clothing, especially for women. He reacted

¹¹⁴ Interview in the mosque on 22 October 2009.

¹¹⁵ In a casual chat in December 2009.

¹¹⁶ Interview on 2 April 2011.

¹¹⁷ Interview on 7 November 2010.

differently depending on the person asking the question, and directed attention away from appearance, *zahir*, towards content and meaning, *batın*. Sumru was a ballet dancer and shy to say this in front of the more traditional people because of the reactions she might get. On one occasion Dede asked her to tell the visitors what her profession was although he himself knew it, he said: “say it, say it, don’t be shy”. And then he said to the visitors: “They turn and turn and say Allah all the while”. To Mısra¹¹⁸ who asked him what she should put on not to disturb the norms, he answered she should open her wardrobe and choose the clothes that she disliked the most: she was very cautious of her appearance to the extent of vanity.

He also respected people’s own norms and did not want them to change their appearance, convictions or habits because they thought he would prefer it this or another way but rather out of their own will and understanding. Burcu asked him about his opinion of Maharishi she and her husband were following. He said he wanted them to compare and decide themselves, rather than acting according to his opinion¹¹⁹.

I am citing here a conversation that took place as Sumru and Rayiha were together at an interview related to our subject¹²⁰, together with the interpretations of the informants:

Sumru: Once I went to Efendi with Sinem and Irem, there was a young girl there with a head cover. Dede stood up and said to us: “Look, she doesn’t uncover her head and because of this she cannot work, either. Hence her mother must take care of her. Talk to her and convince her to uncover her head. If you can’t convince her, you should cover your heads”.

Rayiha: He always says “*ikilik çıkarmayın*” (don’t cause factionalism, binarism). That’s it, don’t cause factionalism, binarism.

Sumru: He just threw such a thing in the space and left. As Efendi was going to the other room, the girl immediately said: “They should cover their head my Efendi”. First we paused, then Sinem tried the most to convince her. She said to the girl: “You believe and we, too. You have covered your head. But our religion says: be useful, don’t become a burden to others. You should care for others, not oblige

¹¹⁸ In an informal conversation.

¹¹⁹ Interview on 15 August 2010.

¹²⁰ 19 October 2010.

others to take care for you. Learn sciences, go to the university, find a job; then you wouldn't become a burden to your mother". We talked to the girl for half an hour or so, tried every argument but she did not accept. Then Efendi came back and didn't mention the subject again.

Rayiha: What a shame that he had to deal with such matters.

Serap: What an interesting method.

Sumru: His methods were always interesting. And think of the girl, she came to him, apparently she trusted him but she never changed her mind.

Rayiha: At one time we decided among us to visit Dede with covered heads. I also went there with a scarf on. Efendi looked at me and asked: "Who are you?" I was wearing the scarf superficially not whole heartedly, only to obey the rules. I immediately took off the scarf and he reacted: "Hmm, it is you, Rayiha".

Sumru: I also did the same. I was sitting there feeling awkward with the scarf on. First he didn't care about me. Then he said "What is it? Take it off." He always considered what one could do and what not. He didn't violate the habits coming from the culture. He didn't offer anything we couldn't do. [...] But another time he said to some visitors about us: "they don't do it now, but they will cover their heads". I was shocked. All the consequences came to my mind, I would lose my job and I would be excluded from my family. It was a horror. As we were leaving, he said: "you are allowed not to cover your heads".

Kamran¹²¹ related that a disciple of Dede, Furkan who was from the faculty of theology brought about the discussion in the media if the call for prayer should be in Turkish –it had been from 1932-1950 during the reign of the Republican Party and with the coming to power of the Democratic Party it was again changed for Arabic. Furkan was for its being kept in Arabic. Dede asked if they intervened with his prayer, he answered "no". Then there was no problem, Dede said. Another group was there whose death d *shaikh* fought against the call for prayer in Turkish in 1940s. To them he said they should follow their *shaikh*. He asked Cahit who came from a Kemalist environment if he loved him. He answered "yes". Dede said to him: "Good, I love you, you love me. That's it".

Dede confronted his visitors with the differences among them and asked for respect but he also warned his disciples to remain alert and said, his living room was not different from other places, there were every kind of people and they had to learn to remain alert

¹²¹ In an informal conversation in December 2009.

(Berrak¹²²). He sometimes asked for confrontation especially if it was not a matter of culture or idiosyncrasy but the claims of people about God. Selim said that it was important to listen to the signs in the heart whether it got wider or squeezed when one confronted things, and narrated that once Efendi was praying in the room at the back when a woman came, and related how she was connected with cosmic energies and got inspiration from the heavens:

My heart felt squeezed but I didn't say anything because we were at Dede's place. There was another friend who was more experienced in *tasawwuf*, he didn't say anything, either. Efendi called us to him, he was very angry with us because we had listened to her without rejecting her –these things from the heavens, they are all lies or illusions.¹²³

He reminded me of the verses in the Koran where there was a warning about this such as: “And who could be more wicked than he who invents a lie about God or says, ‘This has been revealed unto me,’ the while nothing has been revealed to him? - or he who says, ‘I, too, can bestow from on high the like of what God has bestowed’? (Koran 6: 93). But Dede himself did not expel the “false enlightened”, and treated toward them with kindness. About one of them he commented that they would put her in a mental hospital or prison if he did not attend to her¹²⁴.

All of my informants agreed that it was not easy to make rules applicable to every apparently similar situation from what he said, they were equivocal. Dede's acts and sayings were time-, context- and individual-dependent, he did not advise the same things to everybody and each time –the ethical rules and the practice of *namaz* mentioned above being the exceptions- and what he said was difficult to work out. This was one important reason that his visitors paid most attention to what he said to them not to the things he said to others.

Dede's attitudes were puzzling, different according to the situation and open to multiple interpretations which perplexed and challenged people to think and be occupied for the rest

¹²² Interview on 30 November 2010.

¹²³ Interview in the mosque on 22 October 2010.

¹²⁴ Interview with Sumru on 19 October 2010.

of their lives. Most of my informants expressed that they did not have a need for community for the continuation of teaching and practice. Burcu¹²⁵ expressed:

His teaching was so powerful and attentive that you didn't need much *zikir* or long *sohbets*. He is always talking to you through your life. In comparison, the *dergah* organisation –having a community– is a prison. I'm trying to explain something difficult but the secret lies here. This is why we are such various people and not a community where the members resemble each other. Efendi is always in our life, always with us. You continuously watch how he affects your life.

8.1.3 Conclusion

Dede's living room brought people together from various socio-economical milieus, ethnicity, gender, age, cultures and personalities. It also brought various historical times and people together. It was not like any other place, it was a heterotopia. This was possible because people were brought into a liminal condition by Dede where these structures lost their ground. Liminality was made possible because he was so different, always puzzling, and there was anti-structure on various levels; institutional, teaching and relations.

The selves existed neither in void of social structures nor in fullness of them. The void was there because they experienced things that were not related to the secular social structures, or rather were beyond these, and the fullness because these still influenced their perceptions. People were autonomous about what they made out of the experience and heterogeneous in and among themselves and in a "uniform condition" and in "heteronomy" (Turner 1991: 95) in the face of Dede. His attitude did not change towards people according to the ranks and categories of the social structure. However he approached them individually in their present context. These altogether created a dynamic space, always in becoming, ambiguous, attractive and alert.

When Dede's attitudes to various situations are considered, it strikes one that he does not move from an apparent norm to be applied to similar situations similarly, but that there are various considerations according to which he makes choices that are not always comprehensible to people around him. One is challenged to think anew in each situation

¹²⁵ Interview on 15 August 2010.

taking into consideration the various elements that play a role. Although this creates an open, “free” field, and room for subjectivity, it also creates tension. It is a heterotopia.

The variety in Dede’s reactions can be understood by looking at Ibn Arabi’s understanding of *sharia*. Dede commented on him as someone who “explicated the *sharia*¹²⁶ (the laws and regulations)”. According to Ibn Arabi there is a regulation to every state and situation, *sharia* rules cover everything because it is the decision/command of Allah on things arising from the knowledge of things, and God is the All-knowing. He writes:

Although the laws of *sharia* are pertinent to the entities of the phenomenal world, they are related with the states of these [they are situational]. That any being is under the obligation of a law arises from the situation it finds itself in. Thence something is responsible under a law not because of its being in itself but because of the state it finds itself in. For while Reality is stable, states change and with them also the command of the *sharia* on that being changes, along with the state that the being finds itself in. [...] Therefore for someone who has consideration, *sharia* regulations cover every state. This is similar to *Haq* covering and penetrating all beings.¹²⁷ (Ibn Arabi 2006: Book 4: 108)

In this understanding of *sharia*, *sharia* is situational, that is, there is a *sharia* arising and to be applied for in each and every unique situation. Dede’s attitudes towards people reflect this understanding. Burcu¹²⁸ expressed this relationship when she said she was able to understand Ibn Arabi’s rich and complex texts through Dede.

¹²⁶ Interview with Berrak on 17 December 2010.

¹²⁷ This is a translation of the Turkish translation of *Fütûhât-ı Mekkiye -The Meccan Revelations* from the Arabic by Ekrem Demirli, and he has used the words “hal” which I translated as state denoting to the inner state and “durum” as situation which denotes to the outer circumstances: “Şeriatın hükümleri dış varlıklarla ilgili olsalar bile hallere bağlıdır. Herhangi bir varlığın bir emirle yükümlü olması, içinde bulunduğu durumdan kaynaklanır. Öyleyse birşey, kendisinden dolayı değil, içinde bulunduğu hal nedeniyle sorumlu olmuştur. Çünkü hakikat baki iken haller başkalaştığı gibi şeriatın bir varlık hakkındaki hükmü de (varlığın içinde bulunduğu) halin başkalaşması nedeniyle değişir. [...] Öyleyse akıllı insan için, şeriatın hükmü bütün hallere yayılmıştır. Bu durum, Hakkın varlıklara yayılmasına ve nüfuz etmesine benzer”.

¹²⁸ Interview on 14 May 2011.

The heterotopic space created by Dede enables people to retain their idiosyncrasies, and to develop subjectivity. One is impelled to take initiative and responsibility in his/her actions which must be based on decisions arising from, firstly, understanding the situation and, secondly, deciding what would be the best to do in this situation. Another effect is that it deprives one of a field against which s/he can fight or project. The occupation with the “outer” either in terms of fighting or obeying loses its ground as one is transformed into someone whose duty it is to solve puzzles and act in the best way in each situation. One learns not to stick to one’s own perceptions and interpretations, not to take oneself so seriously and to be open to the interpretations also of others. One remains liminal. It also makes it difficult to rationalise and institutionalise his teaching and practice.

8.2 A Heterotopia from Inside – Liminalities and Making Sense of Dede

The capacity of a *veli* in the eyes of the beholders is either determined by the traditional discourse or constructed in time in relationship with a *veli*. In this section the latter will be examined as my informants’ experiences belong rather to this category. The aspects of the traditional discourse which is rejected by Dede and his followers will also be put forward. Moreover the typology of the informants will be discussed before they had met Dede and after having met him. What was appealing to them about Dede and what aspects of Dede did they bring to the forefront? In what ways did they deal with Dede and their lives?

8.2.1 Sainthood as a Field of Contestation

People coming to see Dede can be categorised mainly in two groups in terms of relationship with Dede and Sufism. For the first group, the centre of the relationship is not Sufism with its doctrines but Dede in his capacities of *veli*. This group held a preconception of the historically, traditionally constructed discourse of *evliya*, and in that, *evliya* had access to God and therefore could affect the course of events, solve problems and take away burdens. *Evliya*’s body and spiritual body could affect the quality of other bodies. In this they and their tombs were “sacred” and coming into contact with these changed things. This group visited him from time to time to find solutions to their problems: health, business, education, disputes in the family, financial problems, important decisions. Among the group stories of *karamat*, miraculous deeds, related to him were also brought to the foreground. His *türbe*

(tomb) is now visited by some with the same reasons, and food or amulets are left overnight because it is believed that they will be loaded with his special ability to heal the sick or change things for the better¹²⁹. I was told that Dede's granddaughter started going to the mosque and *türbe* complex regularly after having discovered such items there to stop such attempts. This aspect of his following belongs to that category known as "popular Sufi saint cult".

Although Dede answered every question and gave his suggestions, he refused to be seen and consulted as a "fortune-teller" or a "Hodja" who writes amulets or breaks the evil spells. He said openly that he was not these (Berrak¹³⁰). Yet he hardly ever turned people down. One occasion known to me where he did turn someone down is reported by Miriam and is related to an ethical decision:

[A] member of the Turkish mafia, a hit-man who had run afoul of the mafia and whose own life was now in grave danger, came to beg Ahmet Dede for help, to save his life. "I can't do anything for you" was the reply. "I am a *shaykh*, of the Nashqbandi way. I teach '*edep*' (civility, courtesy). What have you to do with me? Go back to your village. There is nothing I can do for you."¹³¹

The other group may also be divided into two in terms of their embeddedness or otherwise in the Sufi field. The members of the first group had grown up in Sufi tradition, or had already much knowledge and experience with Islam and Sufism, some of them were *murshids* who had their own followers. They accepted Dede both as their friend and also someone from whom they could learn and get inspiration. They considered him a *qutb*, spiritually the most accomplished of his time. They often also brought their own followers to meet Dede and to be inspired by him. Some of these were also in contest with Dede, and came from time to time to check how he was doing. There were also such who came once or sent a message and

¹²⁹ The representation of this group is mainly through my informants, I interviewed one person in the mosque who could be categorised in this group.

¹³⁰ Interview on 5 November 2010.

¹³¹ <http://fakirscanada.blogspot.com/2008/08/post-15-interlude-2-haci-ahmet-kayhan.html>, (accessed 15 January 2011).

asked him to become their dervish –two such cases were related by Ruşen¹³² and Sadık¹³³. At Dede’s place one learned about the” Sufi scene” and that there were so many smaller or larger groups.

The other group where my informants are from were either not from traditionally Muslim backgrounds, or had a period of distancing themselves after a religious upbringing. Their introduction or reintroduction to Islam and Sufism was initiated by Dede. For them Sufism was a perception and practice that influenced almost every aspect of life, and there was no clear cut separation between the “sacred” and the “profane”. They considered Dede as a guide, consultant and teacher in every aspect of life. Their relationship to Dede is almost continuous, in terms of both time and space, as dealing with him in most cases has become equivalent to dealing with life. Dede’s capacity of being a *veli* is learned through confrontations with him and enriched by literature. Although they all use the concept of *Insan-ı Kamil* (the Complete or Realised or Perfect Human Being) to define him, Dede’s being and capacities are still a matter of ambiguity and puzzling for them. Their ideas about him are multifarious especially concerning his motivations. A point of agreement is that he has access to *hakikat*, Reality, and acts accordingly.

8.2.2 Before Meeting Dede: Liminality of Negation

Most of my informants met Dede in their twenties. They seem to be people who are liminal and would be open to new perceptions and do not have stale preconceptions. Sadık¹³⁴ knew a doctor who was very skilled and proposed to examine Dede. Dede did not pay any attention to the possibility of being examined by a good doctor; his response to Sadık was that if he was young he would understand him, and otherwise he would not.

They were part of a network of educated middle class urban people; some of them came from educated elite families who took part in the development and modernisation of the

¹³² Interview on 5 November 2010.

¹³³ Interview on 14 August 2010.

¹³⁴ Informal conversation in February 2010.

Turkish Republic. They had cosmopolitan tendencies; experiences abroad, multicultural partnerships, or friendships and occupations with traditions going beyond the local: Some of them were confronted with Eastern religious traditions: Buddhism or Hinduism, some others with Western philosophy, literature and arts –some of them are artists professionally- some were engaged in Marxist groups which mark them as individuals critical of the modern capitalist society. The traces of these tendencies can still be seen in their discourses, perceptions and attitudes. Most of them were outsiders to some extent or “different” than the others as they could not identify completely with one ideology or culture completely or only for short periods because of the multiplicity of their interests, and critical outlook on socio-political matters. This “neither/nor” position which marked their identities before they met Dede can be called a “liminality of negation”.

When the biographies are studied a common feature is having tried out various ways of life and philosophies before meeting Dede. Their lives were experiential before meeting him and it continued to be experimental afterwards, though the experience became more mental rather than trying out various ways of life. In their biographies it strikes one that there are combinations which would be considered mutually exclusive. To give three examples which seem to be the most extremes: Rayiha came from a family where there were various military officers including her father. The wars, what Turkey and the family had lived through and the most welcomed foundation of the republic were daily topics in her family. Neither the father nor the mother –a primary school teacher- was specifically educated or interested in religion. Her aunt who lived with them had left much impression on Rayiha as a religious and wise woman. Rayiha read Mathnawi by Rumi when she was in the high school and was impressed by it. She became affiliated with Marxist groups and read Marxist literature during the university education but found the groups too aggressive and the occupation too dangerous as there were many who were arrested among her friends. She wanted to find “love, peace harmony and beauty¹³⁵”. Then she got interested in the hippie movement. The death of Janis Joplin made her realise the self-destructivity which she thought was part of this culture and ideology. When she started to work as an opera singer, she was also disappointed as there was much competition, gossip and complaint and she felt herself as an

¹³⁵ Interview on 9 November 2009.

outsider there. As she was then introduced to Dede in 1981, she found what she was looking for there.

Tarik spent his childhood in a village where he had religious education from his grandparents; his father was a local musician and he remembers these days as idyllic. He then became politically active on the left during his high school education in Ankara and then started studying in the conservatory opera department –which is normally categorised as supporting the bourgeois arts– during which time he met Dede in 1983. He said that he could still combine all of these in a way that they complemented each other rather than being in conflict: He sometimes sounded the prayer-call at the mosque of Dede, sometimes gave folks music concerts where he played the Turkish lute and sings, and also sang at the opera. He found that Marxist ideals are in harmony with the Islamic ones¹³⁶.

Cahit came from an elite Kemalist urban family that distanced itself from the popular cultures, and where Islam was considered as such. He was educated as an architect, active as a Marxist, practiced jazz music, and was seriously engaged with the philosophy and history of Western and Eastern traditions. He then found an interest in Hinduism to the extent that he left his high ranking position in a government office to attend to a six months seminar abroad and became a mentor, after which he met Dede. He was critically engaged with all of his interests which caused disputes with more loyal adherents of each tradition¹³⁷.

Before meeting Dede, some of his followers had experiences which went beyond the ordinary perception, or they were interested in existential or spiritual questions which brought them closer to the typology of those who take an interest in the “New Age Movement” in the West. On the other hand most of them had met Muslims who had made a positive impression on them. Both of these factors made them willing to meet Dede and to be open to the experience. For Sinem the grandmother was an example of the wise Muslim

¹³⁶ Interview on 23 March 2011.

¹³⁷ Cahit became one of the advanced disciples of Dede whom I also met and by whom some of my informants found inspiration as it will be explained in the next section. He died in March 1998. These were told me by his wife in an interview on 15 August 2010.

while the parents were not specifically interested in religion. Sadik was to some extent confronted with Islam as a child, and had experiences going beyond ordinary perception in his drug-induced “trips”. Hurşit’s father was a Naqshi and he listened to many of his conversations with friends from *medrese* where he was introduced to Islamic philosophy and courtesy. Irem was brought up in a family where Islam was very negatively viewed but they had a domestic servant who was very religious and she found her very sympathetic and prayed often by her side when she was a child. Burcu also comes from an irreligious environment and was practicing transcendental meditation when she met Dede. She remembered an experience, rooting her interest in her inclination in her childhood:

I was five or six years old. I was standing by the sea. My body felt so light, there was no feeling of temperature, neither hot, nor cold, and I was so light as if I was flying. I held my head between my hands so that this feeling should not get out of it and remained there. I have never forgotten this. Maybe I had been looking for such a taste. [...] Whatever I did, there was always a feeling that there should be something else¹³⁸.

The critical outlook and an anti-authoritarian tendency towards popular social, political and religious matters, and not being satisfied with the given and questioning it was not only relevant for my informants. A more traditional informant I met in the mosque told me that he was a religious person before he had met Dede, but most of the time he had problems when he went to mosques to complete the Friday prayers because he had to utter his critique about what the imam told in the sermons¹³⁹.

The desire for broader understanding, perception, emotion, experience and power which went beyond the mundane was an important motivation that led them to find interest in Sufism. These characteristics are at the same time prerequisites and demonstrate a talent which is called for in Sufism. Most of the informants had the idea or sensation that there had to be more to life than what they were presented with; a deeper reality, a deeper sense and more to feel and perceive, beyond the restrictions of the society and the self. These were expressed by some informants explicitly as searching for the “more beautiful” (*Rayiha*), the

¹³⁸ Interview on 17 December 2010.

¹³⁹ Interview on 22 October 2010.

“more powerful and more energetic” (Ruşen), “more knowledge, seeing, understanding” (Berrak), “another taste than what was to be found in the mundane” (Burcu), “to be open completely” (Simgé).

8.2.3 After Meeting Dede: Liminality of Affirmation

Dede’s presence, actions and sayings were deconstructive of the usual way of thinking and perception. His effect started or intensified a process of reflecting about the self, its acts and habits, finding out the attachments and presumptions and working on eliminating them as well as a change in perceiving and understanding the world, and new possibilities, all of which seem to be an open and endless process. They found that although they were not quite established and were critical of the socially constructed structures they were highly influenced and restricted by their categories. Now that many structures were being deconstructed by Dede they were on the way of becoming creative thinkers.

Power, freedom and meaning were interrelated in the narrations and lives of my informants. Interpreting life events from various perspectives, where there was always a possibility of more interpretations that would make them strong enough not to be overthrown by daily struggles, existential anxieties, pain, wars, disasters and injustices in the world. Dede was an important factor to keep them motivated. Even if an understanding on the global level does not seem to have been achieved after the confrontation with Sufism, on the personal level they can handle their life events as processes open to interpretation. The life stories of the prophets and various Sufis who had been executed or lived through great pains helped most of my informants to cultivate a disposition where personal or general disasters were not responded to with riot or repression, but rather as events which they tried to understand. Or they accepted them as a reality which could not be altered and should be taken as is when a solution was beyond one’s power. I have observed how Rayiha used the life story of Hallaj-i Mansur, who was executed brutally, in a time when she suffered much.

It was not only about acquiring a wider perspective but there was the possibility of a rupture where the perception was turned upside down altogether. Dede expressed his rupture of perception: “One day I saw that everything I considered to be benefaction was evil and

everything I considered to be evil was benefaction". This was welcomed as it meant regeneration and a new life or "a kind of rebirth", as expressed by Hurşit¹⁴⁰.

Generally the focus was directed to the self: to understand and transform it so that new ways of interacting with the environment were found, and to another life-time goal which was to understand Dede and get closer to him, which meant resembling him. These people learned that a way of dealing with problems was to be active and creative with their perceptions and solutions. It was a common experience that a problem changed according to the sufferer's perception and disposition. So any problem was considered as a challenge for change on multiple layers where a change of perception often brought about a solution which had not been thought of before.

Few of my informants considered the others as the source of their problems –or at least not the only source. There was no strong tendency to blame political systems, ideologies or modernity as the cause of happenings. The close contact with history through Sufi literature, where the emphasis was on human psychology and the relationship with existence and God, made it possible to consider events from a non-historical perspective where the root of problems was considered to be the ego. The other was found within, the pharaoh, the *kafir* (infidel, the veiler of realities) and the hypocrite were aspects of the self. Dede also encouraged them to find various archetypes such as Adam, the prophets and the angels within. He said they were all here and present in one's self. The limits of the self were widened to include the good and the bad.

There was a tendency to try to widen the limits of one's self in order to be able to endure more when problems seemed too great, or to attain an understanding in which the problems lost their power. Rayiha repeated often that Dede always said "be wide". This width was a wide perspective as well as a tolerance where the limits of the self to endure and to transform were widened.

Being open to change and different perceptions and focusing on broadening the limits of the self and acknowledging the other within: I call this the "liminality of affirmation".

¹⁴⁰ Interview on 10 April 2011.

8.2.4 The Signification Process of the *Insan-ı Kamil*

In Dede's case the "width" was experienced as being inclusive of everything and activating a change from within. People came to understand in time that he was not separated from everybody around him. Berrak remembered:

Once a woman slapped her daughter in the back room, there was a cry. Efendi asked if someone was beating someone, as his back hurt. And another time he sent me to visit a sick woman at the hospital. She was mentally ill and was having a really hard time. I brought her some food. When I was reporting to Efendi about the visit, he said he was full.¹⁴¹

Sinem recounted:

I guess, he didn't consider the people coming to him as different from himself. It was as if they were all his offspring. [...] It felt as if we had come out of his body. You feel so. The *wahdat-i vucud* (the unity of being) is maybe something like that. Everything is One and we are derived from him but actually a part of him.¹⁴²

Confronting someone like Dede changed the perception about the capacity of human beings. Everything they saw, and heard at Dede's place was new, very different than from everywhere else. Dede's inclusivity, nonjudgmental attitude and that he found it worth devoting all his time and energy to people even when he was quite ill, cultivated hope and trust. The experience with Dede where "there was a solution to every problem" (Sinem¹⁴³) reinforced hope and gave these followers strength to continue trying to look for new perspectives and solutions and to begin anew each time also after his death.

The bond between Dede and people was based on a feeling of mutual acceptance and love as many formulated it. They remained attached to Dede and Sufism mainly for the love, wonder, trust and satisfaction they felt. A state in which one experienced peace, ease, joy and regeneration, cognitive and emotional opening were also activated by contemplation, prayer, other practices and Sufi literature.

¹⁴¹ Informal conversation on 10 February 2012.

¹⁴² Interview on 28 November 2009.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Sadik¹⁴⁴ explained that in whatever “psychology” he went to Dede, he came out with a different one, and this widening, changing, and opening was an experience that was repeated each time. He had a history with politics and drugs, had been to Europe for months and had run various bars in Bodrum. A friend of his from childhood and then also in politics called him and connected him to Cahit. His description explains the hope he felt in meeting Dede, which underlies all the experiences of encountering him that have been related to me in the course of this research:

Cahit Abi said “leave everything and come”. I said that I had nothing anyway, just a suitcase filled with a few clothes. Cahit Abi said “leave them, too”. I wouldn’t come if he said take them with you. [... Then] you see him, an old man, sitting there and you want to be like him. You say “Oh God, let me be like him!” You don’t know at that time what you want. You have thrown your arrow to the most distant target possible. This is our misfortune and fortune.

He had not heard of the concept of *Insan-ı Kamil* at that time but the perfection he saw in Dede as a possibility gave him hope to try to get closer to it. For Sumru¹⁴⁵ Dede was someone who showed the beauty she had in herself. Sinem explained it this way:

Because he showed us in his example the most perfect state a human being could be, he gave us hope, and he still does. [...] I admired him and emulated him, tried to establish what he showed us upon my cultural basis. He sat there without changing for years, there was nothing pretentious in his state, it was so as it was, and without excluding anybody.¹⁴⁶

Burcu¹⁴⁷ said that *evliya* made you think things that you had never thought before and one had to change all the time. Ruşen¹⁴⁸ emphasised that the *arif*, the enlightened, always changed one’s orientation. He gave special importance to originality, courage and creativity in life, thinking and works of art, as he was an artist. Dede was an endless source of

¹⁴⁴ Interview on 30 August 2011.

¹⁴⁵ Interview on 19 October 2010.

¹⁴⁶ Interview on 28 November 2009.

¹⁴⁷ Interview on 15 May 2010.

¹⁴⁸ Interview on 9 April 2011.

originality and surprise. Once he found him with a pair of toy scales which he asked him to hang on the chandelier. Ruşen asked what it was, he answered one side of it was spirituality and the other was materiality, and when they were in balance thought would flow. He should not deal with the thought but take care that the scales were in balance, and if one side was heavier he should not empty it to find the balance but put more into the lighter side. On another day he clapped his hands in the hospital where they were together and said when the spirituality and materiality met they would make a sound, i.e. an original thought which would cause a change.

One of the most important measures of being advanced spiritually was the capacity to look at matters from a different angle which caused a broadening, according to my informants. This broadening that one experienced both emotionally and intellectually was something that they could not resist. It was also not a one-off experience but repeated with each confrontation, and continues still although there is no physical contact any more.

8.2.4.1 Healing

They experienced Dede's power of knowing and acting beyond ordinary human capacities. There are various narrations of his effect in healing illnesses where the doctors saw no solution or advised an operation. Dede most of the time advised against operations and sometimes an abrupt or sometimes a slower healing took place: Burcu¹⁴⁹ had Keratoconus, cornea degeneration, in an advanced stage, and was wearing lenses. She had not known Dede for long yet, before she said anything Dede asked her what was wrong with her eyes and advised her to take off the lenses, which she didn't do, thinking he must have misunderstood what it was. In a year the illness arrived at such a stage that she almost lost her eyesight completely. The doctors advised her to have an operation but Dede didn't allow it to be done, instead he advised her to eat liver and apply saliva in the eyes every day in the morning. He also told Burcu's friends to pray for her. She was unable to work and wanted to leave her post at the university which Dede stopped and told her that she would get well. Such a rapid change occurred that she could not bring herself to go to the same doctor again because she did not want to face the doctor asking what was happening. After the summer

¹⁴⁹ Interview on 15 August 2010.

holidays she was able to see again with eyeglasses, and in three years' time the healing was almost complete. A relative of Lokman had a kind of cancer and was pregnant. The doctors told that there was nothing to do. They visited Dede:

He asked if we had been to the doctor. We said that they said there was no hope. He said she has got well. [...] A few days later she had an appointment with the doctor. They checked her, she was cured. They asked what we have done with her. What could we say? We said that we didn't know, we just gave the medicine he prescribed. Now she is healthy and has a child.¹⁵⁰

8.2.4.2 Irresistibility and Intimacy

The relationship with Dede has a compulsive nature and has characteristics of love relationships which are based on pleasure arising from an elevation of emotions and broadening of the limits of the self. Tarik was only twenty two years old and had combined arts and politics which gave him satisfaction in his life, and he did not want to change it. He learned about Dede from his brother and Lokman, and was puzzled to see the effect he had on them. He decided to solve the puzzle by meeting Dede. He considered himself as someone who was good at analysing and questioning. He would remain objective and would be guarded against him with his many questions.

There is no way that you remain objective there. [...] The first meeting is incredible. Everything was over at the first meeting. He uses such a high, eloquent language, I don't mean intellectual, he was talking with common language, but the meaning he gives to the words, and his voice. [...] I can sincerely say I was out of myself, he enraptured me. It was a shock. I could not ask any of my questions. [...] This was repeated each time I went there. Knowledge, will power, intellect don't work there; he captivates you. I found a method; I said *Elhamdulillah* [as God will], whatever he asked me and evaded any confrontation in this way, and just sat there in his presence. His whole posture, state, language, delicacy and charm –there is no word for it- impressed everybody so deeply. I talked to the people about it, everybody is after this delicacy. This is not something that you can forget; this is something so rare. I have met and read many intellectuals. If I use the classical language this is the *marifet* [gnosis], the knowledge of Allah –not that I know what Allah is. But he explains it, he captures you. This is also why people go to the *türbe* now. [...] For me *veli* is someone you cannot question.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Interview on 14 November 2009.

¹⁵¹ Interview on 23 March 2011.

Tarik wanted to run away several times but was unable to, he found himself there again, sometimes after months. I have heard from two other members of the formation that they wanted to quit but they could not even if there were intervals between visits.

Burcu expressed the satisfaction she felt and how it made her feel different from others:

You do the things other people also do. But the things which are the climaxes of their life are not your climaxes. Your climax is when you deal with Sufism, read the texts, meet Efendi, talk or think about him; and especially when you practice the *namaz*. With the others you pretend as if you were the same, as if you were enjoying yourself much, not to hurt them.¹⁵²

Sinem¹⁵³ said that she was ready to be friends with anybody who would bring information about Dede; what he did and what he said. Rayiha said that everybody saw in him what s/he was looking for. For her who was looking for beauty, he appeared as the most beautiful person in the world: “I was mesmerized. He has an opening effect”¹⁵⁴.

Hurşit¹⁵⁵ had a Naqshi *tariqah* background through his father, he spent his childhood reading the literature which was commonly read in *medreses* and listened to many discussions on the topics, which were all in Kurdish or Arabic. He learned Turkish properly only at secondary school and read all the world literature –mainly French- which he could find in the school library. When he came to Ankara to study law, he first tried to join a religious community but he was thrown out of it because he asked too many “inappropriate” questions. He then refused to be affiliated with any *tariqahs* again because the restrictions repulsed him, especially such that were created by hierarchies. Besides, the worshipping and rules that the religion entailed did not make sense to him. Then he became part of a literature and philosophy group. He decided that the time of *shaikhs* was over. What he had learned from the tradition, he considered as mental enrichment but as having no place in his life anymore

¹⁵² Interview on 15 August 2010.

¹⁵³ Interview on 7 November 2010.

¹⁵⁴ Interview on 9 November 2009.

¹⁵⁵ Interview on 16 October 2011.

because he was disappointed at their inability to bring solutions to the problems of the modern world. After some time he realised that some of his friends began neglecting the philosophy and literature meetings, and when he asked they mentioned Dede. His reaction was a strong rejection: “I know the *shaikhs* well. They are liars; they can’t give one what they promise. Don’t go to him”. Sometime later a friend brought him to an advanced disciple of Dede. He found this disciple was hierarchical. He was disturbed, and felt assured that it was no place for him. After some time, however, because his friends insisted that Dede was different he wanted to see him for himself:

The air there was sticky, I felt so. The room was filled mostly with women. But there was something else about him. I felt there was something different there. But I didn’t know what. It felt like e.g. a butcher is cutting the meat, he is skinning the sheep. You are a passerby and ask him if he has water. While he is working on his sheep perfectly well, without stopping, without even looking at you directly, he says ‘look, here is the glass, there is the water. If you like, you can take the glass in your hand, and take the water with the other hand. Raise the hand holding the water, and when you tilt it the water will flow into the glass. It was like that. What struck me was how he made his thing so perfectly. I can express my feelings I had at that time with these symbols. While he was doing his thing, he was telling me where to find what I was looking for and how to use it. And I would do my own work; the freedom of this! [...] I was wearing torn up jeans and a green military jacket. He doesn’t look at your form [...] When we were leaving, he asked what I wanted from him, why I came to him. I said that I wanted nothing. Actually I had a lot to ask for; love, job, money everything I needed in life. [...] The reason why I didn’t ask for anything was actually because I didn’t really want to go there again. I was surprised, but my relation with Dede had not begun at that time yet.

Then he met Cahit and his resistance was broken down: “He was like us: Someone, who was struggling with the questions of life; not someone looking down from above and knowing everything. No ranks. [...] I was not praying because it didn’t give me pleasure. I learned to get pleasure out of *ibadet* [worship] from Cahit Abi¹⁵⁶”. For Hurşit the *evliya* cut you off from your habits both mental and psychological, and remind you of God:

Cahit Abi always changed the direction, changed the psychology of one, this is *fetih* [opening]. In whatever psychology you went there, either good or bad, he

¹⁵⁶ Many young people who met Cahit thought that Cahit and Dede worked as a couple, Cahit made them understand things which they could not otherwise understand. This is explained in more detail in the section about networks.

changed it, he adjusted it anew, and he cut off your mental ties, attachments. This is what I understand of ‘reminding one of God’¹⁵⁷. We had thought he was like us. But he was not, he was such a sharp sword that he was able to cut without meeting any resistance. This is what is meant by the “light of Allah”¹⁵⁸.

Hurşit’s experience also had a compulsive nature. He could not resist although he wanted to, because it brought him an opening up of his mental activity which gave him most of his pleasure without bringing him into relationships where he had to reciprocate by accepting the hierarchical ranking, and without even asking for it; it was a free gift. He had both artistic, philosophical and anarchistic tendencies, as well as aggression. The latter was smoothed by Dede and Cahit and channelled to the study of Sufism, especially of Ibn Arabi, in the network to his satisfaction. He also found that his philosophical and artistic tendencies were elevated, and he also continued finding inspiration in European philosophy and literature.

There were many quite young people visiting Dede, and most of my informants were in their twenties when they met Dede. His style easily dissolved resistances and ruined the preconditions they had against Islam. Especially among them such anecdotes of Dede where their energetic and rebellious spirit was satisfied were a cause of delight. He was very accessible, personal and close. The “sacred” somewhere high up, cold, untouchable and fearful was brought closer and was loved intensely in his person. Sadık, himself an ex-drug user, reported:

A group of young people, who loved dancing and smoking marijuana, and I don’t know what else, had heard of Dede from friends. When they went to visit him they found him dancing lightly to the music on the radio. He told them that they were calling him on the phone –meaning their “trips”- and he was answering ‘Hallo, Hallo’ but they were not hearing, and at last they did.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ “Reminding one of God” is a sign of *evliya* in the traditional literature.

¹⁵⁸ A characteristic of Hurşit is that he refills the concepts he had learned in his traditional training with fresh meanings through his experiences with Dede and Cahit –this is common also in the other informants, who all have their own meanings for the concepts.

¹⁵⁹ Informal conversation in November 2009.

All the informants emphasised that Dede's affect was more through his presence than his speeches, although his use of language with its clarity, careful choice of vocabulary, and witty and open style were all remarkable. It was not what Dede said which really mattered but his state and "putting something into one's heart"¹⁶⁰. Their hearts and minds were open to him, they felt enclosed by him and they could also feel him depending on their capacities. The intimacy with Dede was to such an extent that people were sure he knew everything about them including things they themselves did not know, their past and future potential. Hurşit¹⁶¹ defined *rabita*¹⁶² according to his experience that it is being filled with each other. Burcu found that he knew one thoroughly, better than anyone else, including oneself. She told:

It is said 'wherever you turn to there is the face of Allah, or 'I'm closer to you than your jugular vein' or 'when two people get together Allah is always there as the third'. We have experienced this through him. [...] He knows me before I know myself, he warns and protects me.¹⁶³

Lokman¹⁶⁴ felt that: "when you were with Dede even if there was no talk, you felt he was doing something in you, he was continuously changing something, cleaning, putting something in and taking away something, you felt this; it manifested itself as a kind of energy". Lokman sometimes dealt with a question and then forgot about it until he went to Dede and got the answer for it. In his narration we also see what Dede means to him:

In time when you experienced things with him you understood he had knowledge in every aspect of life. But what kind of a knowledge? He said something to someone and something else to another. He talked according to the situation of the person. In time you feel such great trust. You realise that you don't know anything and what you have done in your life. [...] [Harabi] says, what you call the *sharia* is not the *sharia*, what you call the *tariqah* is not the *tariqah*, there is a *tariqah* within

¹⁶⁰ Rayiha in an interview on 9 November 2009.

¹⁶¹ Interview on 10 April 2011.

¹⁶² The Naqshi practice of fixing the image of the master on the forehead to connect to him.

¹⁶³ Interview on 15 May 2011.

¹⁶⁴ Interview on 14 November 2009.

the *tariqah*. What you call the truth, is not the truth. [...] I thought since Allah is so near it was as if Allah was manifesting himself through him, I felt so. [...] You feel a strange connection, sometimes you dream of him, he advises some prayers, you do them, things begin to change. [...] His love flows and you try to be worth it although you cannot.

Simge¹⁶⁵ was reciting the *sura Ihlas* as often as possible –Dede had advised a recital a hundred times a day for forty days saying that it would change the chemistry of one. When she went to visit Dede he said that she should do it counting¹⁶⁶ as he was going past her to go to the other room. That he knew she was practicing it, and without caring about counting, surprised her because she was in her first months of visiting him. After some time she saw that this kind of intimate knowledge belonged to the ordinary with Dede. She commented:

It was like a safe zone, or the source of life. You understood there that Islam meant peace, tranquillity, joy and vitality. Efendi always found new things to tell because he talked according to the things people had in their hearts at the moment. He came into your heart and mind and cleaned it up, tidied it up, organised it, made necessary corrections, added necessary connections, opened the blockages every time anew; not only with his words, a very short stay there was enough. It was as if it was a domain he could just enter and work there. When you left his place you felt joyful, balanced and regenerated. You were filled with love for every creation, for the prophet and thankful to God who has created these.

Sinem commented that:

He didn't do anything special to any individual. He didn't say let me do this favour to Sinem –though he did favours from time to time. It was like going under the sun, getting warmed up and changing the colour of your skin. You will get warmer and change your colour as much as you try to follow what he says and acquire his state (*haliyle hallenmek*).¹⁶⁷

This understanding and seeing people enabled Dede to remind one of the abilities s/he had and encourage her/him in this. When he advised something, it included the capacity and the condition to use the capacity. Such advice was also the matter that people had to think about the most, as it was not always easy to understand, but they felt like what the person was

¹⁶⁵ Interview on 4 February 2011.

¹⁶⁶ In the Naqshbandiyya counting the *ziker* is considered important.

¹⁶⁷ Interview on 17 January 2009.

made for when followed. To Rayiha who was a passionate person in her relationships, he advised “Hold your fire in you, you will be then like a stove and warm your environment”¹⁶⁸. He said to a visitor: “I see something in your head, write it”. He became an author of various books. Bayman writes:

He would quickly discover the forte -the strongest virtue- of a person. He once told me that only a moment was enough for a true murshid (Islamic guru) to take the snapshot of a person --I'm inclined to call it a kind of spiritual X-ray. He would then cultivate that virtue of the person, also supplementing this with whatever “vitamins” were deficient in a student's constitution.¹⁶⁹

His granddaughter asked him once when she was a child, how he was able to know so much about people and answer their questions. He said “when you sleep you dream, I also see them as if in a dream”¹⁷⁰. Sinem¹⁷¹ said that she observed that he was not always in the same state, sometimes his knowledge seemed endless, at other times he was a normal human being. His acts were enacted by a knowledge which did not originate from him as he denoted: “He said tapping his body that ‘if God did not let me know, this is just a piece of wood’”¹⁷².

8.2.4.3 Making Sense of What Dede Said

In the narratives about Dede four features stand out: his complexity, unpredictability, love and knowledge. Trying to make sense of Dede, contemplating on him, is an intensive occupation. What Dede said was not always easy to understand. Meanings became clearer or changed in time as one changed. It was also common that one forgot what Dede said and suddenly remembered it when going through an experience. Here are some examples:

¹⁶⁸ Interview on 9 November 2009.

¹⁶⁹ http://hbayman.blogspot.com/2010_11_01_archive.html

¹⁷⁰ Related by Berrak in an interview on 5 November 2010.

¹⁷¹ Interview on 17 January 2010.

¹⁷² Interview with Rayiha on 14 January 2010.

Sumru said:

When he said something it was better to accept it but then think over it, investigate it. It was always like that with him. There were things he said that I accepted literally without thinking over them thoroughly, and then when I saw how they evolved in my life I was always surprised.¹⁷³

She had a tendency to believe and obey without much consideration, but then she discovered that many things he said were tricky for her.

Hurşit¹⁷⁴ recounted that the first time he visited Dede, he said to him “Be wise and discerning (*Akilli ol*), and don’t go into prison”. At that time he thought that Dede denoted to a possibility that he might go to prison literally.

Only years later I discovered a potential in myself, a black hole, a kind of craziness in my mind. It was a warning against it. I had to deal with this black hole. This doesn’t delete the literal meaning, though. On the other hand I don’t think that this is special to me; there is a shared field of craziness in our unconscious.

Burcu¹⁷⁵ narrated that Dede said to her husband; “they will kill you” about a group he had taken responsibility for educating in Sufism. “We were happy to hear this, because we wanted to die, we interpreted what he said as the death of the ego. When he got fatally ill, we understood he had meant it literally”. Yet she believed that he died at the best time for him which meant he had died having accomplished his capacity. He died five months before Dede and he was considered by many young people as a *murshid*, Sufi teacher. She commented that they would try to put him in Dede’s place and it would be too much for him, he would most probably make crucial mistakes.

8.2.4.4 Making Sense of Dede and Life

The occupation with Dede goes hand in hand with a preoccupation with life, human beings and God. On the one hand all of my informants find power and protection in him and

¹⁷³ Interview on 19 October 2010.

¹⁷⁴ Interview on 16 October 2011.

¹⁷⁵ Interview on 14 May 2011.

consider him as a means to Reality. Yet there are tendencies which I could determine among my informants in respect of their different attitudes towards him which, I find, also reflect their preoccupations in life. The typologies below are partly based on my observations, and partly on my participation in thirteen years. But these typologies could include more variety if a broader range of informants were studied. The research period deepened my observations and together with the data from the interviews an analytical re-evaluation of them became possible. All the types here are abstractions of the real people I interviewed during the research. I must also mention that although one of the preoccupations seems to dominate most people are mixed types.

Some of the attitudes are driven by pragmatism. In the first approach there is a distinction between this world and the afterworld although it is accepted and experienced that there is access to the afterworld in liminal states which are in between: this world is in general a stepping stone for the afterworld. There can also be a yearning for the afterworld from time to time. These people think that we have to accomplish our potential in this world to be able to get a good place in the afterworld, and Dede helps one in realising this potential. Dede can do this because he can see the potential and the obstacles one has as he has continuous access to both and can guide one towards the accomplishment. Sufi literature and practices are worked on seriously as they are tools to the aim and prepare one for the afterworld, and they are also referred to in answering questions where all questions about life seem to be answerable as a relationship between cause and reason. There is a tendency for elitism.

The focus of the second approach is, on the contrary, on this worldly presence. Here, life consists of giving and taking rather than cause and effect as seen in the first type. They emphasise that they cannot understand Dede or intellectualise what was happening. He was a "mystery". The approach to life in general is also driven by a not being able to know as everything changes continuously, like the moods and psychological states. The intellect and language do not have the capacity to understand or express reality. Every attempt on this way is an assumption that is deemed to come out wrong, because desires, wishes, and the lower self deceive one continuously. There are tendencies towards relativism and competitiveness, and a need for approval and respect in large amounts. They tend to interpret their experiences with Dede and their life in their favour instead of accepting a critique. The emphasis is on how Dede affected their lives, and pulled them out of their struggles, taught them what to expect from life and what not, gave them peace, trust and love. They see Dede in his role of serving people without asking for anything in return because for them he asked for his returns from God. He could serve this way because he was able to know the psychological, mental and environmental states of people, i.e. the condition one was in, and

could change them for the better. They themselves expect their returns in this life when they serve others –and they are helpful people- as what is experienced here counts and one cannot know what comes afterwards. These are the ones who express the most that they feel the lack of Dede after his death as they are in continuous need of taking, and in search of people who would take over the function Dede played in their lives. The kind of Sufi literature they prefer is the lives and teachings of Sufis, and for example the theoretical Ibn Arabi can give a feeling of inner void because his texts disenchant and often devoid one from an instance outside oneself to refer to. This type is the most similar to the characteristics of the people who are considered as following the tradition of “Sufi Saint Cults” (Werbner 1996).

The third type of pragmatics seeks social power; they want to be respected and followed by others, and manage to have some people who look up to them and are influenced by them most of the time. They can be manipulative and disputative. In their relationship to authority they try to gain favour and if they do not succeed they either rebel or manipulate others against the authoritative figure. They talk more about their knowledge and experiences, and are articulate; they can also talk in different manners according to the social environment they are in, and can start and lead debates. Their identity as followers of a grand Sufi master is socially more to the forefront. For them Dede is a very powerful figure and they gain power as disciples of him, although they can have a humble posture. They project the image of a “dervish” or “Sufi” in their manners which reflects the picture they have of such figures in their mind. Their memories of their experiences obscure critique and any aspects which would conflict with this image. They are more ritualistic and may also try to give a formal structure to the formation which would enable them to accumulate power.

For the fourth type, life is a spectacle and ocean of emotions. They want to be drunk with feelings of beauty, love and harmony. Dede embodies for them these qualities; one cannot theorise about him, and the best would be silence and letting him affect you. Human beings consist of both harmonious qualities and destructive ones and the latter must be confronted and controlled so that they do not rule. In life there are responsibilities beside beauty and harmony. Dede advises one to accomplish responsibilities with beauty and harmony which arises from his being with God. For them there is a big difference between Dede being alive and not, because the love and joy which were evoked by his presence made it easier for them

to carry out responsibilities without feeling constraint: “He is a person with whom one is in love, this brings voluntarism in everything, carrying out his advice becomes very easy. When he is gone, when we cannot hear his voice any more, it creates a great void”¹⁷⁶. They oscillate between their mind and heart, which are sometimes in conflict, and realities can violate their desire to float in their emotions of beauty and harmony. They repress the problematic aspects for the sake of these emotions as long as possible and can fluctuate between depression and elevated feelings. Dede also played a harmonising affect for this type because he was able to see through them and could not be deceived, and was hence a guarantee that one would not deceive oneself. In their social relationships they are reconcilers, and shy away from people who are combative. They are more interested in Sufi poetry.

The fifth type is occupied with the extremities of life, dichotomies and finding a balance between them, where control and spontaneity is the main concern. They are quite aware of their impulses which they compare to volcanoes or earthquakes, and want to be able to control them without suppressing them so that they can channel them to the service of the people and creativity. They have an urge for courage, boldness, and creativity. They can experience conflict between the impulse of breaking the limits and the necessity to limit their impulses which can make them hesitant. Dede was the embodiment of balance; courage, power and creativity together with wisdom and thoughtful action. They found in him magnificence and the sublime, together with subtlety and modesty. Dede is for them firmly grounded in reality and not a mystical figure and represents Islam in its best understood and practiced form; they think that the difficulty to understand him arises from the present understandings of Islam which are far backward while Dede is ahead of his time. They are interested in history, cultures and Islam as a religion which can go beyond cultures, and Ghazzali appeals them more as he deals with societies, history, human relations and the self, rather than Ibn Arabi who makes abstractions. For them there is a great difference between the presence and absence of Dede as he was at the centre of their life as a source of life energy, light and soothing.

¹⁷⁶ Tarık in an interview on 23 March 2011.

The sixth type is occupied with understanding the self, its possibilities and realising them. The desire is not only directed towards one's own self but also towards the others. The focus is neither on this world nor on the afterworld, rather these people have a desire to get at a core existence or the source of life which knows the difference between neither the here and there nor the self and the others. They have a notion of freedom where the authentic self or core existence is discovered and life is led through it, and that this does not interfere with anybody or anything. They are regretful about those tendencies and acts which cut them off from the authentic self, including their own reactions to outer causes as well as socially constructed or ego-originated desires, and they dream of a state where they become immune to them. While the second type blames others they blame themselves and can prefer solitude at times in order to digest impulses where everything feels in its right place, and then go into the society again to experience the self and the selves of others and their interactions. They are keen on facing themselves and the world as they are, and fighting against aspects of themselves which make them prone to harmful attitudes that lead to alienation. They can take risks to see the many faces of the self. They met Dede when they felt powerless, alienated, having made many mistakes and with a need to find someone whom they could trust so that they could open up themselves. For them Dede leads them to independence, is hope and help for discovery, and a mirror showing them to themselves. Dede is a perfect mirror to see reflections of themselves and the world as he has no afflictions coming from delusions and self interest. The reflection in the mirror is seen or becomes manifest, mostly through their own bodily clues, i.e. how their body and the people and the world feel when they are confronted with Dede, which they claim becomes clear through his affect, and they try to activate this mentally also, in his absence. Sufi literature is also used both to get clarity and to deepen the understanding.

The seventh type is driven by a desire to understand and explain the laws that the universe is based upon, and thus the attention of these people is directed more to the outside. They are interested and engaged in social and political activities, and justice is an important concept for them. They are good observers, rationally oriented and very critical, do not shy away from criticising even close friends, and fight for the things they believe in. They have repulsion against popular practices of Sufism and understandings of *evliya*, labelling such practitioners as being too impatient about not knowing. Dede is considered in terms of human capacities which should be accessible to all, as they depart from a concept of justice where some could not be favoured by God by being equipped with extraordinary abilities. They justify their approach by referring to orthodoxy; Islam does not accept the deification of a person. They have essentialist tendencies and are worried about misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Dede by people who bend realities according to their interests, and

shortcut explanations. The paradoxes in Dede's acts and talks are points of attention and challenge their rational mind, causing a struggle to make meaning of Dede as he did not follow a line that could be made sense of with (only) the logical mind: "he showed the right, hit with the left. It was not always possible to understand with whom or with what level of you he was conversing, he could be conversing with your children, with a state in you that you don't know yet"¹⁷⁷. They think that after Dede died one is left alone with the puzzle and with the knowledge to work on, and they fluctuate between the hope that they will understand the "mystery", and despair against the impossibility of it. They emphasise that even if understanding Dede is not possible, everybody should be able to find the *Insan-i Kamil* in him/herself which is everybody's most perfect state of existence possible. They are very keen on the practices, can be very self-disciplined both to open up this capacity and to teach people, and consult the Koran and a variety of Sufi literature to help them understand the "truth", and especially Ibn Arabi who in a way disenchants the "secrets" explaining phenomenon which are considered to be beyond the human capacity of understanding – actually a reason why Wahhabis and the like reject him.

The eighth type is more philosophically oriented and mentally active and driven by a desire of attaining absolute freedom. They think in abstract notions, where the daily life serves as the stage, and the objects as symbols to get at what lies behind them. The mind and its experiences including those that take place in the world of imagination have the leading role. Their attitude towards daily problems can be at times indifference; they are headed towards a state where problems become irrelevant for themselves although they do not teach such a goal to everybody. They have a love of non-being which for them is the only absolute freedom. According to them Dede wants to pull one into a state where existence resolves itself: "like the cube of sugar thrown into water, it melts, and then it melts again, and again, and again. Then you cannot call it sugar anymore. [...] The form changes. It becomes something purer, it becomes water, as it is said everything is created out of water, or some say out of fire"¹⁷⁸. For them there is hardly any difference between Dede being in life or not,

¹⁷⁷ In an interview on 17th December 2010.

¹⁷⁸ In an interview on 17 October 2011.

as long as their mental contact continues. They think one cannot understand him, in what state he was in, or what he was doing also because he was and is complex. The only thing one can do is to theorise about him, which they at times do without giving it much value. Nevertheless there are times when “one can dream his dream”, i.e. can be taken to a mental state by Dede although one cannot keep it and one falls out of it again as it is not one’s own state and one has attachments which are hindrances, but such experiences show where one should head towards. They are highly interested in the Sufi theory developed by Ibn Arabi mostly in its effect of breaking thought structures and perceptions, and because he can express the most abstract things in the clearest possible language without distorting or theorising.

The ninth type is neither pragmatic like the first three types, nor longs for love, beauty and harmony like the fourth type, nor struggles for balance and understanding the practicalities of life like the fifth type, nor desires to understand the self, the world and the existence like the sixth, the seventh and the eighth types. Followers of this type are intuitively oriented. Before they met Dede, they were marked by a feeling of awkwardness. They had an idea that they were not moved by a desire for power or success, nor had they the ambitions that many others seemed to have, and the world to them was a strange place. They felt that they could not identify with anywhere or anything, and whatever they did was at the odds with others. With Dede they found where they belonged, they have come home, and found a place where this lack of ambition does not feel awkward but is actually demanded, and living still makes sense. It is integration for which they are very thankful. With Dede they can share everything, open up themselves completely without having the fear of misunderstanding or misuse; Dede becomes their dearest friend whom they can never lose as long as they carry him in their hearts, although the fear of losing is also present when distracted by other things that might cause them to lose contact with their hearts and intuitions, against which they can be very cautious. So whether Dede is in life or not does not really matter, but being able to connect with him or not is the point of attention. They are not especially interested in Sufi literature as an effort of knowing, they can even look down on intellectual efforts as for them understanding can be perverted to a will to power, especially when it is demonstrated in discussions.

8.2.4.5 Making Sense of Dede and the Creative Imagination

Whatever the tendencies maybe, people had experiences that were apparently enacted through the cracks in their habitual preoccupations. What was Dede, what was he doing, why and how was he doing what he was doing? Such question always occupied most of my informants. Although he was accessible easily, he was imperceptible. Creative imagination

was one tool of getting access to his imperceptible aspects and making sense of him. Dede who was enigmatic and deconstructive of the structures of thinking and perception caused inactivation of this capacity.

Creative imagination can lead to creative answers to questions which may be explicitly put forward and dealt with for long periods or occupies one without being conscious of them. It is not completely outside of the discourse, yet it can process a wider range of inputs -one is not conscious of- in huge amounts. It has access to a collection of impressions and knowledge and can scan through small signs such as gestures, expressions, smell, or the general atmosphere, the context to synthesise them and to come up with ideas and solutions. It is probably the most active when one unites the mind and the heart, something that Dede called for again and again. In Sufism creative imagination is the main means of unveiling. Its realm is the *barzakh* (imaginal or liminal world). Dreams and visions are the product of the creative imagination. Their language is symbolic, hence needs interpretation. It is often thought that while the visions and dreams themselves are less under influence of the discourse the interpretations are. Hence interpretation is given much weight so that they do not restrict or lead astray. Dede also encouraged considering the life events as symbolic actions needing interpretation.

Among my informants dreams are considered to come from deeper levels of the consciousness and hence more close to the Reality. They are also found more revealing than one's thoughts and assumptions about Dede.

Yet some of the dreams were as puzzling as Dede himself. Even if they could not be interpreted and understood, they played their role in reminding one to remain open as there was much one did not know although could have some share of it. And this was very pleasurable.

Lokman dreamt of Dede as someone who united with his Other:

I once dreamt of Efendi. There were two of them and they were embracing each other very friendly. I was surprised; I went to Efendi and told him about my dream. He said, "you were surprised, weren't you?", and didn't say anything else. The

things we don't understand now, maybe we will understand later, maybe in the moment of dying, maybe after death.¹⁷⁹

Nermin¹⁸⁰ said she was not an intellectual type as some others in Dede's circle. She had many illuminative dreams. Her dreams were an important source of her relating Dede. Yet she could not interpret many of them, she shared them with her friends for interpretation especially "Burcu Abla" and "Cahit Abi". Thus her dreams also served others.

In one of my dreams I was going through a room, and at a corner of the room there was a chorus with people I know through Dede. They are singing and Dede is the maestro. I also want to sing with them but I am just listening, it is the most beautiful music I have ever heard. Then I told this dream to Burcu Abla. She remembered Efendi once saying that he was making the most beautiful music of the world.¹⁸¹

The other two dreams of her below were difficult to interpret also for Burcu who was present during the interview.

We are all travelling in a minibus. But Efendi Hz. is wearing shabby, torn clothes and is shackled with fetters. Then he gets off the minibus and starts walking. We follow him. He is walking with those shackles around his ankle. I ask him where he is going, where we are. He answers 'this is the mosque of Mahmudiyya.'¹⁸²

Burcu interpreted that the "shackles" were the people around him. She related this interpretation with an experience she had with him.

Tea was spilled over his brown dressing gown once. I stood up to clean it. He stopped me and said it did not matter. He added "spill over me, all of you". I then realised something: we were all spilling over what we had over him and he wanted this. His service to us was his shackles. This is his destiny. And he advised us not to be like him, not to take the entire load upon us. I have never understood what he meant, and still don't.

¹⁷⁹ Interview on 14 November 2009.

¹⁸⁰ Interview on 15 August 2010.

¹⁸¹ The change of mode in time is original.

¹⁸² Mahmut is another name for Muhammad and emphasises the thankfulness to God. Mahmudiyye is the land of Mahmut.

Nermin's dream and Burcu's interpretation indicate a feature of liminality which Turner describes as "blend of lowliness and sacredness of homogeneity and comradeship" (Turner 1991: 96).

Rayiha¹⁸³ had also a dream hinting at the liminality of Dede. In her dream Dede lived in a poor slum house, but when he came out of it Rayiha saw that he was like a king very rich and adored and respected by many people.

Another dream Nermin told hinted at another aspect of Dede; probably his relationship with God as His vicegerent.

I was looking for Cahit Abi. They said, he went to watch the moon eclipse. I run towards where he is. There is a huge sun and a moon. Cahit Abi is sitting in the balcony and watching them with a few more people around. The moon approaches to the sun and hits it. The entire universe quakes with it. I feel in my dream that the moon is much brighter than the sun. Cahit Abi has this expression in his face that he had when he was completing the *namaz*. I leave them and go to Efendi Hz., he says: There was a great earth quake but I saved you from sensing it.

Burcu suggested that the moon in dreams meant *veli*. But she could not really tell what the dream represented. She commented that it was surely a very deep one which would allow multiple levels of interpretation.

Simge's vision also included the symbols of the sun and the moon. She was dealing with aspects of herself some of which she found quite disturbing, and asking herself how Dede was able to tolerate such aspects of people and not expel anybody. After having completed a *namaz*, she was contemplating where she had this vision. In her vision there are two opposite aspects of her; one is totally good and the other totally evil. And a third aspect observes the vision and makes judgements. This is apparently her analytical mind. It is remarkable in the vision that the analytical mind makes mistakes in its judgements. Yet it is not so dominant to hinder the flow of the vision and is capable of being surprised to learn about new perceptions. In her vision it is more apparent that the sun represents God and the moon Muhammad or *Nur-u Muhammad*.

¹⁸³ In an informal conversation.

I was annoyed with myself. I went on a search in my mind after *namaz*. I was confronted with something or someone that was always insulted. It was me and I thought she was worthy of this insult. She was like a skeleton, like a witch, her hair was scruffy. She was full of grudges, envy and destructivity. She was so repulsive, I wanted to destroy her. She went to Dede. Dede took her in the hand without any sign of repugnance, totally neutral, with this silent love of his, and started tidying her up here and there. She was so surprised at this. This was not a reaction that she was used to. In her a hope arose whether she was something loveable. She was brightened up a bit, but still not trustworthy. I took her and gave her to the pure, angel like girl that was again me. This girl was weak in comparison to the witch. The witch was an enemy of her. They both wanted to destroy each other actually. I realised that the girl would not manage to deal with the witch and gave her to Dede again. The witch started to recite ‘*estağfirullah*’¹⁸⁴ because of the hope she felt. I was expecting her to transform. But she did not transform, she decomposed like a very old tree, as if she was planted in the soil and decomposing with ‘*estağfirullah*’. Out of the soil where she disappeared came a red rosebud with a very intensive beautiful scent. This was the rose of Muhammadiyyat, I thought. It was so impressive and so fresh. I thought Dede would also like to watch it. But Dede picked it up to my surprise and started to smell it. This rose had some kind of fire which hindered it from admiring itself. But having been picked up, I thought OK, this should also vanish like the tree. Again from the same place in the ground came a very strange, very delicate thing. This was surely not as perceptible as the rose. Not everybody would recognise it. But when one studied it one saw that it was so finely and beautifully ornamented. It was like a very fine piece of tulle. The tiny ornaments which were holes had hinted at the painful experiences it went through. Its existence had become so fragile with these experiences. Then came a wind and it also fell apart and vanished. There appeared this time a dark light. It was like the moon, absorbing its light from the sun. But actually it did not even have a body; it was not something that anybody could see. I watched in curiosity what would follow. It started to spread about in waves saying “Hu”¹⁸⁵. It started to carry small lights to the hearts of people without people noticing anything. It had nothing to call him/herself. It just captured the light because it was capable of this while others were not, and carried it over to others. Itself black, but capable of absorbing the light which it distributed.¹⁸⁶

There were no clues in her vision about what has happened to the angelic girl. Simgé simply forgot about it during the vision. When we analyse her vision according to the Sufi epistemology her vision seems to hint at the stages of the self –which will be explained later

¹⁸⁴ The *zikr* one repeats when s/he realises a failure and wants to change it.

¹⁸⁵ A *zikr* that is repeated by Sufis meaning the “He”.

¹⁸⁶ This is the text she wrote down after the dream which she had a few months ago.

in this thesis. Viewed from this perspective, the angelic self must also have been decomposed along with the demonic self. They both cease to be through Muhammadiyyat but what Muhammadiyyat is also changes according to the level of the self from the concrete towards the abstract.

8.2.5 Conclusion

In this section we saw how educated middle class urban people who had cosmopolitan and anti-authoritarian tendencies, with conflicting interests, and a critical outlook on socio-political and religious matters became attracted to Sufism. They could not identify with one of the existing establishments in the society, were looking for something which was more than the given, that is, had a condition of “liminality of negation”. Sufism and *Insan-ı Kamil* represented by Dede was for them different than anything they had known before. Dede was deconstructive of the ways they had thought and perceived life. His body was inclusive of his environment; he knew everything about one and could lead one accordingly. He was able to unite everybody’s cultural embeddedness and personality with universal ethics. They learned that perceptions could change endlessly, and that the other was within. This freed, empowered and broadened them and put them in a condition of “liminality of affirmation”.

Dede’s complexity and style allows a multiplicity of approaches towards him and life. A combination of life-events, experiences with him, creative imagination and how one situates oneself in the world lead to various approaches and perceptions. The preoccupation with Dede’s enigmatic personality and the experiences of one’s life are often intertwined. Contemplating on him, what he said and life experiences cause openings and lead to new understandings. The products of creative imagination, dreams and visions hint at aspects about him that are otherwise unattainable. The understanding of a person evolves with time.

People’s approaches towards Dede have to do with their approaches towards life in general, and explain his function for oneself. The meanings that are found seem to be a combination of the self, his affect and the Islamic/Sufi discourse. The approaches vary: pragmatic, emotional, rational, philosophical or intuitive. Dede’s functions are helping one in accomplishing his/her potential to be in a better place in the hereafter and in dealing with the dilemmas of life. He is a source of power both here and hereafter; unites the ideal and the real; is the embodiment of unification of opposing, battling forces of the world and in oneself. He is a mirror, someone leading to the authentic self; or to truth and an ethical life. He guides one to non-being which means absolute freedom. He is one’s reference of integration in the strange world.

Dede is a heterotopia in inward topographies within the context of Sufism. This heterotopia summons various capacities of *evliya* and interacts with its environment. Entering this heterotopia, at the same time means entering the self and the Sufi landscapes. For everyone entering, some aspects open up themselves while some others remain hidden. These openings and hidings are playful and pleasurable, and seem to be ever-changing.

8.3 Communitas, Networks, Teaching and Practices

There were various networks in the formation. They demonstrate many characteristics of Turner's *communitas*: they are groups made up of liminal people –in our case the travellers of the Sufi path; are anti-structural, that is, are not institutionalised or normative but reflect culminated knowledge and practice throughout history; their symbols and artefacts take on multiple meanings and represent the archetypes of the culture and embody their “tacit knowledge” (Turner 1974: 25). The relationships within the *communitas* are equalitarian, direct, total and intimate, and based on comradeship (ibid.: 274).

In this section we will read how the *communitas* in this formation are constructed and what role they play in cultivating the practices and perceptions where the emphasis is on the practice and understanding of multiplicity and unity. We will also see how the structures of power and hierarchy are deconstructed as well as the dichotomies such as good and bad, high and low without which *communitas* would not come into being.

8.3.1 Networks

How my informants came to know Dede was mostly through a network of friends or family members. They joined larger networks after having met Dede. The various networks in the formation had looser or tighter contacts with each other. Most of my informants belong to a network of approximately 300-400 people all of whom know each other to various degrees or at least have heard of each other. Closer contacts were with around 50-100 people which can be considered as *communitas*. These *communitas* developed somewhat organically, in that people with similar social backgrounds or interests tended to come together.

The relations were basically non-hierarchical. Yet some advanced disciples of Dede played a special role in introducing them to Dede, transmitting the teaching, and cultivating the culture and practices. They put crucial questions up for debate, initiated discussions, generated different perspectives and hinted at those problems that might be an obstacle for development. They also played a role in solving disputes or conflicts among friends. They were considered as mentors and mediators –or translators as an informant called them –due to their knowledge and practice, and most importantly because they were capable of sharing,

devotion and caring for the well-being of others. For some others they were just friends. Dede advised some of his younger visitors to keep in touch with one or the other of them. It seems that the choice of mentors was determined by the inclinations of the members. Especially when Dede was very old and sick, they became very important for newcomers joining the group in the 1990s. My informants had contacts with various such figures.

Two of these figures (Lokman and Ruşen) are among my informants but another one, Cahit who passed away five months before Dede at an early age, is also well represented in the research. Some of my informants were strongly influenced by him, his wife gave detailed information about him, and I had also met him. While Ruşen still has contacts with many of Dede's followers, the contacts with most of my informants are not as intensive as they were before. Lokman who introduced various artists to Dede, secluded himself from the circle after his marriage –already in Dede's lifetime– although he was a key figure in the 1980s. But he immediately accepted to give a recorded interview for the research.

A characteristic of these key figures was that they all had multiple interests shared with the others in the network, and they could address the people in a language which was easier to understand. Each of these figures had contacts with a few hundred people most of whom were acquainted with each other to various degrees because they met at Dede's place and in homes or offices. They again had contact with other networks; such as that of Cahit Baba who passed away in 2008, and who had Mawlawi affiliations and had already had his own disciples before he met Dede.

The networks had an important role in the cultivation of a Sufi lifestyle, understanding of the doctrines and in motivation for practice. Strong bonds were soon established due to the shared interest in Dede and Sufism, which became so central to their lives. The relations in the networks were also a way of confronting the self. One saw the egoistic drives s/he had in these intensive inter-human relations as well as the capacity to understand and give. Jealousy, competition or bossy behaviour were not lacking, as well as generosity, hospitality and sharing. This created a community which was nevertheless quite competitive and dynamic. Dede did not always interfere and smooth out disputes, rather he provided tools for each to apply for himself: “be like the night which blankets faults and mistakes” –although this did not mean that one should not see them at all. He advised his disciples to vie with each other in acquiring the teaching and the practices of religion.

It was Dede's advice and emphasis not to forget family and friends when eating, enjoying, praying, or having a spiritual experience. He included “the family, the friends, the country and all of humanity” in each of his prayers, which also played a crucial role in remembering

that prayer and religious practice was not about an individual “enlightenment”. Sinem recounted:

He didn't give us much homework or the like. But there were some things he said to me, and to the others through me; e.g. can you stay humble and gentle even when you are right and the other is wrong? You are a hundred percent right according to the norms and laws (*sharia*) but you say OK and give up your rights, you don't go after anything with insistence. He said that ‘the ones who see, should take the ones who don't with them and the ones who know, should take the ones who don't with them’. It was the good of the whole, not of one person that he was watching over. [...] Because he protected the well-being of the whole, he advised everybody to take on as much as they could. What was important was the whole, if you had the power, you would carry your child, sister, brother, husband even if they do nonsense, until they are themselves able to see and understand. You may say what you think but you don't insist. This is what I understood from Efendi. He said that they will see when the time is ripe for it. Don't insist on anything. Giving, forgiving, covering up, uniting; his teaching was based on this. Who are you anyway? You're also trying to correct yourself, to try to take the right steps in every movement. He was something that melted; he melted your resistance and your avarice.¹⁸⁷

Newcomers were embraced and integrated immediately in the networks; the ones coming from other cities or countries were helped in finding accommodation and jobs. A culture of solidarity and acceptance of differences was cultivated which was new for most, at least to some extent. They were coming from individualistic and competitive modern lives, and to some extent had built up their identities on the “difference from the mass”. Miriam's narration is a good example of the atmosphere. She had heard of Dede from her teachers in the Gurdjieff tradition¹⁸⁸ in Canada. When she came to Ankara to visit Dede in 1993, she was picked up by three disciples of Dede from the airport:

They took me to a house where more Turks were waiting to meet me, feed me and give me a bed for what was left of the night. The next day I was whisked to Cahit's place, where I stayed three days with him and his wife. I would be shuffled from

¹⁸⁷ Interview on 17 January 2010.

¹⁸⁸ A spiritual school founded by Georgii Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1877?-1949). He was born in Kars, lived in various parts of Russia, Istanbul and Paris. He spent some time with the Sarmoung Brotherhood which was probably a Sufi brotherhood, also visited the Mawlawi order in Galata. His spiritual school bears influences of Sufism.

place to place over the next seven months, until I managed to become semi-self-supporting. Ahmet Kayhan had told his disciples that they were to feed me, house me and find me a job - and that's what they did. [...] [O]ver the four and half years that I knew him [Cahit], his office door was always open and welcoming. He was not rich, but whatever was there to eat and drink was always offered wholeheartedly. He was never too busy to help me with some problem or other. He was never too busy or too tired to listen. [...] I was a difficult case for the people around Ahmet Kayhan and Cahit. I refused to profess Islam. I spoke no Turkish. Their efforts to match me up with an American man who had converted to Islam were curtly rebuffed. (Talk about a case of intense mutual dislike at first sight.) I was, by their standards, rude, and, by anybody's standards, massively self-centred. [...] Long after a number of the others around Ahmet Dede had made clear to me their bewilderment and impatience with me, Cahit hung in there, never giving up on me. He was so self-effacing and our relationship was so always 'all about me,' that I couldn't see what *he* was about.¹⁸⁹

Miriam's narration shows Dede's influence on people's sharing and helping each other, something which Cahit as an advanced disciple can do much better than the others.

8.3.2 Teaching and Practices

People were immediately exposed to the teaching and practice not only through Dede but also by each other, which was also encouraged by Dede who ensured that people met, helped each other in daily matters as well as in Sufi questions, exchanged experiences and discussed ideas. They spent most of the time which was left over from work or study together when Dede was alive. Smaller groups of approximately ten to fifteen people often came together and it was not uncommon that twenty to forty people met in homes and offices. Coming together and having discussions was mostly spontaneous, and unstructured, and happened especially during *Ramadan* when almost every fasting break was at a home or office. Looked at from the outside these were kind of "Sufi parties" which included eating, talking, laughing, reading and discussing, sharing of anecdotes and experiences and the children playing with each other; a brand of Sufi life which meant sharing, sleeping little and being highly energetic both mentally and emotionally. From time to time people in these gatherings also completed a *namaz* together.

¹⁸⁹ <http://fakirscanada.blogspot.com/2008/10/post-17-interlude-3-cahit-benvenli.html>, (accessed 5 November 2010 and is used here with her kind permission).

When one member from the same network went to visit Dede, s/he carried the information about this particular visit to the other members of the network, which everybody was eager to hear. In that way there was an economy of Dede's time and space and one could stay up to date with what Dede was doing or saying on a daily basis. Dede also sometimes assigned one to bring information to other people, "go and tell this to your friends"¹⁹⁰.

These relationships were not always easy. Arrogance in some individuals was sometimes a problem, either because they wanted to let the others feel they knew better or because they wished to let some of the poorer university students feel that they were a burden. Berrak¹⁹¹, who joined the group a few years later than most of her friends in the network and was quite young –at the time 23 years old- reported that: "With Cahit we could discuss a lot, it was fine. But after some time I was really annoyed with the others; everybody seemed to know it all and tried to teach me". These were cases for the mentors to soothe. There was competition over how far one understood Dede and sometimes there was jealousy over him; Dede knew about this and on one occasion he said: "You have to share me" (Berrak¹⁹²).

Everybody feels that they have a special contact to Dede and what they understand of him counts the most. Moreover they know each other very well, including their weaknesses, which make the relationships sometimes difficult or caused splits after Dede's passing away. Especially when one claims that his/her understanding is more correct, s/he is not tolerated.

There was hardly any sense of gradation in teaching; it was a very rushed and intensive process of confrontation with Sufi concepts, and practices, *namaz*¹⁹³, *zikr*, *teheccüd* (night

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Sinem on 17 January 2010.

¹⁹¹ In an interview on 5 November 2010.

¹⁹² Interview on 17 December 2010.

¹⁹³ According to Dede's advice each *sura* in *namaz* would be completed in one breath and during *zikr* the numbers of names repeated in each breath would be multiplied with practice. Holding the breath extends and deepens the breath, and enables contemplation. The attention would be focused on the heart and thoughts flowing through the head would be disregarded.

prayers) and fasting. Times spent alone were filled with contemplation, reading and practicing. A new dimension was experienced in the imaginal world as well as in dreams which were activated and filled with Sufi content: mainly insights about the self and Dede where the usual perception of reality changed.

Attention was directed both to the tricks the ego played as well as the higher possibilities of human being. The main play of the ego was projection; for example, one of the first warnings I heard from a friend when I came to Ankara was that the features that disturbed one the most in others was surely something that one carried in her/himself, and another said that since I found love towards Dede I must have some similarities with him.

These networks represent *Communitas* where a group of individuals go through the process of liminality. They are “equalitarian” and “existential”. The relationships within are “total” and “intimate” (Turner 1974: 274).

8.3.3 Subjectivity, Multiplicity, Binary Oppositions and Unity

Tawhid (unity of God) is the main doctrine of Islam. As it is with Sufism it is not understood as just an abstract concept, it is something that has to be witnessed through oneself and it is considered as the ultimate aim of Sufism to reach this state. The Turkish word *Birlik* means unity and Oneness and solidarity. Cahit reads out of a book in a meeting¹⁹⁴: “What’s it to you when God is one, unless you are not?” However both in the discourse and practice of my informants and Dede there is affirmation of multiplicity and subjectivity which means difference. How is this then compatible with unity?

The awareness of subjectivity, multiplicity of individual interests and perceptions among the followers demonstrated itself in first reactions to the endeavour of this research by almost everyone I talked to: “you will get everybody’s own version of Dede, not Dede in himself”. They had had the experience that when a few friends visited Dede at the same time and then talked about what he said they often found out that they heard quite different things. These different, sometimes conflicting versions of the experience of the same particular topic were

¹⁹⁴ There is a video recording from a meeting of some members of the network.

due to subjectivity. The sharing of experiences in the *communitas* has made it possible to cultivate an awareness of subjectivity and multiplicity among people. And at the same time conditions of being together in spite of differences were learned and practiced.

My informants were also aware of the multiplicities they bore in themselves some of which were in conflict. They read the Koran in such a manner that it addresses them directly; the infidel, the Pharaoh as well as the believer are all aspects of the self. Tapping these aspects in oneself instead of denying, othering or projecting them is an important way of remaining alert and trying not to act out of harmful aspects and cultivate the beneficial aspects.

Ruşen explains how he sees the problem of multiplicity and unity:

Multiplicity is prosperity, and there is no unity without multiplicity. Everybody tells about her/himself, sees her/himself in the *murshid*. If someone says “what I see is the only right way of seeing it”, s/he has idolized her/his own idea. When you go into the community you should not remain in difference but unite with the multiplicity. You can keep your own presumptions but still can get together with the others. This is like tuning your instrument at home but when you are going to play with the orchestra you have to harmonize it with every other instrument. The Koran brings things together, when we read it and close and kiss and lift it to our forehead the devil which is also in it is also kissed. You cannot say “I didn’t like that part of the Koran, so let me tear it out.”¹⁹⁵

There are two words in Arabic which are used for the Unity of God: One of them is *Ahadiyyat* (Oneness in Essence), the absolute oneness before there is any differentiation - and this cannot be attained by humans-, while the other, *Wahdaniyyat* (Oneness in Attributes) is the unity that occurs after differentiation of the multiplicities. This differentiation makes it possible to understand unity and multiplicity as aspect of one other but not as mutually exclusive. Hence they can affirm both multiplicity and unity without coming into conflict with the doctrine and their experiences. One sign of *edep* (civility, courtesy), a manner that a Sufi adherent is called for is courteous dealing with the

¹⁹⁵ Interview on 27 August 2010.

multiplicity. As Dede said of his teaching: "I teach *edep*"¹⁹⁶. The following text from Dede explicates *edep* in this context:

Law is derived from conscience. Without conscience, there would be no consideration of others and no respect for their rights. In fact, not even the existence of such rights would be recognized. Conscience requires the implicit presupposition that "the other" is, at some basic level, the same as or at least not different from the self.¹⁹⁷

The self also includes opposites where the opposites are not mutually exclusive. Rıdvan reported a dream in which he was at Dede's place, and there was a talk that he could not hear. He said he could not hear what was told, and Dede said to him, it did not matter, as he was a liar anyway. But he woke up not feeling bad and the next day when he told Cahit Abi about this dream he just told him to think over it. Rıdvan interpreted his dream including the paradox of the liar who was truthful, and the dream meant for him he had the capacity of realising the truthful¹⁹⁸. The absence hints at the presence and *vice versa*.

Dede's body is a heterotopic one, inclusive of seemingly incompatible elements. He is someone who unites the opposites; Sinem reported that he said to her: "Look, God's *veli*, the most sublime human being, that's me; and the lowest, the most trivial, the most useless, that's also me. OK?"¹⁹⁹ Simge²⁰⁰ recounted that she once had a dream where one and the same figure was rapidly and continuously changing its form each time taking the form of fierce people. She was frightened, she then realised that they were all Dede. She interpreted her dream as Dede's comprehensiveness which did not allow any othering.

¹⁹⁶ <http://fakirscanada.blogspot.com/2008/08/post-15-interlude-2-haci-ahmet-kayhan.html>, (accessed 15 January 2011).

¹⁹⁷ From *The Secret that is Love* tr. by Henry Bayman, <http://www.mysticsaint.info/2011/08/secret-that-is-love-sufi-teachings-of.html>.

¹⁹⁸ Informal conversation in December 2011.

¹⁹⁹ Interview on 17 January 2010.

²⁰⁰ Interview on 10 February 2011.

Dede called for unity on various levels. First on the level of society as we have seen above in the description of the networks, and some of my informants regret that there is no longer the solidarity among the people that there was in Dede's lifetime but most of them consider it a normal process that after the death of such people there are splits in their following. He also called for the unity of spirituality and materiality and said when one of them was lacking or ignored the human being could not produce knowledge and actions beneficial to humanity and the rest of creation. He called for uniting the aim, where the only aim would be attaining God. In the same way all books and the universe were united in the Koran, and all Prophets were united in Muhammad who read the Koran through his body, and all the *evliya* carried this knowledge. For my informants all were united in Dede or the *Insan-ı Kamil* of the time. Dede is the archetype of multiplicity united in one person. He is everything and nothing, i.e. he cannot be fixed or determined as every determination and fixation would exclude some things.

When we look at the calls for unity, and affirmation of the multiplicity and of the binary oppositions, we see that uniting is not based on an extinction of one or the other aspect. They are rather considered to be in need of one other to be able to exist as an ontological law. Dede said "everything is *Haq* (the Real) but there is *Muhammadiyah*" he probably called the attention to this law, and *Muhammadiyah* is the choice one makes for one or the other aspect where nothing in itself has a higher or lower value. The value is added according to the condition and the effect.

Dede said that the distance between the heart and the mind was only one hand span but it was the longest journey²⁰¹. He emphasised that it was necessary to unite the heart and the mind -according to *Rayiha*²⁰² he meant the attainment of a psychosomatic balance. He used the concepts of "*akl-ı selim*", sound mind and "*kalb-i selim*", sound heart which one should try to cultivate through his/her practices. *Akl-ı selim* can differentiate between harmful and beneficial thoughts, actions and emotions, observe and contemplate, evaluate the effects of one's thoughts and actions, and ask questions about the reality. In Sufi literature the heart is

²⁰¹ Interview with Tarık on 30 March 2011.

²⁰² Interview on 1 February 2010.

not only connected to the emotions but it is considered as the organ which can see what the eye cannot, it is not restricted to materiality, it is the centre of conscience. In this sense *kalb-i selim* gives way to emotions and intuitions that are not influenced by appearances. It is considered that the Sufi aim of seeing *hakikat*, the reality of things, can be attained when these two faculties work together.

In Dede's discourse we see more emphasis on mind and "*akillilik*" (the definitions are intelligence, wisdom, consideration, thoughtfulness), and its centre is the "*kafa*", that is, the head or the faculty of thinking and imagination. The ability of discrimination is a combination of the work of the heart and the mind. In *Ruh ve Beden* (no date), in the article "Spiritual Journey of the Naqshi", there is a section entitled "What does *akillilik* or *aptallik*²⁰³ mean?" In this article the *akıl* is categorised in four grades:

Akl-ı maaş is the intellect which is at the service of the lower self and deals with the conformities in life such as earning money, eating and drinking and amusement. The *akl-ı maad* is the one dealing with the afterworld and is occupied with saving itself from hell and gaining paradise, and works for it. *Akl-ı selim* is of the spirit. Those who have *akl-ı selim* act not to avoid punishment or for the sake of reward but they do things because they know that they are the right and the best things to do. This is the more ethical behaviour. If the people who have *akl-ı selim* work hard they can attain the highest state of intellect which is *akl-ı küll*, the universal intellect. With this intellect, they do not evaluate things according to their appearances but according to their meanings, and according to what they are effected by and what they cause. The behaviour of the people who act according to the *akl-ı küll* will not be understood by those who do not have this *akıl*, they might even think it is nonsense or contrary to common sense. (Kayhan, no date: 157-158²⁰⁴)

The last category here, *akl-ı küll*, denotes a rupture. The people behaving according to it cannot be understood by the ones who do not.

Ultimate unity is experienced when time vanishes to be united in one present moment:

There is no such thing as time. Time is total denial. You are in the world with your body, in the *barzakh*, imaginal or intermediary world, with your spirit and in

²⁰³ "*Aptallik*", foolishness, is the lack of "*akillilik*".

²⁰⁴ Translated by the researcher.

eternity with your soul, all at the same time. They neither interpenetrate one another nor are they separate from each other. (Kayhan 2006: 65²⁰⁵)

8.3.4 Power

Hurşit²⁰⁶ commented that “We were all tired of power relations when we came to Dede”, and when he visited Dede for the first time, he sensed that there was something else there. There were no such power relations: and he knew them very well, also in the context of *tariqahs*. He explained that power had to do with being in the world and was not escapable and the relation with Dede also involved an aspect of it, because people going to visit him were all within the world system where relationships are organised according to power relations, causes and effects, and hierarchies. But Dede himself was outside of the system: he was “otherworldly”. He was very powerful but his power was not of this world, it was different: his power source was from somewhere else. He was old, sick, poor and uneducated from the perspective of the world system, and he would be categorised as weak but people got the feeling that they were confronted with something marvellous. His presence was so powerful, diffusive and penetrating. All of my informants emphasised that they were affected by him without really knowing how, through something which was beyond language. Berrak²⁰⁷ said that sometimes they were sitting with Efendi and Hadji Anne²⁰⁸ without talking and Hadji Anne sometimes used to hold her hand: “there would be such stillness; I don’t know it from anywhere else”. Rayiha²⁰⁹ explained that even if one did not understand and did not do everything he advised, a part of the self which was independent of one’s consciousness was influenced by him. Tarık²¹⁰ described this in these terms: “he did his work perfectly well”.

²⁰⁵ Translated by the researcher.

²⁰⁶ Interview on 10 April 2011.

²⁰⁷ Interview on 30 November 2010.

²⁰⁸ Hadji Anne is Dede’s wife.

²⁰⁹ Interview on 1 February 2010.

²¹⁰ Interview on 23 March 2011.

He was working on something which was not perceptible by the senses. His mechanism was “an imponderable machine” which worked without one really recognised what was happening (Hurşit²¹¹).

He didn't see you as something, no matter how you went to him. I mean, I think he didn't see you as a form. Regardless of how much you had 'sinned', whatever your appearance was, and however high your social status was, these things didn't hold any significance for him. You sensed this somehow (Sinem²¹²).

They assumed that this power and vitality had nothing to do with his old body and “worldly status” but was related to his being with God.

Most of my informants did not know much about what *evliya* meant before they met Dede, although they were introduced to the concept later through a process of their experiences together with the literature. When we look at the discourse of *evliya*, we see that it actually entails power, it describes a kind of “super human” who is marked by extreme independence: *Evliya* are only afraid of God and of nobody or nothing else. They are above worldly rulers; in many narrations the rulers consult the *evliya* and the *evliya* ask nothing in return and treat them like any other human being or animal or thing –they have respect and love for everything but not specifically for the powerful. They never ask things for themselves and are only giving –rather than receiving- as they do not need material possessions, not even respect, recognition or being treated well. They can endure a lot, they can live on very little food or sleep. They have overcome such needs and desires that would enslave them, or make them open to manipulation. They are finished with this world. They have overcome death by dying before they die. They can continue their work, which is to remind people of their higher potentials –or God- even if they recognise that people do not follow their advice or have other aims. They just do what they can as if for no reason. They ask nothing in return except God's presence. Their relationship with God is expressed in various ways: they are seen as friends or agents of God, their relationship is like that between lover and beloved. This relationship with God and the awareness of all being as manifestations of God is where

²¹¹ Interview on 10 April 2011.

²¹² Interview on 28 November 2009.

compassion intrudes. They have adorned themselves with the ethics of God and become *Insan-ı Kamil*, Perfect Human Beings. This is also the most accomplished *veli* because he has all the attributes of God²¹³ potentially within himself and has realised them or has become the most perfect manifestation of God's attributes –whereas a *veli* does not necessarily manifest all these attributes. S/he accomplishes that for which God created the worlds: according to Sufism, God created the worlds to be known. In Dede's article "The Secret That is Love", which was one of the most circulated among the adherents, it is written that:

[T]he sway of conscience has purified the heart, purging it of all things, *good and bad alike*, God installs His throne of manifestation in that heart. Thus the love of God engulfs one's being, and that person becomes pure love. Then everything loves him and he loves everything. [...] He or she no longer acts out of blind obedience to the letter of Law, but in full knowledge and consciousness of why the Law prescribes or prohibits a certain thing. The clumsy, mechanical, sometimes jarring and disturbing implementation of the Divine Law gives way to smooth, harmonious flow—the grace of love. Such a person is called a saint, or a "friend of God", *veli* [...]. The motto of the friend of God is "I, if I be lifted up, will lift up all mankind with me". (Kayhan tr. by Henry Bayman²¹⁴, italics added)

Dede did not give any sign of considering himself better or nobler than common humanity; he asked that people pray also for him, thanked them for coming and for any effort people showed, although he radiated magnificence according to my informants; and visiting him was always accompanied with a feeling of awe. Still, he sometimes demonstrated his power. He reacted to encroachments when people wanted to give him presents, saying "you cannot give me anything". Ruşen²¹⁵ once went to visit him, it was winter time and it was quite cold. He found Dede praying on the carpet in a cold room and there was nobody at home. Ruşen wanted to light the stove and asked him why he was sitting alone in the cold. His answer was he became alone after Ruşen had come. He also said that nobody should worry about his old

²¹³ *Al-Hayy*: The Ever Living One, *Al-Qayyum*: The Self-Existing One, *Al-Wasi'*: The All-Comprehending, *Al-Wadud*: The Loving One, *Al-Fattah* : The Opener and *Al-'Alim*: The Knower of All, to name a few.

²¹⁴ Accessed at <http://www.mysticsaint.info/2011/08/secret-that-is-love-sufi-teachings-of.html>

²¹⁵ Interview on 5 November 2010.

appearance, he was very strong. Once he asked Lokman²¹⁶ to help him stand up. Lokman said that he held his hand to help him up, but he was like a rock, he could not move this old and thin man a bit. Then Dede laughed and let help him up, and now he felt as light as a feather.

On the other hand, he also demonstrated weakness and spoke about mistakes he had made. He talked about his health, said that he was tired, and that he had to stay in bed for a long time, which troubled him. Actually he was very sick for years; he also had a stomach operation, and could hardly eat anything. Towards the end, he said that his spirit was young and but his body could not carry the load anymore.

He did not insist that one did what he told, instead he listened to excuses and proposed other possibilities, and he did not claim to be infallible. He sometimes showed his frustration when there were too many complaints about relationship problems or the like and when interest did not go further than that: “To where am I calling you, and where are you calling me?”, and another time: “I always praise you but it still doesn’t work. I always talk from your side, I listen to you, but you don’t listen to me at all” (Sumru²¹⁷). Berrak²¹⁸ reported that in the last days of his life he asked her: “What did I mean, and what did they understand? Where did I go wrong?”

He was both very easy to access and unattainable. Sinem²¹⁹ reported that one night she prayed and wept a lot, she thought she was not good enough, and Dede did not love her. The next day when she went to Dede, he called her to him and said: “My back is itching, can you scratch it?” I did what I was told for something like five minutes. He told me to stop the moment I was sure he loved me, he was letting me get so close to his body to show me that

²¹⁶ Interview on 14 November 2009.

²¹⁷ Interview on 19 October 2010.

²¹⁸ Interview on 10 December 2011.

²¹⁹ Interview on 28 November 2009.

he loved me”. Hurşit²²⁰ explained that he experienced himself as an individual, a separate being with an identity, culture, history, and was convinced that relations with *shaikhs* were harmful as they included power relations and meant decisions would be made without his own consent. Hurşit asked, “How do you ever contact someone when you are full to the brim with yourself and there is no space left for anything else? How do you understand someone, let alone love someone when you are so possessed by yourself?” He went on explaining how he was shaken by surprises that were caused by Efendi’s reactions, sayings and presence, paradoxes that forced him to realise that things were different than he had thought before, before he found a way to him. In one of his early meetings;

Efendi said “Have mercy on me”; someone you visit to find love and mercy, to get healed from your wounds tells you something which is quite the contrary of your expectations and intentions. He inserts a little “Have mercy on me” among all the talk. He gives you an organ to hold him with, an organ of mercy. Having mercy is the first warning that things are not as you think they are. [...] You love him, form a relationship with him, and get close to him. First you manage a relationship with him as a human being. [...] When he says “have mercy on me”, he means that *hakikat*, reality has nothing to do with the systems of the world. You’ve gone there as a part of the power system but the power machine doesn’t work from there on anymore. Efendi becomes your friend, your sick patient, your master but not your boss.

Having been asked for mercy made a crack in his self through which Dede could penetrate. This was how Hurşit could relate to him, and love him: it necessitated letting him in.

The goals Dede set for everyone were very high, still people did not feel overwhelmed. It was interesting that most of my informants said they never felt urged to do anything beyond their capacities or some even emphasised that they were never told to pray or read but they did it themselves in order to develop. Love and the hope for peace and perfection seem to be the main reasons for voluntariness.

On a deeper level, *evliya* might attract people who want to realize their perfection as well as search for independence, knowledge and experiencing life to its fullest, but who also, in their social and professional lives look for power or protection or feel themselves above or different from other people. Some people thought they were “elected”, at the same time there

²²⁰ Interview on 10 April 2011.

was a feeling of humiliation in the face of him, and the sense that they could not have done anything to be worthy of this meeting. It was as if it had no reason. Lokman²²¹ interpreted that the meeting was because of Dede's kindness. Dede also gave clues which would hinder a feeling "being elected". Iris told that she heard from various people that Dede had said to Cahit "bring to me the thieves, the troublesome". Tarık²²² narrated that on the first day he visited Efendi, he told him: "I'm not only your uncle²²³. I'm the uncle of all the worlds²²⁴". So it was maybe a warning that people should not assume they were special or chosen because they were especially "good". As he also said on that day:

Imagine you are walking on Mamak Road [the road where he lived]. There are shops on both sides of the street. What is the cheapest thing which is sold at a shop? For example, a box of matches. As you are walking, you see a box of matches on the ground. Someone has dropped it. You hesitate if you should take it or not. It is this hesitation that is enough to save you.

It was all about interstices at the edges of life events.

8.3.5 Becoming a *Veli*

Becoming a *veli*²²⁵ was a goal Dede encouraged. People heard from him that becoming a *veli* was possible depending on one's own hard work, and it was actually his wish for his

²²¹ Interview on 14 November 2009.

²²² Interview on 23 March 2011.

²²³ Such kinship titles are used in Turkish also to address people who are not from the family in informal relationships.

²²⁴ *Alemler*: This word can be translated as the worlds or planes. It is also used in Koran's opening Sura. "*Alḥamdu lillāḥi rabb alʿAlāmin*: All praise is due to God alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds" 1: 2 (tr. M. Asad)

²²⁵ Dede himself used the concept of *veli*. It refers to the state of one who has become closer to God, has found his own perfection, does not have a self of his own anymore, has attained *wahdaniyyat*, the unity of God, and can act out of it. A *veli* is not necessarily recognised by other people nor even by themselves. It is a disposition, not a social status. The other concepts *mürshid* and *shaikh* are used in the discourse of my informants. According to the contexts they are used in, I worked out these

disciples. The principles or eight gates of Heaven leading to such a state without which there would be no peace, happiness or Paradise in either world were formulated as:

1. Compassion, kindness and affection; 2. righteousness; 3. loyalty; 4. generosity; 5. patience; 6. discretion; 7. knowing one's poverty and weakness; and 8. giving thanks to God" whereas the seven [gates] of Hell were "1. pride; 2. covetousness; 3. [jealousy]; 4. discord; 5. backbiting; 6. lust; and 7. anger. No matter what or who one is or how true one may appear to be, these are the characteristics that lie close to a person's heart if he does not acknowledge goodness, beauty and truth". (Kayhan, from *The Secret that is Love*²²⁶)

To become a *veli*, one had to watch and be aware of her/his own intentions, motivations, thoughts, acts, and their consequences. He asked Ruşen²²⁷ whether he considered the effect of a stone on the other side of the shore when he threw it in the sea during a walk they took at the seaside. He mentioned the conditions of becoming a *veli*, as if they were nothing: He said to Sinem and her friends: "do what is necessary, and leave what is to be left, I will pin the medal of *evliya* on you". Tarık²²⁸ heard him say "Complete the *namaz*, distance yourself from lustfulness, covetousness and fury, I will pin on you the seal of *evliya*". Sumru²²⁹ reported that "He told us that he wanted us to become *evliya* when we were fresh. He added that all the *evliya* we knew had become *evliya* only when they were old, and this was not so valuable when you are past your sell-by date –and we were all idealising them so much". To Orçun²³⁰ he said that "You exaggerate *evliya* so, but they are people like you and me". His

meanings: a *murshid* is someone who teaches Sufism. A *shaikh* denotes someone who leads a Sufi group. It is possible that someone gets these titles without being a *veli*, although it is desired that a *murshid* or *shaikh* are from the *evliya*.

²²⁶ Tr. by Henry Bayman, accessed at <http://www.mysticsaint.info/2011/08/secret-that-is-love-sufi-teachings-of.html>

²²⁷ Narrated in an informal conversation.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Narrated in an informal conversation.

often repeated principle of “bringing things closer” meant in this case bringing the unattainable, high, revered state of *evliya* to a reachable distance and making it a goal for common people.

The desire to become a *veli* or *murshid* or *shaikh* can have various motivations depending on the search one has at a given point in his/her life. Sometimes it appears as a power position; knowing so much, having influence on people and events, being consulted, leading people and being respected, to mention only some of the advantages. Dede sometimes played a joke when someone was full of zeal to have such a position. Sadik²³¹ reported that: “[t]here were some women who came to him because of various problems they had. He directed them to me saying that they should consult me”. Sadik really accepted the role and advised them to practice various *zikir*; reciting a *sura* a hundred times, and 99 times this or that name of God (a common practice in the context of popular Sufism). In such cases it was left to the person to think about why Dede behaved so and about his/her own reaction. But he sometimes warned openly: Mısra²³² thought she was a kind of *murshid*, spiritual teacher for the people in her environment who did not know Dede. One day she was looking at her hands and was proud of their beauty, at which moment Dede, smiling, started singing a well-known Sufi song: “You cannot become a *dervish*²³³”.

On the other hand when we look at the power Dede possessed, it is not a kind of power which brought him advantages. To be a *veli*, as in the example of Dede, meant dealing with people’s troubles and also egos, explaining things thousands of times, being continuously aware of the environment, considering what every single person needed in a specific situation, and what was best for one, deciding and acting in every situation what should be done, patience, diplomacy, and having no private life and no rest. Considering these, becoming a *veli* was not something that everybody would wish for or accomplish. Indeed, he once said “I proposed it to some but they didn’t accept it”. As these qualities seemed so

²³¹ Narrated in an informal conversation.

²³² Narrated in an informal conversation.

²³³ A Sufi adherent who has adopted the Sufi disposition.

impossible to realise with self-discipline or effort alone, and Dede did not seem to be constrained, or trying hard, or finding what he did difficult, some of my informants explained that it was all part of his spontaneity because he was just acting with God; and he indeed said, “Once you have acknowledged to whom the self belongs, stop trying to tame it and instead work on getting rid of presumptions so that you can pray to *Haq*” (Kayhan 2006: 67)²³⁴.

It seems that the power a *veli* has is gained by completely giving away power. “Doing things for God and with God” in practice means expecting no return, not even from God. Being high includes being low. Uniting the opposites is necessary to create life. For the family it was rather difficult to watch him, as Bayman writes:

The Master was very old and sick. He needed his rest, and the constant stream of people coming to his door taxed his energies and his health. He never had a restful night, and yet, come morning, he would be at least partially rested. The stream of visitors would start early in the morning. He would accept them all, forbid us from preventing their entry, and heed and try to help the slightest trouble of even an ant. He would resolve the most intractable problems with the greatest of ease. The grind would continue late into the evening. When the last visitor had departed, I would watch him prostrate on his bed, his frail frame utterly exhausted, lying as if dead.²³⁵

8.3.6 Dealing with Hierarchy

There were various points in Dede’s system that made building hierarchies difficult, and also among his disciples. According to the teaching, a hierarchy could be based on the difference between those who knew and those who did not –where knowing certainly included acting accordingly- but it was not so easy to determine who knew more, as there were no material clues to it, moreover being higher in the hierarchy was not really a power position but rather meant extra work load and responsibility.

First of all the complexity and multiple meanings and purposes of what he said left people in ambiguity and hardly gave any clues to build hierarchies. The levels of the students were not

²³⁴ Tr. by the researcher.

²³⁵ <http://hbayman.angelfire.com/en/flawless.htm>, (accessed 21 December 2011).

verified materially with ranks such as *khalifa* or *vekil* (representative). The clues people looked for to make such a gradation, like educational, cultural and religious backgrounds, or the amount of time one spent with him, were uprooted systematically. He sometimes addressed his visitors as a group saying that “you come here for years but leave what you learn and experience at the door when you’re leaving”²³⁶, he also mentioned someone for whom spending one week with him had been enough. Maybe one of the most important reasons why there was no basis for hierarchy building was that there was no apparent gradation in the “homework” he gave, in contrast to the common habit in *tariqahs* where there are fixed special *zikr* phrases to be repeated certain numbers of times for each level. His special advice seemed to correspond to the special needs of individuals with their specific problems, obstacles and the dilemmas they confronted which included all ways of life as well as dealing with the self. He also advised people to repeat the names of God according to their needs by consulting the descriptions in his books about their effects, although in most *tariqahs* it is advised that they should not be practiced without direction from the *shaikh*. There were people coming from religiously learned, or *tariqah* backgrounds and people who came for the first time or without any previous religious education gathered in the same room. His talks and advice were directed to everybody who was there at the moment -although each person might have understood something different according to their perception, or remembered some parts and not others, as was a common experience when people compared their impressions afterwards. He challenged everyone who was visiting him to “lead a life beyond eating, drinking, coupling and sleeping”. He compared the education he gave to a university education, reminded his followers that it would not be easy, and added that there was no time for graduated education. Sinem²³⁷ said that in their first meeting Efendi smilingly said that there was kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and high school. But some wanted to go to university immediately. “He didn’t say it directly to us but I knew it was meant for us”. Depending on the disciple’s capacity, power of endurance, willingness, trust and love, it could be a slower or faster process.

²³⁶ Reported by Sumru.

²³⁷ Interview on 28 November 2009.

On the other hand there were some apparent differences among the disciples; teaching each other was a common practice which was encouraged by Dede as long as one did not become self-righteous or dominating; and some of them were more often with him, some had made more contribution to the books, some others had themselves followers, and some others were consultants whom Dede advised others to keep in contact with and who were apparently more advanced, as they were really able to help. But they were not beyond critique, and his comments on them were sometimes ambiguous. For example when someone asked him about the self he said “it has been a long time since I have dealt with it and have forgotten about it. Ask Cahit, he knows it well”. He said to a disciple about another, as he was taking notes of what he said: “he writes and writes but doesn’t understand a word”. For another he said: “he doesn’t listen to me”. To some others he said they were *evliya* of Ankara but they had no leadership roles²³⁸. Simge²³⁹ reported that during a visit Dede said that “there is a person who is sitting at the back, and s/he is the only person who understands what I’m telling now”, and there were some close disciples of him sitting beside him.

There was barely any privacy; his advice, criticisms, comments were heard by everybody who was present. This made it hardly possible to hide mentioned weaknesses from each other and construct idealised selves. He also reflected on his mistakes, especially concerning the time when he was with his master Ahmet Kaya, and advised people not to make the mistakes he had made. This cultivated a culture which was not based on extolling people, which would be possible when errors were covered or hidden, it was rather based on seeing and addressing the errors both in oneself and in others but respecting and loving in spite of these, and keeping on working.

Dede was a mirror where one saw her/himself, and corrected the perception one had about oneself. Those who felt high and important were brought down and those who felt down were brought up. Miriam writes:

²³⁸ This information is a collection of narrations which I have heard in the formation through the years.

²³⁹ Interview on 10 February 2011.

I never saw or heard of him being dogmatic about anything. He never suggested that the non-Muslims who came to see him should change their religion. He was always courteous and gracious to those who came to see him. Okay, almost always: on only one occasion when I was present, he did speak quite sternly and coldly to a visitor. She was not Turkish, and I don't remember where she was from, but she was evidently a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed's family, or so one of her entourage had taken pains to make known to the gathering. She was sitting next to me at the time; and her face is imprinted on my mind because of my shock at how Ahmet Dede spoke to her. There was nothing in her outward manner to provoke the way Ahmet Dede treated her. She kept her eyes modestly down, and she had clearly been 'brought up right' on the way to behave to revered personages. "You have to do your own [spiritual] work²⁴⁰. You mustn't think that you are somehow special because you happen to be related to the Prophet," he told her coldly.²⁴¹

Sadık²⁴² said that when he went to Dede satisfied with himself, he did not pay much attention to him, or he made him in some way feel that he was unimportant, or he became aware of his faults, and when he went to him blaming himself he was consoled. Iris²⁴³ went to visit him feeling small, and in error; he said to her "The head of my *dervish* is upright" which meant she had enough reason to be self-confident. Sinem²⁴⁴ was from an elite family, had been to some European countries, and also in India in an ashram for eight months and thought she was already advanced spiritually. He warned her against feeling special and clever, and overrating herself, he said she was seeing herself in a magnifying mirror. She asked him to break the mirror, he answered she should do it herself. He once said when she came into the room, "the beggars have come" and she said that when she did not feel any offense and remained calm inside he said: "Hmm, they are not beggars anymore". Irem²⁴⁵ was also from

²⁴⁰ "Spiritual" is Miriam's original addition. I would translate this sentence as "Mind your own business".

²⁴¹ <http://fakirscanada.blogspot.com/2008/08/post-15-interlude-2-haci-ahmet-kayhan.html>, (accessed 15 January 2011).

²⁴² In an informal conversation.

²⁴³ In an informal conversation.

²⁴⁴ Interview on 28 November 2009.

²⁴⁵ Interview on 7 November 2010.

the educated elite and she felt she could not speak properly when Dede asked her some questions; she left the first meeting with a feeling of insecurity. He praised people especially when they had been humiliated or patronised by someone else or were having troubles with the self although struggling with it. Nermin²⁴⁶ was going through a crisis; she was offended by her fiancée, and was really depressed when she first visited Dede. He welcomed her saying “my rose has come”. It seemed that nothing was too small to him to deal with. She was also criticised by those around her for her clothing –she often put on shorts; Dede advised her to put on slightly longer skirts and when she bought a quite long one he advised to hang it in her wardrobe for the future as it was too long for now, and all the while he made clear to her that sexual intercourse before marriage was forbidden. On the other hand, Miriam writes:

While I was in Turkey, I made a big mistake and became romantically involved with someone inappropriate. To my horror, I became pregnant - with twins. I was in no position whatsoever to look after two babies. [...] Cahit advised an abortion, which is perfectly legal in Turkey, up to nine weeks of pregnancy. Everyone else who knew of my predicament advised the same. [...] After the abortion, I was very sad and depressed. When I went to see Ahmet Dede, I did not know what to expect in the way of a reception. Another visitor had brought him three yellow roses that morning. He gave the roses to me, and he told me that he loved me very much.²⁴⁷

There were also warnings against abstractions and imagined concepts that would give one a feeling of elevation where the talking and imagining would be mistaken for the state and actions arising from that state. Loving God should have consequences: Loving meant acting accordingly and performing the necessary practices, *namaz* being the most important one. Yet, although practices were important, they could even lead to the opposite of what is desired to achieve through them, if they gave rise to conceit. Ruşen²⁴⁸ was going to hospitals to help some patients with their healing process by giving them a massage after having

²⁴⁶ Interview on 15 August 2010.

²⁴⁷ <http://fakirscanada.blogspot.com/2008/08/post-15-interlude-2-haci-ahmet-kayhan.html>, (accessed 15 January 2011).

²⁴⁸ Interview on 9 April 2011.

visited Dede. Dede warned him to stop doing it because it was feeding the ego as he thought he was doing a favour to others.

He also refused the attempts of the intellectuals who wanted to do things very “correctly”. He once asked for a Hadith collection. Ridvan²⁴⁹ who had studied philosophy took over the job and studied meticulously, chose such Hadith which he thought contained a specifically Sufi content and also wrote out all the references. Dede said (smiling) that there were too many numbers on it –because of the detailed references- and accepted a simple collection from another disciple.

People felt that they were confronted with something which had no equivalence in the world. He was so special, and they also felt special which led to tendencies to consider oneself “elected” and to become arrogant. But he did not encourage any tendency that made someone feel special or better or wiser than others. Everybody was valuable: he said “if you saw the ‘real self’ of each other, you would love each other so much”.

Everybody had an intimate relationship to Dede. He gave people the feeling that they were valuable. He recognised them all and knew what was happening in their lives even though he had so many visitors over so many years. He understood them, worked hard to educate them, and helped them in all their troubles; they were seen and addressed individually.

The states were not static, and he reacted both to the “real” in oneself and to the states that changed which meant he did not behave in the same manner to one person each time. Although people had assumptions, they did not have any sure ground either for generalisations or for fixation. For any hierarchy to be established there would have had to be a more static base, fixed positions, and an organisation which would be based on these.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges for some of the members of the formation was that Dede was accessible to all sorts of people and did not privilege a number of selected ones over others. Although this was at the same time a source of awe and attraction, many uttered their perplexity about it in some way. Even his family members were not privileged; he said

²⁴⁹ In an informal conversation.

to his disciples that they were all his family. That there were no such hierarchical positions with authority has become evident after Dede's passing away and it will be discussed in more detail in the chapter *Post-Dede*.

8.3.7 Conclusion

Existential *communitas* were built around Dede where the relationships were egalitarian and intimate. These *communitas* in the formation however, were not intended for short periods of time during a ritual. They were meant to become a life style as Dede's followers did not step out of the structures of the society completely; they remained in their social environment. But because these *communitas* –ideally- hardly reflected these social structures which included power and hierarchical relationships, they can be considered as existing on the margins of the society. However, in contrast to Turner's *communitas*, they are not utopian, the relationships do not always run smoothly. As Turner suggests the identities were not merged; they were liberated from conformity to general norms (Turner 1991: 274). Conflicts arose sometimes because of the differences of interests and of social classes, when some people wanted to correct each other or had ambitions and jealousy. The arising of conflicts were part of the education as a way of being aware of the multiplicity and subjectivity and learning how to deal with them without violating each other's rights, which is termed *edep* (courtesy, civility). The conflicts were not repressed but managed through principles and Dede's instructions.

There is affirmation of multiplicity on both individual and social levels. Unity and multiplicity are not considered as binary oppositions. These are rather at the heart of the teaching. Unity is achieved through multiplicity. There is also a call for uniting spirituality and materiality, and the mind and the heart. The self is also understood as a multiplicity of sometimes conflicting elements. The binary oppositions such as good and bad, high and low are comprised in one's self. This is also evident in the mode of reading the Koran where the characters there such as the veiler or hypocrite as well as the faithful are found in the self which prevents othering. Ultimate unity is when time collapses altogether and everything is gathered in one moment. Dede is the archetype of multiplicity united in one body, he is a heterotopic body. This unity is not based on binary oppositions and excluding one side of the binaries. It is all-inclusive. The concept of *Muhammadiyah* hints at a choice where the decision is made in each context anew about what is beneficial and what harmful.

The power of a *veli* is not based on the power relations determined by social structures, or on "outer" conditions. They can live on very little, endure a lot. Their power is considered to

come from their closeness to God and demonstrates itself in their knowledge and love. They are considered by my informants in this sense “out of this world”.

Dede clearly aimed at the deconstruction of power structures and hierarchies which were internalized by the people, as well as such dichotomies as good and bad, and high and low. Even the rank of high status in the Sufi context, *veli*, is deconstructed: S/he is not unattainable, and does not gain social power through the status and seeks rather to serve than be served. Moreover the transparency about the failures of people and changing reactions of Dede towards the same people made it hardly possible that someone could be exalted. This style of Dede also made it hardly possible to institutionalise after him as we will see below.

8.4 Post-Dede

As it has always been in the formation, people demonstrate a variety of attitudes towards the absence of Dede and how to continue after him. Dede’s tomb and mosque complex which is the physical centre of the formation is a heterotopic place: a meeting place for a variety of members who refer different meanings to the place, for newcomers, contestations among the members and in the religious scene in the society. There are also other meeting places. On the other hand the older *communitas* have split up and contacts weaken.

In this section we investigate an acephalous society which the formation has become after Dede’s death. The formation has not been institutionalised and the teachings have not been rationalised. The intention is to analyse what changes have taken place both on the personal and the social level and what people think of these changes. How does the formation continue, and if so, how? How do the people situate themselves in society which has gone through radical changes since Dede’s death? Does the liminality continue, or have the members been reintegrated in the society? How do people deal with Dede’s absence? Does the occupation with Sufism continue, and if so, how?

8.4.1 Pictures from an Annual Meeting

When one drives on the motorway from Ankara to Samsun, one sees a small white mosque on the hills of Kızılcaköy with the name “Hadji Ahmet Kayhan Mosque” –I was told that

this small village was chosen for practical reasons: it was not far away from the city and the property prices were low. It was built for him in 1996 two years before he died. Although it was obvious that the “fairytale”²⁵⁰ was heading towards an end, when it really came, it was unexpected and shocking to people. The funeral was held immediately, before the first noon prayer following the occurrence in his mosque, and he was also buried there without waiting for the people who would come from other parts of Turkey. I was told that the family wanted to keep the ceremony small, and it is a *sunnah* not to delay burials. Since then an annual meeting is held here on the day of his death.

It was August the 4th, 2010, the twelfth anniversary of his passing away. As I was walking up the hill I saw buses and cars parked on the sides of the road: five buses with banners showing where they came from; four from Aktarla-Pötürge in Malatya, Ahmet Kayhan’s hometown; one from Istanbul, lots of cars with licence plates from Istanbul, Izmir or Ankara and also people walking, people like me who had taken public transport; buses and the minibuses from Ankara carrying the sign “Hadji Ahmet Kayhan’s mosque” for the day. Next to the mosque is his tomb surrounded with a large garden and a cemetery. On the other side of the hill there is a small forested area which carries the name “*Birlik ve Sevgi Ormanı – The Forest of Unity and Love*” which is tended by his followers. An estimated 1600 people, of whom approximately sixty percent were women, gathered for the anniversary. Dede’s granddaughter went about making last-minute preparations and welcome the guests; she had also been the one to serve guests at home when Dede was alive. Her husband, Dede’s sons and his daughters were also welcoming the guests.

A stage had been built leaning on one of the walls of the mosque, where musical instruments, microphones and loudspeakers stood, and there were 500-600 chairs. Many people sat on the walls of the garden or stood behind the mosque talking to each other. A booklet which included information about Dede, his aims and the meaning of the day, had been printed and was being distributed. This was the most organised annual meeting I had ever seen here but people were as many and varied as they had always been. There were old

²⁵⁰ Burcu called the time spent with him as a fairytale to express her feeling that it had a poetic beauty and magicity outside anything she had known until then.

and young in modern or traditional clothes, children running about and the joy of the event was on everybody's faces. People were mostly grouped like with like. Although I had been in contact with Dede and some of his followers since 1997 only a few faces were familiar to me. I approached a group of six, some of whom I knew. They had been leftists during their university education, and had met Dede in the 1980s when they were fresh graduates. They were telling each other about their first encounters with Dede, which caused laughter and joy ascribable to the delight of remembering and sharing, and also seeing each other after a long time. Besides, there was love and gratitude expressed for the love and giving of Dede which seemed to have no limits. I was introduced to a woman who had come into contact with Dede a few years ago because of a dream she had had about him. She then read his books, talked to disciples of Dede and now she had also brought her elderly mother and father to the anniversary.

The programme started with reading the booklet where the aim of the meeting was described as:

We have gathered here to remember our Dede Hadji Ahmet Kayhan who was born in Malatya and passed away in 1998 after having spent a century of life in this world. We are here to share our memories of him, to remind each other of the advice he gave; to love God, to love God's beloved [the prophet Muhammad], and to love what God and His Messenger loves in the light of what he [Dede] showed us, and to strengthen the love amongst his children [his followers]. When we depart today, our aim is to spread this heightened love and affection wherever we go. (*Hak Yolunda*, 2010)

When the programme began, talking and laughing did not stop and those who had a long bus journey behind them were busy feeding their children or putting them to sleep and chatting all the while. They had arrived very early in the morning and had hardly slept except for a few hours on the floor of the mosque after the Morning Prayer. It was only for the Noon Prayer that peace and order were restored, when most of the people lined up tightly side by side on the mats spread on the ground in the garden, and followed the imam's lead. The variety in appearance was also muted to some extent while the praying was going on, as the women who had no headscarves also put scarves on for the prayer.

These 1600 people who came together for the annual meeting are surely a very small fraction of Dede's followers, but nobody can tell how many people are affiliated with him. The mosque association is the only formal institution of the formation and it is run by a board which is elected in annual meetings among the members. I was told by an informant who is a member of the board that the association has no function except for running the mosque complex.

This relatively small and humble complex carries the characteristics of the classical *evliya* tombs consisting of a combination of *türbe* (tomb), mosque and cemetery. There is also a small kitchen where there is always tea for visitors, as had been customary at Dede's place, and benches and tables which are often used by people to picnic and chat after visiting the tomb and after prayer; it is especially pleasant because of its relaxing atmosphere and fresh air in contrast to the tumult of the big city nearby. A few years ago a hall was built next to the kitchen which can be heated in the winter time, and on Sundays video recordings of Dede are run by his granddaughter; these are watched mostly by those who have not met Dede. Except on Fridays, Sundays and special celebration days such as *bayram* or *kandil*²⁵¹ when around two hundred people gather, it is a quiet place. Dede's books are also distributed in the mosque against print costs –in Dede's lifetime they were free. The site has a caretaker who does cleaning, deals with the garden and cooks tea for visitors, and an imam who leads the *namaz*. There is a house in the back garden behind the cemetery for them to live with their families.

The site serves as a point of reference, especially for the newcomers who were introduced to Dede's teaching and personality through friends, relatives, dreams or his books and who want to meet and talk to the old disciples a few of whom are frequenters, and also the only centre where the members still come together in relatively larger numbers. There are also various Alawite groups who accept Dede as their spiritual leader who visit the place. Some followers come together, share experiences, anecdotes about Dede and discuss matters of social and private concerns on Fridays and Sundays until the afternoon prayer. People who live in other parts of Turkey or of the world mostly visit the complex when they come to Ankara.

When people are there, they most of the time complete a *namaz* in the mosque, visit Dede's tomb and imagine themselves beside him and open their heart trying to hear the inspirations or think about their troubles and pray to God that they are solved to their satisfaction or as God wishes. They usually also visit the other graves in the back garden, some thirty or forty in number. Among them are Dede's wife Hadji Anne, the daughter of Dede's master Ahmet

²⁵¹ *Bayrams* are religious holidays, and *Kandils* are Islamic holy nights.

Kaya, some other followers of the path and Cahit Benövenli who has been a companion for most of my informants. Especially in springtime people also bring flowers to plant on the graves.

The mosque and the tomb complex is the material centre, but actually Dede is the mobile centre of the formation. There are various attitudes towards the site. Most of my informants find that it is a special place but they emphasise different things that give it this quality. Some say that this quality is created mainly by the visitors. Tarık who goes there almost every Friday said that there he felt similar feelings to those he had experienced in Dede's presence, because everybody visiting there carried some part of Dede in them²⁵². Dede's son said that the specialty of the place was not due to his father's tomb. His tomb was there, not him: "it is the visiting people who make the place special. They go there to pray and unburden their hearts. Such places acquire magicity"²⁵³. Burcu and Berrak said that they visited it seldom only as a sign of respect. They think prayer and contact with Dede does not need to be restricted to the place or is not necessarily intensified because they are there. Still Rayiha finds that the place has a special atmosphere because of Dede's tomb, and she sometimes visits it to pray and lead a kind of imaginal conversation with Dede.

The site is also a place of contestation. Some followers who are accepted as *murshids* by some newcomers after Dede's death come with their followers. This is criticised by some others as not really being in line with Dede's way. There are various ideas about how the annual meetings should be organised. It seems that the site is the only area that the legal inheritors of Dede, the family, can decide about what is allowed and what not. The granddaughter of Dede started going there regularly on Fridays and Sundays approximately two years ago because it had been reported that there were some tendencies towards building a "Sufi Saint Cult", to name it in the fashion of Werbner and Basu (2002) –some visitors left amulets or food so that they would be blessed, or wanted to sleep by the tomb for healing, and such attempts were not found to be in accord with Dede's teaching. The granddaughter keeps an eye on the events taking place there, deals with the kitchen, cleaning, visitors, and

²⁵² Interview on 30 March 2011.

²⁵³ Interview on 9 March 2012.

she sometimes cooks for them. She also runs Dede's video recordings on Sunday afternoons in the hut where people sit and chat and drink tea. A request from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to open a Koran Course for girls was refused by the family although some followers supported the idea or thought it would not cause any harm. Another idea from some of the followers which did not find much support was establishing a foundation which would organize conferences and publish books. These restrictions were explained as not to lead the place astray from the way of Dede which was keeping multiplicity but not becoming a place for any particular group or becoming institutionalized. So although the site seems an open place, there are regulations to be obeyed.

It is a heterotopic space, a place of otherness. It looks like a very quiet place from outside, surrounded by a nice garden and a cemetery, in a small middle Anatolian village. It is yet at the centre of some of the contestations both in the formation and in the religio-political scene in Turkey. It reflects the debates in present-day Turkey about the representations of Islam in the public sphere. Yet it is a place where some people go when they go through crisis, some others to find peace, and still others to turn inward, to remember their past and to reflect on the present and the future. It looks open to everybody yet "hide[s] curious exclusions" (Foucault 1984: 6).

8.4.2 Dead or Alive?

"We are *Hayy*²⁵⁴, we do not die. You are actually the ones who are dead. Recite the *Fatiha*²⁵⁵ for yourselves". This notice hung upon Dede's tomb. For my informants it reflects Dede's style which has always shaken preconceptions. There are clues in his books which explicate what he meant. It is related to the understanding of time and space in Sufism as it is expressed in the article "The Part and The Whole" in *Adem and Alem* (Human Being and the Universe):

²⁵⁴ One of the attributes of God meaning the "Ever Living One".

²⁵⁵ The opening *Sura* of the Koran. It is recited in every *namaz* and also after the ones who have died especially at their tombs.

The seeker has been distanced from what s/he seeks for to the extent of her/his search: Because s/he has taken the subject of her/his search together with her/him to the place where s/he wants to arrive [...]. When a circle which begins with a point has completed its circulation again at that same point, every point on the circle is that point. That point is thence both *ezel* (beginning without a beginning) and *ebed* (end without an end). The beginning and the end are intertwined. It has no beginning that it should have an end, and no end that it should have a beginning. That which restricts is the *Zat* (Essence) of the circle, the restricted is its attribute, and they are the origin of each other. The one who looks at the inside sees the outside and the one who looks at the outside sees the inside. S/he is both the seer and the seen, all in one moment.

There is no such thing as time! Time is total denial. You are in the world with your body, in the *barzakh* (imaginal or intermediary world) with your spirit and in eternity with your soul, all at the same time. They neither interpenetrate one another nor are they separate from each other. There is no passing from one to the other to make space or time. What separates you is your presumption. If you make your body, your spirit and soul the reality of each other, you will exist in these three realms simultaneously, you will experience them at the same moment which is present, and time will be eliminated. Thence your being which you suppose to exist, will also cease to be with it. And the *Vacibül Vücud* (the Necessary Being) will manifest itself with its Real body of pure illumination through you and fulfil its sovereignty through you, over you and with you. (Kayhan 2006: 65²⁵⁶)

This idea stipulating a total destruction of our categories is considered to be the perception of *Insan-ı Kamil*. So it is now a question among my informants what his death means and there is consensus that his absence is restricted to the physical plane. But there are two main approaches relating whether and how one can continue to contact him. According to the first approach one can contact him, and to the other one confronts only the self. Various informants of mine said that on one hand Dede prepared them for his absence, and said he was entrusting them to God, and on the other hand he said he was not actually leaving them. My informants agree that Dede's absence means an absence on the physical plane. They assert that the contact is continuous through dreams, visions and contemplation. But some think that when he appears in dreams or visions, it is Dede himself while the interpretations of these reflect the self. He continues to teach and help. Yet the contact will depend on one's own openness to the planes other than the phenomenal. Tarık²⁵⁷ dreamed of Dede a few

²⁵⁶ Translation by Amy Sevil and the researcher.

²⁵⁷ Interview on 30 March 2011.

years ago and he woke up and knew that his wife had a car accident. In a moment the telephone rang and it was his wife on the phone telling him to come for help. The accident was not serious. He said that he did not want to speculate about theories that were doubtful. But he simply scrutinised his experiences both now and at Dede's time, and he found a continuity, although Dede's physical presence sometimes hurt and he was apt to make more mistakes or often did not know what best to do. Lokman²⁵⁸ said that he dreamed of Dede when he had questions, and he answered them or advised him some *zikir*. All the others also have dreams or visions which they consider as almost the same as having met Dede in life.

Ruşen reported that he once asked Efendi what would happen when he died. He answered: "tombs hide me from you, and show you to yourselves"²⁵⁹. He believes that one is left with his/her *Rab* (personal God²⁶⁰) now. Sadık²⁶¹ also thinks that it is always aspects of the self that one encounters. He believes that these dreams and visions are not much different from the time spent while Dede was alive. One is always confronted with the self and cannot reach beyond it. All the while he believes that Dede's intervention is and will be to rescue one from going astray within one's own topography.

Most of my informants regard their ideas as speculations or presumptions and do not argue that their way of understanding is the only possible way. One thing they know is that Dede's influence continues through the teachings he disseminated, and the experiences one had with him. Ruşen also added that Efendi was letting the "honey" be tasted and now it was time to make the "honey" ourselves and give it to others to taste. For those who are left behind, his absence means a transition from childhood to adulthood, i.e. one was dependent on him and took from him, and now it is time to process what one has taken and become independent and find oneself, which brings real development (Sadık). It is time to discover the self

²⁵⁸ Interview on 14 November 2009.

²⁵⁹ Interview on 27 August 2010.

²⁶⁰ This concept will be explained in the section about the discourse.

²⁶¹ Informal conversation in a group meeting on 10 December 2010.

because when he was here one always looked to him and could not always separate oneself from him (Berrak²⁶²).

Especially such informants of mine who consider Dede in the first place in his role as a spiritual guide rather than as a consultant in daily matters, or did not have a relationship with him on a daily basis, state that there is not much difference for them as he has already planted the “seed” in oneself and one has to care for its growth now. They say that he has affected them so much that they have enough material to work and contemplate on, but individual effort through practices and implementation are much more crucial now. The others, who had more physical contact or found much support from him in providing solutions to their dilemmas, find his absence to be a great loss. They miss him enormously and they find that there is chaos after Dede, both among the members and in the world. Most of them think that very many things have changed, both in terms of group relations and in the individuals, since his death.

8.4.3 Change, Ambiguity and Conflicts

There have been changes, ambiguities and conflicts both on the individual and social level after Dede’s death. The loose community which was connected under the leadership of Dede became acephalous although his spiritual existence unites people in a more abstract way. The lack of a formal institution and a leader creates a field that is open and in flux, and it is more difficult to map out now what form the formation has taken, and will take. While it is hardly possible to speak of a community there is continuity in various different forms.

The *communitas* and networks in the formation had been built because of the influence of Dede. He encouraged comradeship and people were going through a similar, intensive process. After him there has been indecision about how to continue. The relationships among people have weakened, also among the ones who belonged to the same smaller networks. Close contacts have taken the form of small groups of friends. Although in the time when I was doing my research the tendency towards splitting continued, I found that there was still a

²⁶² Interview on 17 December 2010.

contact; people remained informed about each other and an imagined unity was still considered to exist.

The changes after Dede's passing away can be summarised as a five stage process up to now: first, people tried to continue as they had been before, larger group meetings were held. In time the meetings got more seldom and smaller. It was not like before, either among friends or for the individuals themselves. A follower expressed this realisation in the following words: "The light was from him, when the light was unplugged, we remained in the dark²⁶³". This was a time of confronting the self, and for many it meant disappointment about the self. This was followed by a period of splitting; bigger groups got smaller and smaller over the years, even various couples got divorced. Many turned their attention to their daily struggles. There was disorientation. When I was in the field I found a new integration in people which had escaped my attention. People had turned to others, to older friends, to childhood friends or colleagues in the workplace trying to embody the teaching themselves. As Irem expressed it: "We don't know anything else, when we share something with people it has to do with *tasawwuf* and what we saw through Dede"²⁶⁴. I have also observed that people talked more about other subjects such as politics, professional and family life, or cultural events, whereas the main topics used to be Dede and Sufism. It seems that people feel an urge to make something out of the experience with Dede and become more active individually, to give back or distribute what they have taken. When we consider the time with Dede as liminal, a period in which crucial changes took place, the present time can be considered as a diffusion and reintegration in the society from which they had been separated to some extent. Another stage that I observed during my research was that interactive groups were formed on the internet. As I was about to finish writing up this thesis a new group was created on the 18th of April on Facebook among some followers who used to belong to three different but connected *communitas* and some of whom now lived in different cities.

²⁶³ Informal conversation.

²⁶⁴ Interview on 7 November 2010.

As there was actually no separation from society and the period with Dede rather enacted a distance from the self, the existence of reintegration or non-reintegration must be questioned in this field –according to the teaching, the liminality is expected to continue together with occupation with the self- but to question this is rather everybody’s private sphere and remains outside the sphere of this research. I have observed that there is a continuity of the preoccupation with Sufism. People continue with the practices, *namaz*, fasting and *zikr* and reading Sufi literature. I have also observed that the intensity of this preoccupation fluctuates, and sometimes becomes more, sometimes less intensive; in Ramadan and in times of trouble such as problems with health, family or in professional life it seems to be more intensive. The preoccupation has taken a more individual form among most of my informants, i.e. it has become invisible even to other members. It is integrated in their lives and diffused to all aspects of life. As explained in previous sections, their perception is highly influenced by the Sufi perspective they had acquired with Dede. On the other hand, the invisibility sometimes causes presumptions and is interpreted as a neglect of spiritual preoccupation and reintegration into the lower qualities of *nafs*, and going back to old habits by other group members. Everybody knows about his/her preoccupation but not about the others’.

It is considered as a sign of lack of real confrontation among most of my informants when one’s perception does not change with time. In this context remaining the same means having stopped questioning and seeking. Burcu reported her disappointment because she thought that many have stopped dealing deeply with Efendi; “Real occupation causes you to think something completely different, something you have never thought before. I see people talk about him, are still fond of him, but the little illuminations are lost again in the haze of daily life. There is no real challenge”²⁶⁵. Berrak²⁶⁶ also asserted that now one should say new things, Efendi had talked from himself and now only repeating what he had had said was too little and too easy. She even thought that it was making use of Efendi, if people had nothing

²⁶⁵ Interview on 11 September 2010.

²⁶⁶ Interview on 17 December 2010.

to say apart from just repeating him. They should speak about their own insights. They should all find their own inner Perfect Human Being.

On the personal level, the most important difference I have observed among my informants is the lack of Dede in his role as the mirror who confronts one with her/himself. People are left to themselves to decide how they are doing, if they are improving or falling back in their journey. Sumru²⁶⁷ said that “*nafs* is something which tries to veil and Efendi unveiled in that he did not let you produce excuses, or the excuses you produced did not affect him in any way. You could not pull him into the games you played with yourself and with others. It was as if he was a mirror and these were reflected back to you”. This kind of mirroring is not available now. Together with Dede, people have also lost much of the reflection they used to get from the other group members. Although they hear criticism from others –as in the case of publications- this does not seem to have much influence. They are rather individuals who prefer to act according to their own interpretations and do not try to arrive at a general consensus in the group or give in to the authority of any one member. It seems that life events are now considered as the most important mirror that people can test themselves against, i.e. how they are dealing with what is happening in their lives. People also try to remain within the limits of the basic “rules” as established by Dede –“*iş, eş, iman*” namely focusing upon your relationship with your work, your spouse and your faith as emphasised by most of the informants.

On the other hand there is much reflection about the time with Dede, what one heard, saw and understood. My research, which took place in the post-Dede period, also shows that this kind of occupation is intensive. This occupation raises the question of “understanding Dede”. Trying to understand Dede means at the same time self-discovery, but while doing this, people also observe how others understand him and they see that there are many differences. Differences also existed in the time of Dede, and were acknowledged by the people, but while Dede kept people together, in spite of their differences, they now increasingly drift apart. The main reason for this separation does not seem to be the differences themselves, rather it is an inability to tolerate it when some members seem to claim understanding better

²⁶⁷ Interview on 19 October 2010.

than the others, and to criticise the others; this is why some of the old friends do not meet each other anymore. People are quite sensitive about such claims and do not accept any authority, yet in friendly conversations they are open to inspirations coming from each other and also take different points of view into consideration. Burcu commented that Dede did not refute anybody, and affirmed people in their individuality, and this was a factor which made the relationships after his death so difficult²⁶⁸.

Although some regard themselves as just individuals who were deeply influenced by him and everybody is now going his/her own way, there are two pressures which make it difficult to take this as such: first, Dede's call for unity is understood by some as a unity and solidarity which must be given among the members of the formation, and the process of dissolution of the relationships is interpreted as a departure from his teaching. However, some others think that dissolution is a natural process and that unity must be sought in oneself and with the whole of humanity, which means an abstract form of unity.

Dede warns about conflicts in relationships that could be referred to the criticisms people have of each other, and advises his followers to remain united. He reminds them that everybody is apt to err, and people should not expect from each other not to make mistakes, rather everybody should identify his/her own mistakes, first of all by him/herself, try to make them better, and expect nothing from each other; he also advises not to be offended by each other, rather to embrace each other (Kayhan 2009: 21). As Dede's emphasis on friendship among people was strong, I have observed in most of my informants a concern about these conflicts, and some who were very cross with each other for years have been able to be reconciled. Although the contacts between followers have got looser and their relationships are reduced to increasingly smaller circles of friends, people remain interested in each other even if they do not see each other anymore, and information about who is doing what spreads easily.

Although unity and sharing and caring for each other is not granted to members of the community to the extent that would satisfy some of them, when they compare the present time with the time of Dede, people seem to be connected through a "shared culture"

²⁶⁸ Interview on 14May 2011.

consisting of a shared experience, similar practices and perceptions. And if someone turns to friends in the formation in times of need, most of the time s/he finds the aid s/he needs. Moreover most of them still find conversations with people from the community quite satisfying, even if this is restricted to a few close friends. And some of my informants said that they include friends in their prayers. There seems to be an abstract togetherness which is based upon the interest in Sufism and the shared extraordinary experience. Dede seems to support this abstract unity. In a discourse in which he mentions the Hira Mountain –where the prophet Muhammad was secluded for forty days until a revelation from the Archangel Gabriel came- he says that the original name of the mountain was the Mountain of *Nur*, divine light/illumination. He advises one to show an effort to climb up this mountain of light with the help of wisdom and the Koran, and adds that “when you climb up this mountain of *Nur*, it is my testament to all of you that you do not forget about these friends. Climb together, all of you, and do not forget the others. Take all the others with you, I mean in your imagination. To the mountain of illumination”²⁶⁹ (*Sohbetler* 2011: 7, 8).

8.4.4 Representations of Dede

The citation above from *Hak Yolunda* (2010) expresses the attitude for the vast majority at present: not forgetting about what Dede taught, coming together on special occasions and then departing to lead lives with the disposition learned with him. But it has not usually been as simple as this. There are the books, the mosque and tomb site, and materials such as pieces of recordings and writings which are considered common property although legally their rights belong to the family. There is the problem of representation of Dede and his teaching in the public space. Moreover the splitting of *communitas* has also been painful because at the beginning people thought they would continue like they used to when he was alive but in time people were drawn into their private lives more and more. The variety of interpretations, influences from classical *tariqah* structures and currents in society and different expectations of people in the formation have also created different attitudes which stand at times in contestation with each other.

²⁶⁹ This citation from the much criticised book is approved as authentic by my informants.

The public representations of Dede, including new publications, web pages, house meetings and the use of the mosque and tomb site, are points of conjuncture. Although Dede's family and some of the disciples seem to have more to say, their opinion is not that decisive; this was also evident in reactions about this research. A few of my informants think that public representations of Dede need to be done in consensus with Dede's legal inheritors and others think that every disciple is the inheritor and there are no such instances of control, although they respect the family. The former refute any attempt that is made in the name of Dede and find that people should appear as individuals, and not speak in the name of Dede, giving their websites his name or publishing under his name –which is done by some of the disciples.

Various people have attempted to become Dede's successor, but they found a clear rejection by majority of followers. Dede himself said he was leaving 1000 people to succeed him on various occasions; there is also a version of this in which he is reported as saying he was leaving 10000 successors, as mentioned earlier. All of my informants think that they will not have the chance of meeting another person like Dede, a reviver of religion, someone who represents the Prophet in our time and interprets the Koran in the present context, rejuvenating Islam; an *Insan-ı Kamil*, a Perfect Human Being.

Newcomers usually have contacts with some of the old disciples. Some of these disciples are very cautious about not creating any kind of master/disciple relationship. They openly reject such tendencies even to the point that they do not accept visitors who may have this kind of expectancy; an example of this is the son of Dede who left Ankara when he saw a danger of being considered as Dede's successor by some of the followers. Those who were also considered advanced in the time of Dede continue to accept visitors. In one such gathering I attended, concepts of Islam and Sufism, some social issues, and some books that had been published on Islam were discussed. Although the visited disciple was evidently accepted as a person of respect by the guests, the relationship did not have characteristics of a *murshid*/disciple relationship, such as high veneration or the person being considered as having extraordinary abilities. One informant expressed that he helped her to broaden her vision. In another meeting there were only new followers and the speeches of Dede were read and the disciple interpreted them as she understood it and talked about the context of the speech, and

my impression of the relationship was again not that of a master-disciple relationship. However, I have been told that there are still others who hold regular meetings and are accepted as spiritual teachers by smaller circles. An informant critically told that regular meetings were held in Ankara in various houses among followers of Dede, each under the “leadership” of another disciple²⁷⁰. These leaders disseminate Dede’s teaching as they have understood it. Although most of their visitors are recent followers of Dede, there are also a few older ones. This can be considered as a reflection of a trend on the Turkish religious scene at present, especially wide-spread among women. There are many such small groups who meet at houses and share a form of piety and solidarity and consult their group leader about their daily occupations, dreams or norms of the religion. These are connected to one or the other supra-leader –dead or alive- through their sub-leader. This means that parts of the formation is integrated on the organisational level in present Turkish society and is expansive in the form of normative and ideological sub-branches.

Some of my informants express explicit abhorrence to such meetings and a few are in approval of them. None of my informants look for another master, except one of them who felt overloaded by her daily problems and needed someone who could relieve her burdens as Dede once did. But she was then disappointed to find out that the people she consulted could not help her like Dede, and she accepted that she now had to master her problems through her own efforts.

When I was writing this research one big issue was a book of *Sohbetler* which was published by a disciple and already has had two printings (2007, 2011). The book consists of transcriptions of some audio-recordings during the visits to Dede after the Friday prayers. This book was severely criticised: Some criticised the style as it was not edited properly, and there were some mistakes due to misinterpreting some parts because the recording quality was bad. Some said that it should have been done as teamwork. Some others – especially one of my informants Berrak who had been with Dede on a daily basis- were altogether against such publications as misrepresentations of Dede, because the context was missing although in Dede’s lifetime who Dede was addressing was always important, as was

²⁷⁰ Berrak in an interview on 10 December 2011.

the context in which he was saying something. She was also concerned about the inclusion in the second edition of some texts which were not originally from Dede, and the fact that the book was printed under Dede's name. These additions are at the end of the book and include short life stories of some of the Sufis in the *silsila* and a *wird*—every *tariqah* has a collection of fixed prayers that are read in weekly communal meetings and also privately by individual members on a daily basis. None of my informants witnessed that such a *wird* was read at Dede's place. On the other hand the book found acceptance among some others and continues to be disseminated especially through house meetings I mentioned earlier in this section. The reaction of the family was to refuse to disseminate it in the mosque and to say that the inclusions were not original, when asked. Berrak argued that legal precautions should be taken against such trespasses, and she was also against the house meetings and web-pages which carry the name of Ahmet Kayhan. There seems to be no clear agreement about where, by whom, how and to what extent Dede and his teachings should be represented in the public space.

The lack of institutionalisation also hinders an accumulation of power. This echoes a phrase of Dede that was told me soon after I met Dede: “You won't find anything to put into your pocket here”. For those who need a community with clearly defined structures, solidarity and security it gives to its members, this formation is too ambiguous; it has the characteristics of liminality; i.e. it is in-between existence and non-existence.

8.4.5 Reactions to the Socio-political Context

Islam has become one of the central topics of political discussions since the AKP, the Justice and Development Party—with an Islamist background and neo-liberal policies—came to power in 2002. The AKP won three elections in succession and in each increased its vote, and was able to form a third consecutive majority government in 2011. The supporters of the AKP are categorised as “provincial capitalists, the pious small bourgeoisie, the newly urbanized poor, important fractions of the police and much of the liberal, left-leaning intelligentsia” by the sociologist Cihan Tuğal (2007: 5). Religious communities now have more political influence, and support the AKP regime. The AKP identifies to some extent with the Ottoman past, builds upon a Muslim identity and considers the republican elite as suppressors of various opposition groups including the religious ones. The CHP, the Republican People's Party is the main opposition and claims to stand for the Republic built by Atatürk which is marked as being at least partially a secular national state, which identifies with the values and institutions of Western modernity, and which is further marked by a radical rupture from the Ottoman past.

Since the coming to power of the AKP there has been a rapid process of transformation. The AKP represents the idea of a “new Turkey”: retaliation against the suppressions instituted by the Kemalist state by means of transformations of its institutes; military, security, judiciary and education. History making and the political discourse have changed drastically: the Kemalist state was a modernist project; it considered itself a democratic, modern, unitary nation state where the elite had the responsibility and right to educate and transform the general populace from backward and superstitious subjects to rational, modern, democratic, emancipated and patriotic individuals. The model for identity building was taken from the prosperous West with its modernist values of rationalism, development and idealistic desires to serve a cause rather than serving power, as against a backward, corrupt and suppressive Ottoman rule. The AKP regime built its identity against this republican one, representing the Kemalist state as a failure, as suppressive, anti-democratic, and alienated from the folk. The model for identity is rather the USA, a post-modern, pragmatic world power, together with the Ottoman state, which is considered to have a unique, Muslim identity and was a world power in its heyday. The AKP is promoted as the voice and conscience of those who had been politically and economically suppressed and whose values were looked down upon. Demonstrating piety and belonging to a religious community have become social capital, as a tool to gain access to power positions –which produces inequality. “Being a Muslim” has been commodified.

Most of my primary informants are quite sceptical about these changes –only one secondary informant of mine expressed himself explicitly in support of the regime. They are disturbed about the government’s emphasis on the “evils” of the republic and neglect of its gains, that the religion has become commodified and politicised, and that there is strong polarisation in the society. They are also worried that Islam has been identified with the AKP regime. One of them expressed herself explicitly against the regime, calling it the “tyranny of the majority”. She said that she tried to make her voice heard when saying that there was another kind of understanding of Islam which was also appropriate to Atatürk’s idea of Islam. She wrote to a newspaper which was known as a traditional supporter of the CHP, but she did not get a supportive response. Another expressed his worry about the elimination of the Sufi aspect which had had a strong influence in Turkey. A few are more relaxed, and also do business with circles that are close to the new political power. But they are not fully integrated in those circles. A primary informant of mine who supports the Kurdish cause expressed himself at first as supportive of the AKP politics but he has already distanced himself through disappointment. Another was also supportive until she saw the AKP’s complete new recruitment in the governmental institution she worked for, where AKP supporters were put in place and old officers like her were encouraged to retire. These

examples demonstrate the liminal condition of Dede's followers, which hinders them from identifying with any one political front.

8.4.6. Conclusion

The formation as a whole has been acephalous since Dede's death in 1998. It is not institutionalised and the teaching has not been rationalised. There is yet continuation and change. New networks have been built; the old ones have been split. Some aspects of the formation have become more visible in the public sphere, yet the formation is still invisible in comparison to other religious communities.

The visibility is through the mosque and the tomb complex, disseminations in the form of books or on the internet, and various smaller networks meeting mostly in houses under the leadership of various disciples of Dede now acting as *murshids*. The relationships among larger networks of comrades, the *communitas*, the contacts with Dede, the occupation with Sufism have moved to some extent to the imaginal realm. There has also been much reflection about the experiences with Dede. The field of the formation is diffused while its physical centre is the mosque and the tomb complex which does not have a central meaning for many; the non-physical, mobile centre is Dede.

Dede's absence is felt deeply by the majority of his followers. They have lost the reflection coming from Dede and his love and guidance in their daily life. While some think that it has been necessary to "grow up", and their experiences give them enough material to study for the rest of their lives, for some others who considered Dede as a great help in their daily struggles or had been with him almost on a daily basis, the lack is felt more deeply.

The physical centre, the Hadji Ahmet Kayhan Mosque, is a heterotopic space, a place of otherness. As described earlier, it is a very quiet place from the outside, yet embracing a variety of attitudes, perceptions, meanings and contestations both in the formation and in the religio-political scene in Turkey. It is a place where people open their hearts and spill out their burdens, hopes and desires. It includes some exclusions to remain what it is; a heterotopic space, a space open to a variety of people and meanings some of which are in conflict with each other. Much of the conflicts are about the public representations of Dede. The family has control over the mosque site to some extent. They have stopped the tendencies towards building a "Sufi Saint Cult" or institutionalized religion. The suggestion to start Koran Courses organized by the Department of Religious Affairs is refused. However disseminations such as websites and books carrying Dede's name, as well as house

meetings continue as private initiations, that are confronted with approval or disapproval by other members of the formation.

Most of my informants preserve their liminality; they either cannot integrate or do not want to integrate in any of the political segments or interest groups of society fully. In the face of the importance of religious identity in the political scene, some of them think that religion has become commodified in present day Turkey.

Considering the history of the tradition, the resistance against institutionalisation and rationalisation since Dede's demise, and the ways in which the formation has developed since then, I tend to claim that the continuation is an expansive, diffusive and open-ended process. The tradition continues insofar as there are newcomers, quite a few groups who meet at houses and Dede's books continue to be disseminated. There is also contact and dissemination through the internet; there are quite a number of web-pages most of which include his books, and translations of his books –mainly English- and there are interactive web-pages where anecdotes and experiences are shared. There is also new publication in the form of books and on the internet. Some disciples have contact with groups from other countries who used to come and visit Dede or have heard about him and want to be informed. There might be a follow-up in years to come, attempts to gather many groups together, although most of my informants exclude such a possibility. Moreover, many people have taken extensive notes of their meetings with Dede and about what he said, although very few seems to show any attempt to make them publicised and they are left for the following generations.

Dede's education seems to have many aspects which can affect continuous liminality as it sets forth deconstruction of the self and being, rather than being just a preparation for reintegration in the sense of the "Rites of Passage". The continuation of liminality requires the continuity of deconstruction. This means keeping a good distance to any one of the structures, be it thought structures, such as ideologies, or dogmas and social structures such as the cultures, identities, discourses or institutions even while one operates within them. It is difficult to guess what might happen in the future, as the field is dynamic and many are still around their fifties. Furthermore Dede said that he would be understood sixty years later, which contributes to the understanding of the process as an open-ended one.

8.5 Deconstructive Discourse and Related Experiences

This last section of the thesis deals with the main concepts of Sufism which form the basis of "perception" among my informants. It discusses the relationships between experience and

the Sufi discourse and delineates deconstructive discursive aspects of Sufism. The attitudes towards the “text”, discourse, knowledge, creation and experience that have their basis in the scriptures are delineated. *Allah*, *Rab* (the personal God), *Haq* (the Real), names and attributes of God, *Insan-i Kamil*, *nafs* (the self), the stages of *nafs* and *fana* (nothingness or loss of self) are the main concepts which will be discussed, and the occupation with them will be exemplified. Deconstruction appears as an intrinsic part of the tradition as it is understood and practiced by the members.

8.5.1 The Koran

There are two types of verses in the Koran; the *muhkam* ones have a clear meaning and the *mutashabih* ones have various meanings either because their words have various meanings or they are symbolic. Many of the *mutashabih* verses attribute anthropomorphic qualities to God, and since these would conflict with the incomparability of God they are understood as symbolic:

He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are verses basic or fundamental of established meanings; they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical (*mutashabih*). But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except God. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord: " and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding. (Koran 3: 7²⁷¹)

There are two main approaches in relation to the *mutashabih* verses: One tradition declares them as not interpretable and do not assign meanings to them. This is the understanding of the tradition which is known as the *Salaf*, and the Wahhabis also advocate this approach. The other tradition considers such verses as open to various interpretations because the allegories cannot be taken literally and the words simply have various meanings, and argues that if they were not understandable at all there would be no reason for them to be included in the Koran, this tradition is called *Halaf*. This discussion has been going on since the first centuries of Islamic history. The Sufis consider both the literal and the symbolic meanings and they usually include various interpretations in their books not only of *mutashabih* verses

²⁷¹ Translation by Yusuf Ali.

but also of the others. Ghazzali in the eleventh century advocated the legitimacy of esoteric interpretations even for verses which had an apparent meaning (Almond 2004: 68) and for Ibn Arabi (13th c.) the verses had “an unending flow of different meanings” which occur “according to the situation and moment of the reader” (ibid.: 69), and “forever producing meanings without ever revealing itself” (ibid.: 72). This reflects the “ineffable source of all manifestations [*Hak*, the Real] without ever actually manifesting itself” (ibid.: 72). Ian Almond who compares Derrida and Ibn Arabi’s deconstructive hermeneutic styles writes that while the infinite possibilities of the text leads Derrida to conclude that the text has no depth and is “semantically vacuous” (ibid.: 57), it leads Ibn Arabi to conclude that the text is an “inexhaustible storehouse of treasures” and represents both the transcendence and immanence of God (ibid.: 71). In line with Sufi tradition Dede’s interpretation of the Koran was a point my informants emphasised. Ruşen addressing the *mutashabih* verses said that Efendi was interpreting them as a “man of understanding”,²⁷². Lokman²⁷³ emphasised that the Koran was not a book to recite without understanding, it challenged one to think and to consider in so many verses, and asked again and again “Will you then not consider?” Berrak²⁷⁴ had recordings of Dede, and when she listened to them, she realised that they were often interpretations of the Koran. Hurşit²⁷⁵ recounted the perplexity of a friend of his who was good at Koranic studies when Dede challenged his capacity of interpretation giving interpretations he had never been confronted with before.

Another point about the Koran which is important to mention is the approach of the Koran to the concept of “text”. There are three kinds of sacred books (Kayhan, no date: 214). First, the books of revelation: “And, verily, [the essence of] this [revelation] is indeed found in the

²⁷² Interview on 5 November 2010.

²⁷³ Interview on 14 November 2009.

²⁷⁴ Interview on 17 December 2010.

²⁷⁵ Interview on 17 October 2011.

ancient books of divine wisdom [as well]” (Koran 26: 196²⁷⁶). Second, the universe and thirdly the self: “Soon will We show them our Signs²⁷⁷ in the (furthest) regions (of the earth), and in their own souls²⁷⁸, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth” (Koran 41: 53). The concept of text thus covers everything, namely the books, the self and the universe. These are read in cross-reference to unveil each other. Sufis work for acquiring literacy to be able to read the signs: “Verily, in all this there are messages indeed for those who can read the signs” (Koran 15: 75). Secondly, the truth is to be read through the signs but they themselves are not the truth: “Now among His signs are the night and the day, as well as the sun and the moon: [hence,] adore not the sun or the moon, but prostrate yourselves in adoration before God, who has created them - if it is Him whom you [really] worship” (Koran 41: 37). Thirdly, the signs are infinite: “And if all the trees on earth were pens and the oceans (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet would not the Words of Allah be exhausted (in the writing): for Allah is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom” (Koran 31: 27) and “Every day in (new) Splendour doth He (shine)!” (Koran 55: 29). All creation is hence considered as the Words of Allah and they are at the same time veils that hide Allah: “with the lote-tree²⁷⁹ veiled in a veil of nameless splendour” (Koran: 53: 16). So Sufis seek what lies behind veils, i.e. they attempt unveiling or deconstruction which will make them literate, and seek the moment of being addressed: “but now We have lifted from thee thy veil, and sharp is thy sight today!” (Koran 50: 22).

²⁷⁶ The Koran translations in this thesis are all from Muhammad Asad except where otherwise indicated. They are from <http://www.islamicity.com/QuranSearch/>.

²⁷⁷ The word “*ayat*” is here translated as “signs”, sometimes it is translated as messages. The verses of the Koran are also referred to as “*ayat*”.

²⁷⁸ The word “*anfusahim*” comes from the root “*nfs*” and is often translated as the soul, *nafs*, self or mind. “*Anfusahim*” means their own soul, or themselves, or their *nafs*. <http://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=nfs>, (accessed 17 March 2012).

²⁷⁹ Lote-tree: “*Sidretu’l Münteha*” is the nearest Muhammad has come to God during his ascension. God is veiled through his creation and cannot be seen (see Koran 53: 14, 16).

The ultimate deconstruction is through *tawhid*, unification. The human heart is capable of unification as referred in the Hadith where God says: “I could not fit in the heavens and the earth but in the heart of my servant”. When a single body unites –also when binary oppositions unite-, it becomes empty of everything and all-inclusive at the same time.

8.5.2 The Sufi Discourse

One of the reasons why it is always difficult to claim that Sufism is a discursive tradition as Asad suggests (1986: 10), is the quality of the discourse which is often quite complex and necessitates a close reading where the meanings have to be “unveiled” or deconstructed through intensive occupation and experiences. Further, one is usually surprised at the difference between the assumed meaning and the experience once it occurs. Such a discourse serves both as a tool to generate certain experiences and to reveal them, which thus becomes an open-ended process holding one in a continuous liminal phase where the discourse can hardly be structured to a formal way of thinking, and the individual can scarcely settle down in the security of knowing. Instead s/he remains insecure and at times in perplexity for as long as s/he is ready to expose her/himself to it, and one day her/his insecurity is lifted.

It is often emphasised that Sufism seeks experiential knowledge, i.e. knowing through oneself. Although the knowledge acquired by reading, hearing and reasoning is also considered necessary, experiential knowledge is ranked higher because it is claimed that the meanings will not open themselves up to the subject in an only partial confrontation, whereas an experience includes the whole of the self and its environment. The knowledge gained through empirical knowledge or reasoning alone is not trusted because the sensory organs can be misleading, and the intellect works within the limits of the given, while the Sufi aims at going beyond preconceptions, or *zan*. However *tefekkir* (contemplation and reflection), also holds a significant place in Sufism. The experiences and knowledge gained have to be contemplated on so that they become sources of further knowledge, and contemplation may also lead to new experiences.

Another point is that all of my informants spoke about an “affect” of the text –the written text as well as Dede’s- which was transmitted from body to body, for the most part through unconscious processes, and what was experienced or understood could be different from individual to individual. *Hal* (the state, disposition and affect) of someone, i.e. what one radiates, is considered to be decisive rather than *kal* (the discourse), or what one says. A Sufi adherent is advised not to be blinded by a person’s words and rather to concentrate on the unseen, the *hal*. On the other hand, the word that has the power of affect is the one that is

uttered by someone of the relevant disposition, i.e. where there is no discrepancy between discourse and disposition. This mechanism is considered to work also with the written text: texts written by people who have this unity of disposition and word also have the power of affect. Such encounters cause openings and preparedness in the listeners or readers, which can give way to experience. Hence it is a common saying among Sufis that “Sufism is not the wisdom of *kal* but the wisdom of *hal*”, a saying Rayiha repeated often.

Some of the experiences I will quote below take place in the imaginal plane, i.e., in a plane between the dense phenomenal and less dense spiritual planes; *rüya* (dreams) and *rüyet* (visions) are considered to take place in the imaginal plane. Some others are contemplations, and still others are daily life experiences which are interpreted in terms of Sufi discourse. The dreams and visions are crucial in establishing the bond with Dede and the theory of Sufism. These are important in building the base of people’s convictions. In the course of my field research I observed that the visions were either shared with intimate friends or not at all, and people preferred to relate their deductions rather than these experiences, although they were generally quite open even in sharing their weaknesses and errors. Hurşit²⁸⁰ explained his reason for reticence as first a fear of his experiences being degraded as hallucinations and secondly that such visions were very private because they accorded with the disposition of the perceiver, and hence would differ from person to person. The examples of such experiences in my interviews are from informants I had particularly good rapport with.

Dede described his role as the “awakening of the *murshid*, spiritual teacher” in oneself. What he means by *murshid* can be interpreted in various ways but when we consider the effect of these experiences on people, we can say that they play the role of a kind of *murshid*, i.e. they guide people on the path. People depend on these experiences more than on what they read and hear, and this is apparently one of the important reasons why hierarchies cannot be properly developed in the formation. Experience is deconstructive on the discourse, i.e. it reveals underlying meanings.

²⁸⁰ Interview on 17 October 2011.

8.5.3 Concepts and Ambiguities

The most reliable sources of knowledge seem to be experiences which show reflections of the discourse, and what people call the “affect of Dede”²⁸¹. In this case it seems like a contradiction that people read so much, but when we look at what the people in the formation read and how they deal with it, we see that reading is for them often a kind of experience rather than an intellectual act. Reading Sufi literature or the Koran means dealing with many concepts that one does not understand clearly or that have multiple meanings²⁸².

The Koran is more than ingenious; e.g. one word *felak* has something like sixteen or eighteen meanings, bell, explosion etc.; it always breaks your preconceptions. [...] *Melek* (angel) means will power in Arabic, not creatures that have wings. [...] The *zikr* given in numbers is to keep you busy, the *zikr* of God means never forgetting God. [...] And *tövbe*, repentance means realising that I have no existence. And when you realise this, you say “*la ilahe illallah*, only God exists”. [...] Opening your heart, soul and self means putting thoughts aside and saying “my God only for your satisfaction”. Everything will go on as it is, you won’t break your contact with the world. Efendi said “wherever you are, don’t forget God”. (Lokman²⁸³)

The meanings are developed in time, especially when they are supported by experiences, and these experiences are different from person to person although they are recognised when

²⁸¹ Here the word “affect” is used in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari as it seems to be the nearest to what people mean when they talk about Dede’s *hal*: “AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling [...]. *L’affect* (Spinoza’s *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act. *L’affection* (Spinoza’s *affectio*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest sense to include ‘mental’ or ideal bodies” (1993, xvi).

²⁸² Moreover few of my informants have a command of Arabic or Ottoman language which is highly influenced by Arabic and Persian. They have to rely on Turkish interpretations of the Koran and Sufi literature where some of the concepts have been kept in their original form. Analysing the effects of this could be a subject of study in itself.

²⁸³ Interview on 14 November 2009.

they are shared or interpreted in terms of the discourse. *Hal*, the affect accompanying the reading is the main reason why people read. They call it tasting: reading is done for the taste of it, rather than intellectualising what they read. My informants say that they enjoy reading, but most of the time, when asked about concepts, they cannot be defined. The attempted definitions remain within the discourse and lack the clarity of “objective” and “scientific” definitions, and would not mean much to those who have little acquaintance with such literature.

The complexity of the discourse is first of all on the level of concepts. In Sufism, one challenge –and at the same time, attraction- seems to be that those interested in learning should be willing to handle many concepts that they do not understand clearly. Even the most common concepts such as *Allah*, *Rab*, *Insan-ı Kamil*, *nafs* have a certain degree of ambiguity, and a Sufi follower is exposed to such concepts and invests a lifetime in discovering or unveiling their meanings. Unveiling, finding or deconstruction is considered to be necessary to get at the meanings, and this is not only an intellectual practice but it also includes various levels of perception which are to be opened up in the body.

Another reason for complexity is what the Sufi adherent is expected to read. There are three kinds of “sacred books” to be read in order to awaken and develop the potential of perfection. These are the holy books of the Torah, the Psalter, the Bible and the Koran, the book of the universe and the human being (Kayhan, no date: 214) because God manifests His Being in His creation which is in continuous flux.

The acceptance of “continuous flux” draws attention to change on the level of creation and opens up to the limitless. A Sufi adherent must be able to read what is behind this “continuous flux,” which is likened to the waves on the surface of the ocean, and s/he is expected to go through planes of existence towards the source where creation is refined, where the crowd of multiplicity is diminished at least to some extent, where the outsideness is inverted and the meanings begin to get clearer.

Sufi literature can be roughly divided into three categories: One type is about rules and practices and what the Sufi adherent must pay attention to, and especially about the self and social relations once s/he embarks on the path. Abd al-Qadir Geylani’s and Erzurumlu Ibrahim’s texts are mainly of this type. The other type comprises poetry, prose and anecdotes which are rich in symbols –Jalaladdin Rumi is the best known of this type. They are mostly the expressions of experiences that a Sufi has gone through, which also guide the Sufi follower. The third type mainly deals with concepts as they are explained and experienced by

Sufis, and the best representative of this, also the most widely read, is Ibn Arabi. But even in him the concepts are not clearly defined, instead their qualities are explained and they are used in various contexts.

Reading includes associations of various contexts –encounters with Dede, the Koran, the Hadith, other Sufi texts, and experiences- that one has been confronted with. One actually moves in a field where one does not understand intellectually, but gets affected. Simge said that:

Once as I was reading Ibn Arabi, I realised that I had thoughts flowing on three different tracks in my head but I did not understand anything of what he wrote. I thought I would leave the book aside and do something useful while thinking, and started to knit. I assumed that I would be able to go on thinking just like when I was reading. But I saw that my thoughts changed altogether when I stopped reading, they really lost depth. I was not able to follow the various tracks at the same time, either. Then I understood that my thinking was influenced by reading, and what the use of reading was and took up the book again. It was in a way opening deeper levels in me. It was my first and only experience of being conscious of the different tracks of thought this clearly.²⁸⁴

Much of the occupation with reading of my informants has this characteristic of half-unconscious experience. It is a mixture of the affect of what is read and the perception it opens up in oneself which is apparently different from person to person, at least to some extent. Reading in this sense is not experienced as acquiring knowledge from outside but as opening up levels of the self inside.

It is also an associative study and experience; people consult the literature to understand what Dede means, and consult his affect and words to understand the books, and individual experiences and perceptions are also associated. Burcu²⁸⁵ said that she was able to read and understand Ibn Arabi through Dede because she saw the meanings in him.

²⁸⁴ Interview on 10 February 2011.

²⁸⁵ Interview on 15 August 2010.

8.5.4 An Exemplary Reading

Here I will try to describe the theory of Sufism by relating it to the Koran, Sufi literature and some sayings of Dede. The reason for such an attempt is that some basic understanding of the theory is necessary in order to understand the mental occupation of my informants which influences their perception.

Sufism deals with the relationship between God, the human being and the cosmos, and presents and incorporates many differentiations of these relationships. The complexity of the discourse is apparent only when we consider the various concepts which are used interchangeably with *Allah*, also in the Koran, such as *Rab*, *Hak*, and *Mevla*, to denote different aspects of *Allah* which is the name that is all-comprehensive. In this research we have already encountered various descriptions of Sufism –and there are hundreds of them. Now, to give an example of the discursive style, I will take another one and study it, and attempt to demonstrate the occupation with it although it is a reduced one and will not include all the questions and associations it calls forth. It is the definition by Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakkı in *Irfan Okulunda Oku*:

Tasawwuf is the name of the wisdom which is of –“*Ilahi*” and “*Rabbani*” based on the book and the *sunnah* [sayings and acts of Muhammad]. Its subject matter is changing one’s condition from unawareness to *huzur* [tranquillity or experienced presence] of God. Its benefit is to save one from bad habits of his/her *nafs*, and to make an “*Insan-i Kamil*”, Perfect Human Being and a servant worthy of “*Mevla*”. The difference between Sufism and other sciences is that it cannot be learned by reading books. The books about Sufism are there only to learn about the methods and observances of *tariqahs*. Sufi education is only possible by performing and practicing with a “*Murshid-i Kamil*”, a perfect teacher, and by reading the book of the body. (Kayhan 2009: 373)

The concepts of *Ilahi* and *Rabbani* are commonly used in Sufi texts, and although we can translate *Ilahi* as Divine, when it comes to *Rabbani* it becomes problematic in a way that is not only related to translation but to the meaning. God is addressed as “the *Rab*, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds” in the Koran (1: 2). *Rab* is often translated as the personal God or Lord. *Rab* is also considered as the guide, the One that knows and teaches one, it is merciful and all-knowing, and the revelations to the prophets come from their Lord, and it is the aspect of God which can be recognised as in the famous saying: “whoever knows himself, knows his *Rab*”. Qashani (d. 1330) explains the concept in his glossary as:

A name for the Truth, seen from the standpoint of the relationship of the Essence to really existing things, whether they are spirits or physical bodies. The relationship between the Essence and the Established Essences [*ayan-i sabita*] is the starting point of various Divine Names such as the Capable and the Aspirant; and its connection with the

physical world is the origin of the Names of Lordship such as the Provider and the Protector. (Qashani 1991: 99)

When we consult Ibn Arabi for a conceptual study we find that there are various places in his books where *Rab* is explained, and when we take one example: *Rab* is “*hakikat*” the reality of the *nafs*, self or what one has and can know of God –*Hak*, the Real is also one of the names of God. The actions of everything are the actions of *Rab*, and the *Rab* is content with one although not everyone is content with his/her *Rab* –Dede also says that “*Allah* is content with you, the question is, are you content with him”? The contentment with *Rab* is the contentment with oneself or with one’s real self. Knowing the *Rab* means knowing its qualities and by knowing one tries to be in accord with it and to do what these qualities ask of one. Every act is the act of *Rab* even if one is not aware of it (Ibn Arabi, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 2008: 92-93). According to the Sufis’ understanding of creation, the reality of everything is/are the names and attributes of God which are the stepping stones of Sufism, and *zkr* is the recollection of them. They are the archetypes or the qualities from which everything is made. They are epistemological and intelligible but not existential until they have an objective form. According to Ibn Arabi, the forms are created so that the Divine Names –or Beautiful Names and Attributes of God as they are called in the Koran- can manifest their Realities in the world which is what they desire and strive for (Chittick 1982). They are the essences or souls, i.e. the meaning behind the forms which take various forms in the phenomenal world.

Mevla, on the other hand, which is also in the definition, is another word which is used for God and it means master, protector or friend. What is meant by *nafs* is going to be explicated in the following section. The *Insan-i Kamil* is considered to comprehend all the Names and Attributes of God and to have the knowledge of them²⁸⁶. But what does having knowledge mean?

²⁸⁶ Chittick writes that: “In Qunawi’s terms, the first presence is the divine knowledge, which “embraces all things” (Q. 40: 7). Hence the divine knowledge, by embracing everything, whether divine or created, delineates the total sphere of influence of the name God. However, this is on the level of God Himself, within His own non-manifest knowledge. The second presence is the spiritual world, which manifests the full range of the properties of the name God in the appropriate spiritual

Sufism defines three types of knowledge: *ilmel yakin* is the knowledge learned by hearing and reading, *aynel yakin* is empirical knowledge which is considered to be apt to distortion because it is prone to being constructed by sensory organs and presumptions, and *hakkel yakin* is when the duality between the object of knowledge and knower disappears –i.e. it is possible when annihilation or loss of self, *fana* takes place. In *Irfan Okulunda Oku* this is explained with an allegory: When the fire illuminates a piece of coal with its light which is reflected against the wall and falls on the coal from the wall it is like *ilmel yakin*. If the coal gets closer to the fire and gets illuminated and warmed up by it directly without the intermediary of the wall, it is like *aynel yakin*. And if the coal falls into the fire and is burnt by the fire becoming itself fire it is like *hakkel yakin* (Kayhan 2009: 284). That such kind of knowledge is within the human potential is supported by a verse in the Koran and a Hadith in *Irfan Okulunda Oku*: “Soon will We show them our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth), and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things?” (Koran 41: 53²⁸⁷) and “Your bodies are your souls and your souls are your bodies”. It is further explained that this Hadith complies with *tawhid*, unification, which is the main doctrine of Islam, and it demonstrates that there is correspondence between the laws of the material world and the laws of the spiritual world (ibid.: 50). Hence Sufis look both at the world, in their body, and at the Koran and Hadith for knowledge. However, when one observes the attributes of God in *Insan-ı Kamil* or in other beings or in the self, and assumes that they belong to him/her personally, it is considered as deification or idol worship.

This potential of knowing God through His Names and Attributes is considered to be what makes the human being special. Qashani explains that;

modes of existence. The third and fourth presences are the imaginal and corporeal worlds, and the fifth presence is the perfect human being, who is the “all-comprehensive engendered thing” (*al-kawn al-jâmi'*). The divine presence specific to the perfect human being is the whole of reality on every level, which is to say that he experiences simultaneously the first four levels in their fullness and total integration” (1996).

²⁸⁷ Translation by Yusuf Ali

the servants of God [are] [p]eople who have been illuminated by the Divine Names. If they have verified the reality of one of the names, and have been imbued with the quality which is the reality of that name, they become related to God through the adoration and contemplation of its divinity” (Qashani1991: 65).

According to the narration in the Koran, God asked the Angels to prostrate themselves before Adam when He created him.

AND LO! Thy Sustainer said unto the angels: "Behold, I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it." They said: "Wilt Thou place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood -whereas it is we who extol Thy limitless glory, and praise Thee, and hallow Thy name?" [God] answered: "Verily, I know that which you do not know." And He imparted unto Adam the names of all things; then He brought them within the ken of the angels and said: "Declare unto Me the names of these [things], if what you say is true. They replied: "Limitless art Thou in Thy glory! No knowledge have we save that which Thou hast imparted unto us. Verily, Thou alone art all-knowing, truly wise." Said He: "O Adam, convey unto them the names of these [things]." And as soon as [Adam] had conveyed unto them their names, [God] said: "Did I not say unto you, `Verily, I alone know the hidden reality of the heavens and the earth, and know all that you bring into the open and all. That you would conceal'?" And when We told the angels, "Prostrate yourselves before Adam!" -they all prostrated themselves, save Iblis, who refused and gloried in his arrogance: and thus he became one of those who deny the truth. (Koran 2: 30-34)

According to these verses, because *Iblis* (Satan) did not understand the reason for the command, and saw the brutal, ignorant aspects of the human being, he disobeyed God and was thrown out of *Cennet*, Paradise (God’s presence). In the following verses he asked for permission from God to mislead people, i.e. to make them believe that they are nothing other than as he saw them, i.e. as the creator of pain and disorder on earth. Following the way of *Iblis* means in this context not being able to see another capacity in the human being; i.e., knowing the Names and their possible manifestations and bringing an order to the world. Dede said, “Everybody who comes here is upon *Hak*, but there is *Muhammadiyah*”. *Hak* is the sheer manifestation of God such as water making the earth fertile, enabling life but also causing disasters through storms and floods. *Muhammadiyah* might, here, mean a guiding towards fertility and life rather than towards disaster.

According to Sufi theory there are various planes/realms/worlds beside the phenomenal plane, and there are also seven levels of the self. According to these levels and planes of existence, perception changes. Emanation theory explains creation in phases, as it goes through plane to plane, from the most subtle to the dense, the form which is considered as a widening or opening from God’s *Zat*, Essence. God’s Essence is in *âmâ*, the absolute unknown, and the emanation or creation goes through various levels of density, planes, although this does not change anything in the Essence. In this description of Sufism what is

meant by *Ilahi* is the absolute Oneness of God in its Essence, which is called *Ahadiyah*, the absolute Oneness or the unmanifest Absolute. The following plane is the *Wahidiyah*, the manifest Absolute, it is “the Unity of multiplicity at the ontological stage of Divine Names and Attributes, is specifically called *wahidiyah* 'Oneness (of Many)' and thereby strictly distinguished from the absolute, pure unity” (Toshihiko Izutsu 1983: 108, note 9). Knowledge in this realm is the knowledge of things as they are known to God. It is the realm of beatific vision, and considered to be the boundary of human vision. It is the first level of differentiation or the first determination and “[t]he ‘first determination’ means the self-manifestation of the Absolute to itself as a unifying point of all the Divine Names (ibid.: 216, note 15). This self manifestation does not come from the Essence which is attributeless but from the aspect of Mercifulness, *rahmaniyyah*, while Essence (which is called *Zat*) makes self-manifestation only to itself (Qashani²⁸⁸ in Izutsu, 1983: 192) or, as it is generally said, only God knows God. Again according to al-Qashani, “toward the creatures, the self-manifestation is done exclusively according to the ‘preparedness’ of the locus in each case” (ibid.: 192). This second type is called the “holy emanation”. Izutsu quotes from Bali Efendi²⁸⁹:

The self-manifestation whose source is the Essence and which takes a particular form according to the form of its locus is the ‘holy emanation’. (This latter divided into two kinds).

When the locus is of such a nature that it receives self-manifestation of the Essence from the presence [i.e., the ontological level] of the comprehensive Name, Essence manifests itself (in that locus) directly from the Presence of the comprehensive unity of all Names. This kind of self-manifestation is called ‘Divine self manifestation’ and the results of it are the ‘essential gifts’²⁹⁰.

²⁸⁸ Qashani (d. 1329) is a Sufi from the school of Ibn Arabi.

²⁸⁹ Bali Efendi (d. 1553) is also a Sufi from the school of Ibn Arabi.

²⁹⁰ “The essential gift is the Mercy which gives everything its existence and is not exercised in reward of some act. This is meant by the Name *Rahman*; and what is meant by the Name *Rahim* is exercised with discrimination. It is the gift given in accordance with the preparedness of each individual being” (Izutsu 1983: 121).

But when the (locus) is of such a nature that it receives the self-manifestation of the Essence from the particular Presence of one particular Name, the Essence manifests itself from that particular Presence. This is what is called ‘self-manifestation through an Attribute or a Name’, and there result from it the ‘gifts given through the Names’. (ibid.: 192)

The particularity of *Insan-ı Kamil* and the human being lies in these differentiations. According to the doctrine, while everything knows God through a particular Name which is its *Rab*, God is the *Rab* of all. Various verses of the Koran remind readers that “God [is] Lord of all dominion” (Koran 3: 26,) or “[...] God is your Lord Supreme, and He alone is all-knowing, truly wise” (Koran 66: 2). All these statements lead to an understanding that knowledge about God will be limited by each person unless s/he “receives self-manifestation from the presence of the comprehensive Name” as expressed by Bali Efendi. The Lord of such a person is God, and s/he is called an *Insan-ı Kamil*. And for such a person accepting multiplicity is not an act of tolerance but of knowledge. As this might not be possible for everybody, people are called to believe in the transmitted knowledge by the people who have such kind of knowledge.

In the Sufi discourse we often meet the concept of “vessel” or “receptacle”. It is said that everybody has understanding or perception according to her/his receptacle, and there is a suggestion that one should try to “widen her/his receptacle”. This might also be what Dede means when he says “be wide”. It seems that the human being as a locus is considered to have a potential to broaden his/her locus to comprehend or emanate more Names while non-human loci are considered to be more limited in that.

When we return to the definition of Sufism as “*Ilahi* and *Rabbani* wisdom” in the definition of Sufism by Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakkı, “*Ilahi* wisdom” refers to the first and “*Rabbani* wisdom” the second categories of Bali Efendi.

The plane which follows *wahidiyah* is called *Jabarut*, the realm of Power, the world of spirits or archetypes or realities which are the attributes of God and it is the second level of differentiation. This is followed by *Malakut*, the angelic world, the “world of symbols” or *barzakh*, which is translated into English in various ways: the in-between, an isthmus, an intermediary zone, the liminal realm, or the “imaginal world/realm” as Henry Corbin calls it (Corbin 1997: XI). In Turkish it is called *hayal alemi*, the imaginal world, and it is used also this way by Dede. It is in this realm that separate consciousness comes into being. The place of *Insan-ı Kamil* is also considered to be here as s/he is the intermediary between the subtler realms and *Mulk*, the phenomenal world, which is followed by this realm. In this way s/he is the gate between the subtler realms and the phenomenal world for others because s/he can

see the realities of everything, or in other words see through all these planes in every human being and in that way s/he brings them closer.

In the imaginal world or the liminal realm, hidden meanings are clothed in images: abstract meanings take form, spiritual realities are seen in visionary experiences, dreams, archetype-figures, and apparitional forms are to be found. Chittick writes that according to Ibn Arabi the imaginal world has an independent ontological status and is different than the “imaginary world” which consists of individual fantasies. It opens itself up to someone who has been “waiting on the door” seeking knowledge of God, and in the ideal case neither self-exertion nor searching for particular knowledge intrudes with it. It is between the spiritual world which is more real and subtler, and the physical world which is denser and less real (Chittick 1989: ix-xiii).

The Sufi concept of “unveiling” or “opening” means going through these planes, from the world of physicality to the world of “abstract meanings” or the spiritual or intellectual world where the “principles” of things appear. When it is mentioned in the Koran that “to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and all that is between” (Koran 5: 17²⁹¹) it is understood that these realms are referred to. The *mirac*, ascension, of the Prophet Muhammad to heaven, according to Sufism, means that he passed through all these realms. Burcu²⁹² explains the importance of *namaz* as the essential tool, in Dede’s teachings, to make this ascension. She says that *namaz* creates fluidity between these realms, as if all the realms become aligned and the flow becomes easier, and when this goes smoothly it is what is called the “real *namaz*”. Simge²⁹³ relates that “when you are completing a *namaz*, your body is like the rock standing firm in a wildly flowing river, which is the multiplicity. When you stand still, you can watch whatever is running with the flow. In this, you become also open to the vertical flow”. But she sometimes cannot unite her body and spirit, and while her body

²⁹¹ Translation by Yusuf Ali.

²⁹² Interview on 11 September 2010.

²⁹³ Interview on 10 February 2011.

is still, her spirit wants to flow, which she experiences as restiveness where calm breathing or holding one's breath helps for bringing the spirit back to the body.

8.5.5 *Nafs*, the Self

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The Parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it: Light upon Light! (Koran 24: 35²⁹⁴)

According to al-Qashani: "The glass is the Heart, the lamp is the Spirit, the tree, from whose oil the glass is lit up - like a 'glittering star' - is the Self. The niche for the lamp is the body" (Qashani 1991: 25).

Nafs is maybe the most widely used concept of Sufism. I will delineate it here by means of Dede's sayings, Sufi literature and data from the interviews with my participants. *Nafs* is mostly translated as the self and sometimes also as the soul. Sufi literature gives the *nafs* seven stages according to the various levels of perception that it goes through; in this, *nafs* is not a fixed, unitary or necessarily individual entity. Though in daily language the word refers to the egoistic and delusive self, the egoistic self is the first stage, and it is called *nafs al-ammara* (it is one of the rare concepts for which Dede used Sufi jargon probably to differentiate among the various selves). According to Sufism, the *nafs* is exposed to forces mainly from four sources: the society, own, *Iblis*, and the spiritual quest or the question of meaning. The seven stages that the *nafs* goes through, together, is called the *suluk*, or spiritual journey. In this mind frame, what the self identifies itself with on the historical and cultural plane and its basic needs –as a part of the phenomenal world- needs to be deconstructed. And Sufism asks its adherent to hold these basic needs and desires within boundaries and to deal with them in the light of basic ethical rules.

It is considered that the *nafs* must realise that it is a non-self, i.e. it does not have an independent self originating from its own centre. This consideration is relevant both on the phenomenal level and on the level of the *Rab*, which is the epistemological and intelligible

²⁹⁴ Translation by Yusuf Ali.

level. Dede mentions a “real self”: “if you saw your *asil*²⁹⁵ (the Real in each other), you would love each other”²⁹⁶. Hence he sees a possibility of finding the “real self” which requires a process of reflexion and deconstruction or unveiling. He also advises the recitation of some *suras* and names of God (*zikr*) so that one will be able to see the “angels”.

Rab, the “real self”, the Names and Attributes of God and “angels” are all differentiations of the Essence on various planes. The “real self” is not on the level of phenomenal world and hence is placed outside the sphere of the constructed self. Knowing one’s self in this sense is the same as knowing one’s *Rab* as in the saying “whoever knows oneself, knows his/her *Rab*”. Working with the self towards knowing one’s *Rab* is then “getting rid of presumptions” as Dede expresses it. Corbin writes why it is crucial to know one’s “angel” or *Rab*: everybody knows God through his/her “eternal individuality” and hence with differences from every other person. Denying this would result in unilateral monotheism and imposing one’s own *Rab* on others as the only possible way (Corbin 1997: 118).

Dede’s ability to love, understand and address people individually in their particularity and to direct them towards their potential is explained with the concept of *Insan-ı Kamil*, for such a person manifests all the Names and Attributes of God while each creature, matter or living thing manifests some of the attributes. An *Insan-ı Kamil* is a mirror where one can see him/herself and the universe, and being seen makes it easier for the one who has been seen also to see. In other words Dede, or an *Insan-ı Kamil*, brings the “real self” closer to someone. Finding the “real self” is also understood as “real freedom”. My informants claim that consciously or unconsciously everybody searches for God, i.e. the “*Rab*”.

The love and respect awarded by followers to Dede’s advanced disciple Cahit is connected also to the help he provided in “getting rid of presumptions”; among his students he was addressed as the “way-clearer” or “idol-breaker” because he was considered to be good at breaking constructions and attachments. Confronting the self in order to progress meant recognising one’s barriers, attachments and constructions, features of one’s psyche such as

²⁹⁵ He used words which are commonly used in Turkish as many other Sufis did in their times.

²⁹⁶ I heard him say this on a visit of mine.

laziness, hastiness or greed, as well as concepts which one takes for guaranteed. Detaching from the “lower self”, one would realise her/his potentials and deep desires.

My informants were confronted with their *nafs* through insights during contemplation, reading the Koran and through spontaneous imagination, dreams or visions as well as in their relationships with others. The confrontation with Dede caused an opening of perception and this opening was not only towards their own higher qualities. It seems that the lower self became more difficult to cover up at some points of the journey. That it became apparent also in the relations with each other seems to have made relationships difficult. Cahit Baba, who was considered as an advanced follower of Dede by a number of my informants, compared Sufis to a storm stirring up the water which one might have thought clear where the water became turbid with the mud at the bottom²⁹⁷.

The idea of self-responsibility is based upon the ability which is believed to lie within the potential of human beings to bore through the construction of the self. The first step is to realise this construction, and to be able to do this, one’s own pragmatism must be left aside because society is not considered as the only cause of this construction which also involves desires for power, self-interest and greed.

8.5.6 States of *Nafs* or Unveiling *Nafs*

Stages of the self²⁹⁸ are delineated in *Ruh ve Beden* (Kayhan 2003) through the writings of Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakkı: The first state of *nafs* is called, *nafs al-ammara* (the inciting or commanding self) because it urges one to do what it commands and is deceptive. This *Nafs* resides in the world of the senses and passions and cannot reflect upon its actions and thoughts. It is not aware of the underlying intentions of its actions –monopolizing, self-interest and basic instincts- and can even disguise them with religiosity. *Nafs* at this stage has such attributes as ignorance, stinginess, greed, arrogance, boasting, lustfulness, enviousness,

²⁹⁷ In a meeting with him in 1999.

²⁹⁸ My informants either do not mention or do not know at what stage their *nafs* is. The quotations from interviews in this section are chosen according to how they match with the descriptions of the stages of the *nafs*.

hollowness, mocking, hurting, fighting and laziness. It does not really see another way of being unless it becomes aware of her/himself. If this happens, it begins to transform itself from arrogance to humility, malevolence to love, harshness to mildness and lustfulness to chastity, which means stepping to the second stage (Ibrahim Hakkı in Kayhan 2003: 172-173). Someone in the first stage likes to think good of him/herself and finds fault in others. S/he seeks pleasure and recognition even while being false, hypocritical, fearful of the unfamiliar, unknown and uncontrollable and involved in constructing a world out of his/her presumptions.

Meeting the *nafs al-ammara* in the form of various animals in dreams or the imaginal world is a common theme in Sufism. Sadık²⁹⁹ related a dream where a big, black dog came out of himself. He woke up and really struggled with it in order not to take it in again: “I woke up and I was still struggling with the dog –a black dog is a symbol of a depraved *nafs*- I managed at last to throw it away, and it disappeared”. Meetings might also happen in wakefulness but with a dream-like sense, as Simge³⁰⁰ narrated:

I was sitting after praying on the prayer rug. I saw a fat bellied rat sitting lazily, knowing that it was me. First it seemed harmless but when I refused to give it what it wanted -I guess, food- it became furious, it tried to frighten me. But I didn't get afraid and remained determined, and then it faded away.

Both Simge and Sadık were calm during these dreams or quasi-dreams.

Reading Sufi literature –my informants often read Abd al-Qadir Geylani when they struggle with the *nafs al-ammara*- and the Koran is also a way of debunking the *nafs al-ammara*. Simge recounts a realisation that came to her while reading the Koran, and a dream. We see in her narration that she has realised the role of society in her construction of identity. The experience happened years before the dream quoted above, and it motivated her to turn to Sufism:

The first time I read the Koran I diagnosed myself as the hypocrite described in it; and it was the worst state, worse than *kafir*, the non-believer. I noticed that there

²⁹⁹ In an informal group meeting.

³⁰⁰ In an informal group meeting.

was very often a difference between what I pretended to be and how I was inside and how I considered myself. I had some imagination of the “real feeling” and was acting as if it was my state though I was just performing it. It felt like being dead. I realised that I was imitating being alive though I felt lifeless and so flat, just a sheet of paper or shadow, having no content. I was actually a zombie. I was not really capable of feeling what I tried or pretended to feel, e.g. the state of love, I was just acting out what I imagined how a person who felt love would act, appear and feel like. I had some notions I valued; being a free, loving, caring, wise person. I was just playing this role though I was something else deep inside: an unsafe, fearful, weak, miserable being. After some time, I realised through a dream that I was denying myself so that I would be able to act according to the expectations I imagined society had of me: an independent, strong etc. woman. If you are pretending, you are what in the Koran is defined as *münafik*, hypocrite. This realisation comes with such pain and regret that you decide to stop pretending. One feature of *nafs al-ammara* is pretension. Everything you do expecting to get something in return, is not a genuine action. In a society where these “right” actions are well defined there is more pretension. Those who don’t act according to the society’s “morality”, consider themselves free but this has nothing to do with freedom. It is just a reaction.³⁰¹

The second state is called *nafs al-lawwama* (the self-critical self) where the self begins questioning his/her actions and finds fault in herself/himself and asks for forgiveness and feels there is hope of perfection. The outward directed gaze of *nafs al-ammara*, now turns inwards. The narration cited above depicts this transition. Simge realised that she had been dependent on outward impulses and had been reacting to them to assert herself; her concept of self was determined by external effects. She acted according to the pictures she had gathered in her life, and this made her feel dead or empty.

Ibrahim Hakkı warns that the danger in the second stage is vanity, because one tends to think s/he has already achieved a lot and does not want any criticism, and s/he might also be tempted to interpret the rules according to her/his own desire and thus becomes delusive. If s/he is easily satisfied with her/his achievement and finds excuses for her/his action s/he will stop improving. S/he must check whether s/he is not just trying to impress others, guarantee a place in heaven or just stop the pain. If something does not flow smoothly, s/he must be ready to question what obstacles s/he must clear out of her/himself, and not cling to her/his attitude (ibid.: 175). Simge’s narration supports this idea and shows how she deals with delusion:

³⁰¹ Interview on 4 February 2011.

When we realise the motives behind our acts, it becomes easier to deal with them. If we concentrate too much on high ideals and expect these from ourselves we will just disappoint ourselves or manipulate the interpretation of our actions, we can imagine e.g. what unity is like and assume we have understood or even felt it, but when it is only imagination what follows is a kind of feeling of being drained. If we dare to observe what goes on in us, even if it is a wild wolf, it will become harmless as nobody would do what s/he considers bad. We have all the evil of the world in us as well as all the good. I cannot recognize in others anything that I do not know from myself.³⁰²

Rušen³⁰³ also emphasised that there were greater hurricanes and volcanoes in us than outside. My informants find that the belief that one will have to face the self sooner or later, at the latest when one dies –which will be too late for any correction- is a motivation for reflexion.

The third stage is *nafs al-mulhimah* (the inspired self). In this stage one gets inspirations from God, and there is a struggle between acting according to the inspirations in the heart or according to basic instincts. Ibrahim Hakkı warns that this is a dangerous stage as one can go back to the previous stage if one does not have the help of a *murshid-i kamil*, and the previous stage only means that one is a “good” person. He reminds us that the person at this stage must be very alert against delaying good deeds and becoming self-righteous. One might have difficulties in distinguishing between inspirations coming from God or from the self or even from *Iblis*. S/he forgets what s/he has known, and has illusions about him/herself and the environment. But *Iblis* tells her/him that s/he already knows everything and is enlightened. S/he is advised not to believe *Iblis* and to continue *namaz* and her/his efforts (ibid.: 175-176).

The need for a guide becomes crucial at this stage; having friends who are going through similar efforts, studying Sufi books, and reading the Koran are all advised. Rayiha explained that realisation of the unreliability of one’s own feelings of right and wrong means accepting one’s own unknowing and makes one unstable. She had to accept she was very prone to err and she struggled to endure the consequent insecurity, and when she mentioned her irritation with herself to Dede, he calmed her down and said she should be patient. She considers

³⁰² Interview on 4 February 2011.

³⁰³ Interview on 9 April 2011.

presumptions as a way to her *Rab* if she can discriminate between her image of herself, her desires and the awareness of her present state:

Imagining is the first step towards the Real. You start out with a *zan*, presumption - and they [*evliya*] change your presumptions. There are three levels of the self; what one is, what one supposes one is, and what one wants to be. [...] There are things you want to do, endless wishes. But there is also the knowledge of your real state. Your *Rab*, comes into light through your wishes, presumptions, dreams, and your *nafs*, these are chaotic. The *ermiş*, enlightened one brings you to the present. He brings order to the chaos, [gives you] determination, will, sincerity and direction. You say 'My God my wish is You, and Your consent. Have I really realised this in my life? No. I presume, I build upon it. [...] When Dede said 'be wide', he meant, get rid of your obsessions and compulsions. The enlightened always widens and the ignorant narrows down. [...] Rabiya [a Sufi lady of the eighth century] says that she came to the station with '*hüsn-ü zan*', beautiful presumptions. (Rayiha³⁰⁴)

Sadık said that Dede changed the perception he had of himself when he went to see him. But now, without such a mirror, he has a more relativist understanding, and saw no possibility of discriminating between the presumptions of the self and the knowledge coming from the *Rab* except through life events that reminded him of his inner disposition. He is keen on acting within the limits of the *sharia* rules to be safe of illusions. In a meeting he was relating a dream in which he met Ibn Arabi, and a member of the group asked him how he knew whether it was a hallucination or not. His answer was, "it doesn't make a difference; we already know that whatever we see in such cases are aspects of us"³⁰⁵.

The fourth stage is *nafs al-mutmainnah* (the self at peace). Ibrahim Hakkı writes that only in this stage does the person find peace, because s/he becomes content with God's will, and tries to do her/his best to remain serene whatever may happen, and has been left in peace by the inciting self and *Iblis*, Satan (ibid.: 177). It seems that this stage marks a threshold. The description below is quite similar to Dede's description of the *evliya* that he called people to become:

S/he has become Islamic in a real sense at this stage. S/he is tranquil as s/he rests in the certitude of God. S/he no longer finds it difficult to do what is to be done and to

³⁰⁴ Interview on 1 February 2010.

³⁰⁵ Participant observation on 10 December 2010.

leave what must be left. S/he has eliminated the obstacles to courtesy and become beneficent, trustworthy, submissive to God, patient, hopeful, straightforward, tender, gracious and grateful, covering up other's deficiencies, being forgiving and joyful at heart. [...] S/he has found the hidden meanings of the law and adapted them as a lifebuoy in the tumultuous sea of life and become safe from external and internal tempters. The toilsome way has become smoother and moving on to the next stages has become easier. (ibid.: 177)

The fifth level is *nafs al-radhiyah* (the well-pleased self), it is marked by complete compliance to God's will. S/he is calm, without resistance, unstirred and feels light and pure at heart at the face of any occurrences. S/he has left everything behind and is just filled with God (ibid.: 178).

The sixth level is *nafs al-mardiyyah* (the well-pleasing self). On this level the person's conduct is the same as God's conduct (which is called "*Allah'in ahlakıyla ahlaklanmak*" getting God's morality in Sufism), and s/he works to help people out of the abyss of ego into the light of the spirit. Love for God and the created are now united. Here, s/he becomes the vicegerent of God and knows the profound mysteries in everything. S/he has attained the realm beyond the capabilities of our language. S/he follows the middle way in everything which is very difficult and is possible only at this level (ibid.: 178). This realm is described as beyond language in all respects, i.e. ineffable. The symbolic realm no longer works. It is also called the "station of the perplexed".

The seventh level is called *nafs al-kamila* (the perfect self) or *nafs al-safiyyah* (the pure self). S/he gives peace and joy to others; s/he has no wishes, as every wish of her/his has been attained. S/he worships God with all her/his particles. S/he behaves with justice and love towards everybody (ibid.: 179).

The Sufi adherent is asked to take this intentional journey through the stages of the self to become nearer to God where s/he will be free of the inciting self, presumptions and *Iblis* and can unveil the realities of the phenomenal world of sensible and visible forms as subtler presences or planes.

8.5.7 *Tawhid* (Unity) and *Fana* (Loss of Self)

Adem ve Alem states that “*tawhid*, unity is a divine and sublime orchard. Its readers may experience it as sweet or bitter. But to turn bitter to sweet, one always needs implementation and digestion³⁰⁶” (Kayhan 2006: 5). Simge recounts:

The first year I met Dede I had the feeling he was gradually taking away the ground under my feet. It was an astonishing but actually a sweet experience as he was alive. I did not find it difficult to lose the ground as long as he was there, because when everything was gone there would be him, although some friends told me that he sometimes left one without aid or something happened and you could not meet him or he made you understand you have to work and understand yourself. But still it is much more difficult now; the anxiety can sometimes be very strong. One tries to linger with daily routines, a few things one enjoys but the feeling of vulnerability comes back again and you know that you’re just delaying what must come.³⁰⁷

Tawhid is a process of self-annihilation or deconstruction of the self or as a member of the formation expressed to get rid of “false-consciousness”. It is actually annihilation of the attachments and presumptions of the self. This is supposed to lead to an understanding that the self does not exist as it does not have anything originating from itself. But as long as there are attachments the self finds causes and pretexts in them for its persistence, and as long as there is a self there is dualism. The process of loss of attachments might involve feelings of bitterness or sorrow and the pain of loss, because the self is still attached. There might also be a feeling of insecurity as one watches how the guardians and the ground the self has constructed are lost. Besides showing another way of existence than the functional, Sufi literature –an example is Abd al-Qadir Geylani, whose texts are considered to be very awakening- and the realised Sufi masters accelerate the realisation of loss because on one hand they hint at the pointlessness of the attachments of the self and on the other hand call one to God.

It is possible to say that the loss is experienced on five different levels: One is the loss of the dependence on others. There is usually a realisation that others are not dependable where

³⁰⁶ Translated by the researcher.

³⁰⁷ Interview on 4 February 2011.

every self is experienced as seeking and competing for its own survival and advantage and is driven by emotions of jealousy, avarice and gain. A feeling of loneliness takes over. During this realisation, knowledge about the characteristics of the base self helps one not to take this so hard because it is in the nature of the base self. This also, then, fortifies the desire to get rid of it as it lacks any characteristics which would make it lovable. Along with it one also experiences the undependability of material goods; a feeling of vulnerability and powerlessness against a world that is not very friendly takes over. Then there is the loss of the things and people that one loves, and which give one pleasure and satisfaction, such as nature, the arts or family members; they either die or one realises that they cannot be possessed or they simply lose the meaning they once had for one. The fourth is loss of dependence on oneself which is probably one of the hardest to take. When one wants to turn to oneself to find something to depend on, s/he realises that self-construction is a will to power and aims at providing one with tools to survive. Acquiring skills, an identity and knowledge aims at bringing one to a more advantageous position than many others, in order to have a chance to survive. One sees that there is nothing in the self to depend on, and that one owns nothing really; one confronts her/his own vulnerability and *faqr*, abject poverty, and watches how moods and perceptions can change rapidly, and how one lacks any power to control anything. This realisation may cause a strong existential anxiety where the only way seems to be to accept the situation and to turn to God and what the prophets and the *velis* say about the way, its signs and what to do. Still a fifth level comes in when one sees the world one lives in altogether as non-attractive, one does not find in it anything worth striving for and people's situation in it as being one of loss and powerlessness. This is considered as the human condition which one will have to confront last, with physical death, and the Sufi adherent intends to realise it before s/he dies. This is expressed in the Sufi motto "die before you die". Rayiha³⁰⁸ reported that as she was struggling with her problems, trying to bring an order to her marriage and professional life as she wished them to be, Dede told her that nothing he wished came true.

This would be a strong form of nihilism without faith in God, and without the knowledge that this is not the inevitable end. When one does not resist loss and accepts the realisation

³⁰⁸ Interview on 14 January 2010.

wholeheartedly, and when one feels at a complete loss, God's love overcomes everything. As the article *The Secret That Is Love* states, "the love of God engulfs one's being, and that person becomes pure love"³⁰⁹. Only after this point does love become free of being dependent on others, and able to embrace everything without discrimination. Someone in this state can also see and discern problems and mistakes more clearly, but as s/he acts out of love his critique can be accepted and does not hurt. "Doing things for God" as a free gift can also be realised only after the realisation of *fana* because one has no desires for her/himself any more as s/he has no self or attachments of the self to maintain. This is, then, not altruism; it is rather doing things without expectation, and the humility that such people radiate comes from the knowledge of the powerlessness of their selves. At this point acts cease to be functional, and the source of doing becomes the understanding that one does things because they are the best to do.

This is not the last stop either; again only after *fana*, the *hakikat* (Reality) begins to unveil itself. It is reported in the Sufi literature that after loss of self one's state changes from not knowing to knowing, a broadness reigns, a rupture from the previous perception takes over, one's perception totally changes and one perceives and acts through God.

During the process of *fana* one also experiences periods of clarity, trust, joy and insightful inspirations. These light, spacious, free, content and joyful times are called *bast* (widening). The bottlenecks are called *kabz* (constriction), times where one feels heavy hearted and desolate and realises that the only possessor is God. These can be triggered by external causes but many times they occur without any change in the external conditions, especially if the person is spiritually more advanced. In times of *kabz* one is reminded not to lose hope that one's situation will change, and in times of *bast* not to neglect the rules and practices. One should always be ritually washed, and read the Koran frequently. Sufi literature is regularly consulted as a guide helping one not to go astray and as an aid to reading the signs on the way. Sufism warns against traps on the way, traps that might block the realisation of

³⁰⁹ Translation by Henry Bayman, accessed at <http://www.mysticsaint.info/2011/08/secret-that-is-love-sufi-teachings-of.html>

poverty and loss, and that might destroy the follower in such a way that s/he loses sanity or becomes nihilistic or neglects her/his responsibilities towards others. The main rule is holding fast onto the rules of *sharia* which Dede summarises as staying away from illicit lust and desire and not seeking individual benefit, and becoming a cure for the wounded. In the literature one sees an often repeated warning that at some parts of the journey some people presume that they have no need to remain within the limits of the rules anymore, and they neglect *namaz*, prayers; this neglect actually leads them off the way. One is considered to be safe from the danger of backsliding only in quite advanced spiritual levels -*makam*, stations, where the states, *hal*, become stationary in one. The spiritual guide's role is seen as especially crucial in helping the wayfarer to remain on the path and in preparing him/her for what comes next and doing the things necessary to advance. The love, understanding and assistance s/he gives is always crucial.

8.5.8 Experiences of *Fana* on the Imaginal Plane

Here we must recall that Sufism makes a differentiation between *hal*, or state where something can be experienced and understood does not have a firm footing inside the adept and which disappears after some time, and *makam*, or station, which is found when a state becomes permanent and cannot be lost anymore. Kaşani (Qashani) explains *hal* as the feelings that overcome heart such as “joy, gloom or sorrow or ease or widening or desire or pleasure or contraction or awe or familiarity without depending on one's own struggle, work and contemplation as against *makam*” (Kaşani 2004: 119). In this way there can be fleeting experiences of *fana* as states, followed by times in which one finds her/himself in the self again. They give one a deep insight into what it means, leaving one with the desire to make it his/her station. These states are getting “the taste of” Sufism.

In some of the narrations of my informants there is the description of a peak experience of *fana* shortly after meeting Dede, which marked a rupture in people's perception of reality and felt like having had a glimpse of the goal, for which they were not yet prepared but would work towards. A strong bond with Dede was also established after this experience because the confrontation with him triggered the experience.

Hurşit had been occupied with the concepts of nothingness and unity for some time and came to experience the state one day all of a sudden, after his second meeting with Dede. He said that only after that did he really surrender himself to him.

I was going to see a friend in Cebeci and walking by Ahmetler post office where there is a sloping road named Dede Efendi. Just as I attempted to walk up the slope,

–and I was tired-, I looked up the slope and the world disappeared, the thing I called “me”, the environment, the world, being, however you call it, altogether disappeared. There was just One living, One who knew and continued living. Then I saw as if everything had a life only as the reflection on a mirror I had. It means the space existed on the gloss of the mirror. I felt very illuminated, very light, without weight, without questions, without a psychology for a moment. The light blend is something indescribable. This was a real answer to me, the real answer to my question.³¹⁰

Iris names her experience as her “apocalypse”. She was not very familiar with Sufi literature, came from a non-Muslim society, had a totally irreligious upbringing, and was only twenty-three years old. She visited Dede for the second time and then she met friends:

There was only Cahit Abi there and another friend. They were working on the booklet “the Call for Peace”. They were discussing the concept of apocalypse. It touched me so. These will end. I loved nature. I suddenly realised these would all vanish. I started crying. I was thinking of the plane trees. My interior was demolished. It was hard to bear. Suddenly Efendi Hz. came and covered my interior. He was everything, he was the source. I started to burn all over. It was an enormous life, I burned. Cahit Abi noticed it and said “they burn one”. Everything, until the tiniest particle was Efendi Hz. and his beauty. I experienced it so. Nothing is outside of him. After that my whole perception changed. It changed me completely. I turned back to [... the place she lived], the trees, the birds, everything was Efendi. It did not feel like my imagination, it was the reality. This state lasted a very long time, for months. All the while the life was going on. I did not know how to explain this to people. They noticed that I had changed. One day I woke up and looked out of the window. It was not there. I got panicky. When his spirit, his light had receded, the whole world seemed dead to me. I was so frightened. This state also lasted a very long time. Efendi was far away, we could not go to Ankara whenever we wanted. At last we did, but we could not see him. He was very ill, they did not let us in. Cahit Abi was also so distanced. I asked myself, what did I do wrong? On the last day of Ankara we were able to see Efendi very shortly, just kissed his hand and left. Then when we met Cahit Abi again, he told a story as if he was talking about someone else: ‘There was a man who was very much in love with Efendi, he tried to do everything right but yet everything was taken away from him. He panicked. ‘What did I do wrong?’ he asked himself. God is both beautiful, and Majestic, and both existent and non-existent. One has to taste it all’. It’s been so many years since then. We still try to understand this. They give it all at the beginning and then take it all back, and you run after it your whole life long.³¹¹

³¹⁰ Interview on 17 October 2011.

³¹¹ Interview on Skype in December 2011.

Simge's description of the loss of self³¹² is called *fana in shaikh* in Sufi terminology as she was annihilated in Dede. Her experience took place in the imaginal world where she watched a ritual of sacrifice of herself in the steppe in which she turned into gossamer smoke. It was a few months after she had met Dede. She wrote a poem as she was watching the ritual as if it was projected on a screen. She had already been familiar with the Sufi literature, and the poem includes classical symbols of Sufi imagery such as a rose and an abyss. She wanted to sacrifice herself for the love of Dede who appeared in the poem as the landlord of an empty steppe which served as the scene for the sacrifice ritual where there were also others she knew from the group who joined the ritual:

The smell of the rose stings the nose
Folded at the heart and extending to eternity.
Outside the sphere of language,
This is the land of love and passion, and tear drops,
A spring that gushes out
From the depths of a well, that has an abyss instead of a bottom.
The steppe
And its people are the soldiers of the heart.
The landlord gathers the guests in lines.
The adorer,
So young and callow, and so feeble,
Yet the love!
She throws herself at the feet and calls: give me a task!
Her struggle does not touch him a bit.
Scarlet is the rose,
Proud is the landlord.
The steppe encloses its secret
No trace of anything, no landlord, no rose, no guests
In the aftermath is a gossamer smoke, and a slight prick in the air
Everything is in its right place here.³¹³

All three informants are members of the group who have been influenced by Cahit, which may not be a coincidence as he emphasised the concept and experience of “nothingness”. On the other hand the informants had not been long in the group and their interest in Cahit's circle rather than other circles around Dede could be referred to their own desire for

³¹² Interview on 10 February 2011.

³¹³ This is a shortened free translation from the Turkish original with the permission of the writer.

annihilation. Hurşit suggested that a desire for nothingness, even if one was not aware of it, was the impulse that attracted people to Sufism and if one did not have this desire s/he could not do anything in this field. Duality would never cease as long as there was a self and God. The experience of the unity of Being would only be possible when there was no individual self.

Hurşit and Simge were familiar with Sufi literature before they met Dede and in them the desire of loss was expressed openly, and it can be claimed that it might have been influenced by the Sufi discourse which they had studied; but Iris was a young novice from a different culture. Her experience is different from that of Hurşit and Simge in that she felt sorrow at her loss until it was filled with Dede's presence, which she did not expect. All three had the feeling that they had had a glimpse of a "parallel world" beside the usual one. The experiences caused perplexity because they brought about a rupture with their habitual perception.

This circle is also known for their special interest in Ibn Arabi for whom God is the "Necessary Being", and all other things are "possible beings" which have a relative existence only as loci of manifestation of the names of God. In this frame of mind, the non-being which is sought is actually not the annihilation of existence but an awareness of one's relative being.

There are two dreams that are more difficult to explain as being triggered by the discourse because they were dreamed by mothers of informants, who did not have the knowledge of Sufism's concepts. Burcu's mother was irreligious and had no familiarity with Sufism but knew that Burcu would visit a Sufi, and it was a few days before she met Dede. Possibly she was afraid that she would lose her daughter to a religious sect but she herself did not relate her dream to such a fear. Burcu narrates:

My mother came to my bed at night, she was horrified. She thought it was real, not a dream and wanted to remain with me saying that in her room there was something strange: As she was lying in her bed, she saw a white round light on the wall. She sat on the bed and wanted to stand up as the light fell into her lap. The light spiralled and out of it came an old man. She said that when I saw him I immediately said it was Dede and followed him. We had a living room where one

side was all windows. The windows looked at the house of Efendi in the dream. Efendi walked out of this window and I followed him holding a plate of oleaster in my hands. - We lived on the fourth floor - my mother called, "Stop, where are you going? You're going to die" and woke up.³¹⁴

Sometime after, Burcu took her mother to Dede, too. She told him about the dream and that the man in the dream was him. He told her not to be afraid.

Simge's mother knew that she was visiting a Sufi master, she was religious but did not know much about Sufi concepts. She dreamt that her daughter's dead body was being washed in a river by people who wore white gowns. She told the dream to Simge and Simge immediately related it to her affiliation with Dede³¹⁵.

8.5.9 Experiences of *Fana* on the Phenomenal Plane

The consequence of having met Dede was obviously deconstruction of the individual self to some degree, or in other words he gave the test of *fana* through his being in *fana*. In the confrontation with Dede what was once called reality was turned inside out, and the phenomenal took on an imaginative, constructed feature, only a faint reflection, whereas the new meaning was found to be "more real" or having more life. The force of Dede's affect was there even if one did not know about it consciously or did not always want it. Among those who had more resistance, some unpleasant somatic symptoms appeared, such as pains in the muscles for months, the feeling of having lost control of one's body, not being able to walk for some moments, or some parts of the body feeling numb or as if they did not exist³¹⁶.

Hurşit³¹⁷ explained that the erosion of bodily boundaries disturbed power structures. The perception of possessing an individual body or self with an identity and boundaries to be

³¹⁴ Interview on 11 September 2010.

³¹⁵ Interview on 4 February 2011.

³¹⁶ Two members of the formation told these to me in informal conversations in my first years in Ankara.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

protected meant remaining in the sphere of power relations. He helped me to understand the phenomenon of nothingness as losing the bodily boundaries which were made of identity, culture and history, all of which he called mere pictures, and nothingness had to do with erasing pictures. The separation would be removed and one would be united with everything only when these boundaries were erased. One could not separate one's own body from everything around him/her anymore; a huge body made up of organic material where nothing stood alone as if one was watching an ant moving on and in the earth when one could not really separate it from its environment. No empty spaces were left between the self and others and it was all filled with life. Nothingness meant unity and existence alienation.

Hurşit said that he saw "nothingness" in Cahit Abi and Efendi. He used the metaphor of "a sea which has eroded its own shore" and added that the *Sura Qaria*³¹⁸ (Koran 101: 1-5) indicated the perception of nothingness: "The Calamity! What is the Calamity? Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Calamity is! A day wherein mankind will be as thickly-scattered moths, and the mountains will become as carded wool". *Insan-ı Kamil* is often defined as "the shoreless sea" in Sufi literature which is implied in the image of Hurşit.

Looked at from that point, the consciousness of a separate body where everything except oneself is the other appears absurd and pain-inducing. The experience of erosion causes permeability. When the body and identity are detached from the meanings that are attached to them, one becomes more open to affection.

There were also losses on the other levels. All of my informants come from the middle classes, the ones who come from upper middle class went through a downward mobilisation and the ones who come from the lower middle class went through an upward mobilisation. They all depend on their work to continue their life. None of them have been able to accumulate wealth and remained conscious of the necessity of not depending on others, family members, friends, directors or bosses at work. Rıdvan³¹⁹ reported that Dede said

³¹⁸ *Al-Qaria* means the calamity, the stunning blow and the disaster. The translation here is by Pickthal.

³¹⁹ In an informal conversation.

“work, earn and distribute what you have earned” and this was both in a spiritual and a material sense.

They had to confront various losses in life, have either gone through periods of extreme financial or other types of losses, such as bankruptcy or losing their dearest ones, or serious health problems, some in Dede’s lifetime, some others after his demise. They consider the crises as guides leading them closer to the fifth line of the opening *sura* of the Koran which is repeated various times in every *namaz*: “Thee (alone) we worship; Thee alone we ask for help”, and Dede advised people to repeat this line seven times while citing the *sura* (Sadık³²⁰). Rayiha³²¹ mentioned that Dede said, “even if it is only a shoelace you want, ask for it from God” and he was an extreme example of leading a life depending on very little from outside.

Going through periods of existential anxiety, various sorts of restrictions and pain, and warnings of Dede also led them to an understanding of those who were going through such processes. Burcu narrated:

There were shelves on the wall by the window, full of printed sheets. I was sitting right next to them. There were some people and he needed a sheet from there. Efendi told me ‘Girl, it is there, bring the sheet to me’. Whatever happened at that moment, it is a *tecelli* (manifestation), I raised myself on tiptoes and looked for the sheet on the top shelf. He said to me “it is down below” and he said to others, “she is very tall, she always looks upwards she never looks downwards”, we already knew being tall meant being intelligent but he added immediately afterwards: “it is necessary also to look downwards a little bit”, in this he warned me slightly. He meant that I was always occupied with the high, the upper limits of mind, and I should come down a bit, look around, who was needy. And really after that event my demeanour, my inner attitude changed. I started doing something which I had never done before: being interested in other people, people who were not from my class. If there was something to give, also giving to them. Society had really never been in my mind before that.³²²

³²⁰ In an informal conversation.

³²¹ In an informal conversation.

³²² In an interview on 14 May 2011.

Although she and her husband came from relatively wealthy families, when her husband left his job they had to depend on her salary which was not much. They were having financial problems, and while they were in this situation Dede told them that they had enough money and they should save some of it, which they did by cutting their expenses even further and were surprised that they were really able to save some money instead of feeling a lack of it.

After having met Dede, for three months Sadık³²³ lived in an apartment where there was nothing but a mattress to sleep on, where he prayed for hours, and while working in a badly paid job in a stationary shop for his living. Afterwards he had various periods of losses and gains in business life. After Dede's passing away he had lost most of his friends and job, and felt humiliated. He said he was in a kind of hell, and he was very depressed until he realised that there could be nothing else to depend on except God which brought about a complete change in his mood. After a short time he recovered both psychologically and financially. When his business got worse again years later he said that he realised with disappointment that he had become attached to many things again.

Sinem³²⁴ recalled that years ago she had convinced Dede to come and stay with them for some time in their summer house. Dede sometimes visited people, especially when they were sick but he seldom stayed longer. When he came, he asked her what she would give him now that he had come. She answered automatically "everything", he smiled. After Dede's death she and her husband went bankrupt after being quite wealthy. They lost everything and were left with debts. She had to start from the beginning with great difficulties. This, she told me with a smile on her face. She did not find that their loss of wealth had to do with Dede but rather it was her preparedness to give away everything that she remembered when this really happened.

8.5.10 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen the Sufi adherent's struggle. It is based on the Koran which challenges to read the books, the universe and the self not as having selfness in themselves

³²³ Informal conversation.

³²⁴ Interview on 28 November 2009.

but as signs of God. This means for the Sufi adherent that the self must deconstruct itself along with the texts. Although Sufism is highly scriptural, this makes it a deconstructive discursive tradition where deconstruction is considered as an intrinsic element of scripture. Sufi literature can be highly technical but does not allow a remote reading: it affects. The unveiling (deconstruction) is triggered by experiences both in the phenomenal and imaginal worlds.

Essentially, it seems, it is the desire to put an end to the perception of being separate. *Fana* (loss of self) is thus considered as a precondition for what is called *vuslat* (union with the Beloved) in the classical poetic Sufi terminology.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been a journey into the intersubjective universe of a group of Sufi adherents, the followers of the Sufi master Hadji Ahmet Kayhan (Dede or Efendi as he is called among the followers). This universe involves experiences and practices on physical, imaginal, emotional, and intellectual planes, and the influence of these on the adherents' being in the world. The research unveils the practice of a form of Sufism which is invisible for the most part due to its various characteristics: first, the group is not institutionalized, it has a loose structure as against *tariqahs*, Sufi brotherhoods or religious communities –which is the reason why it is called a “formation” in this text. The formation lacks most of the formal elements which are found in other Sufi groups such as a hierarchical classification of the adherents, initiation rituals, communal ceremonies and the succession of the leader. Secondly, there is nothing in the adherents' appearances or behaviour that would attract the eye and indicate their intensive occupation with Sufism. Thirdly, the most crucial experiences of the participants in the realm of Sufism which underlie their convictions and specific perceptions are invisible because they have a purely mental character. Fourthly, the teaching has aspects that do not commonly connote religiosity or Islam, such as the anti-authoritarian style of the leader, experientialism and plurality.

The thesis delineates both the “outer” or social Sufi topographies and the inner, or individual, experiences and perceptions of the informants, and contextualises these within the Sufi tradition. It takes place in heterotopic places where all the sites within the culture are “simultaneously represented, contested and inverted” (Foucault 1984) and has a deconstructive effect on the people who enter its realm. People who come into contact with these places are put into liminality, because their identification with their selves and categories in the society are shaken up, and creative and intellectual capacities are liberated (Turner: 1974: 253). The discourses about the creator and the created, the self and the other, knowledge and power, past and present go through a deconstruction process based upon experiences with someone who has already deconstructed these discourses. During the process, the discrepancy is minimized between the outer and the inner or the other and the self. Desire, joy, pleasure, enrichment and liberation are part of the experience as well as

loss, restriction and pain. Sufism as depicted in this thesis is a practice rather than a belief system and entering its realm asks for a certain degree of openness to being affected and guided.

The findings complement the definition of Sufism as a “deconstructive discursive tradition” which is based on founding scriptures and a certain approach and preoccupation with them throughout history, and suggest that it is a method based on uniting binary oppositions, which uniting is itself based on two types of deconstructive process. Firstly, contexts or bodies are diffused where the multiplicity of elements within them is revealed and acknowledged—which is the basis of the objectivity, and secondly, they are concentrated and reduced towards their irreducible existential core which leads to subjectivity.

9.1 The Research and Its Findings

The research was conducted in Ankara among the followers of the Sufi master Ahmet Kayhan (Dede or Efendi) from August 2010 to December 2010 but the thesis also includes data gathered over a time span of fifteen years; from the time when I met Dede in June 1997 until the end of writing up the thesis in May 2012. Although the followers are from various milieus of society, the participants were restricted to the urban educated middle class because they were highly represented in the formation and easier to access, and also because they exemplify a type which is seldom represented in the context of Islam and Sufism in anthropological works; they are cosmopolitan, antiauthoritarian, experiential and critical of the socio-political and religious discourses of their context. They have much in common with the “post-modern intellectuals” who were raised in the modern/post-modern Western paradigm, except that most of them were raised in a context where the West and the East were almost equally present.

The existing representations of urban, educated Muslims depict them as groups or individuals who struggle to reconcile modernity with Islamic ethical principles (Yavuz 1999, Silverstein 2007, Howell 2007), or as those who add some salt to their lives with classical Sufi literature (Gilsenan 1982) or redefine religiosity “in connivance with contemporary relativism and individualism” (Champion 1993 in Haenni and Voix 2007: 255). I find that none of these categories is adequate to describe the type here, as my participants do not seem to develop subjectivities against or in agreement with a “modern self”; they rather go from a conception of an ahistorical self as is taught by the Sufi tradition, and are embedded in their context which is marked by modernity. Their occupation with Sufism does not have a hobby-like character; they have gone through a process where their perceptions of the self and

society were shaken in their very foundations, and they have taken pains to abide by the restrictions and principles which are put to them by their master.

Most of my informants found that they did not comfortably fit in the structures of society before they were confronted with Dede (the master); they were not established in society, they were young, critical and experiential. Although most of them were confronted with Islam in their social context, their upbringing was either irreligious or they had cut off their ties with religion. They had tried various Eastern and Western paradigms to help them live in or explain the world; for example social activism in the form of Marxism, or the Hippie movement with its interest in Hinduism, drugs, philosophy, arts and music, but they could not identify fully with any one of these. Their identity was constructed rather in negation of structures and paradigms and marked by a “search”. Some of the attributes of liminality as described by Turner are “neither here nor there; [...] betwixt and between positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom and convention” (Turner 1991:95), and these explain the situation of my informants before they met Dede. They were closer to the description of people who demonstrate liminoid (liminal like) states, who search reflexivity and emancipation in the arts, philosophy or concerts in secular settings of complex societies (Turner 1974: 16). This period I call the “liminality of negation” because their outsidership was based on reaction, where the other was outside and with which they could not reconcile. As opposed to this, in the period that prevailed after having met Dede they were encouraged to find the other in the self and acknowledged their existing perceptions as distorted and constructed, with the aid of the “sacred” training they got from Dede. Social relationships were to be arranged according to ethical rules and responsibility, and social structures lost their weight. I call this period the “liminality of affirmation” because it was not based on reaction but affirmation of first an authority outside of their selves and secondly finding this authority along with what they had reacted to in the outside-in-themselves. As in the description of Turner, confrontation with Dede –which was the most important event in their lives-, is likened to “death” and being “reborn”, possessing nothing, no status or rank and acceptance of subordination, foolishness and sacred instruction (Turner: 1991). They went through a signification process of (re)learning Islam and the concepts of Sufism based on experiences with Dede where dichotomies such as the present and the past, the traditional and the progressive and the other and the self lost their importance for them.

The relationship with Dede was hope inspiring and transformative because they experienced with him perplexity, trust, strong attraction and mental and emotional openings which they referred to his knowledge, difference, tolerance, love and care. Dede was able to accept, relate, understand and help people equally who were often in conflict with each other,

because they were different individually and culturally, without trying to make them similar. The social status, ethnicity, cultural-religious-political background, gender or the nature of one's appearance did not matter to him. He could always give fresh input, was surprising, humorous, quick witted, all-embracing and paradoxical. Each time they visited him they experienced a change in their mental and psychological states, were relieved and got answers to their questions and dilemmas. Although he used a seemingly simple language what he said was complex, and kept them occupied about what he meant which forced them to leave meanings open. They also felt his affect on them without discourse or intrusion of mental processes. Dede filled their thoughts, dreams and visions, and they became convinced that he knew them better than themselves and his knowledge embraced their past, present and future possibilities.

They were encouraged to "bring things closer" as Dede expressed it, which meant everything was to be found now and in the body, this included the characters and archetypes in the Koran, from Adam to Pharaoh and the attributes of God as aspects of the self. They had to turn their gaze upon themselves to find various conflicting elements where what was outside and in the other was to be found inside and to be reconciled or emptied as they saw in the example of Dede. As they could not explain things with their logical minds, their imaginations were activated, which expressed itself in vivid dreams and visions and became an important source of their making sense. These experiences debased their knowledge and understandings, and deprived them of the grounds of their self, judgements and explanations for actions, thoughts and emotions, and their liminality was intensified.

Dede's person, his living room which was frequented by visitors practically all day long, and the scriptural sources are "heterotopic"; "absolutely different places", "outside of all places" where "all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, [were] simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 1984). They include various seemingly incompatible historic times, cultures, planes of existence and qualities without becoming any one of them. My informants understood that the world, the social environment and the self were also such heterotopic places. The various elements in each were to be laid bare, acknowledged and brought together in the present. Some of the examples of the incompatible elements in the data included transcendence and immanence, distant and proximity, modern and pre-modern, the East and West, plurality and *sharia*, the scriptural and the experimental, the spiritual and the phenomenal, multiplicity and unity, power and weakness, reason and imagination, good and bad and the other and the self. Heterotopias are places where subjectivity arises through the relationship of things with each other.

The effect of confronting Dede can be likened the transition rituals in premodern societies that Turner describes, where initiands are deprived of their social status and habits and put into a condition where everything is turned upside down or is deconstructed, a process that causes an opening of creative capacities and a deeper understanding of ontological levels. These initiands are in-between, belonging neither to the old status nor yet to the new. When they go back to their society, they are ready to accomplish the necessities of their new status. In our case the Sufi follower was not taken away from her/his social environment and duties; rather s/he experienced new possibilities of perception which meant a break with old habits and created a state of being both here and there. Moreover the liminality was not meant to be a transient stage but a continuous process; my informants considered that the change of perception, the broadening of the limits of the self should continue, for whatever was found needed to be deconstructed again.

As with the Turner's initiands they were also levelled with everybody else, and became almost anonymous. They discovered the various aspects in themselves, along with historical and archetypal ones. They were full of a multiplicity of higher and lower qualities and capacities, and needy and full of dilemmas at the same time; that is they were both enriched and impoverished. Dede encouraged them to build "communitas", the group of those who went through the process, where they were equals (Turner: 1991). Communitas was a place of practicing, learning and sharing. They were confronted and encouraged to broaden their capacities of love, sharing and tolerance and deal with jealousy, conceit and will to power. They had to become aware of the subjectivity, differences, delusions and partiality of their perceptions. As they were put into close contact with others and various cultures they became more alert to the conflicts within people and also had to learn to make themselves reconcilable. They were encouraged to apply self-discipline and ethical rules where they had to decide what would be the most beneficial for the general public in each and every situation and act accordingly, and train themselves to exist with the least dependence on outside conditions or on their needs and habits. The *namaz* was the practice most emphasized which could fulfil various functions: concentration, mirroring the self and enabling a flux between the planes of existence which stood for different perceptions of reality. Being among people, at work, in the family, seeing dreams and visions and being occupied with scriptures all diffused the confrontation with Sufism to various areas and levels of the self. They had to affirm and deconstruct these.

Turner suggests that communitas which are existential either dissolve or institutionalise. In our case, since Dede's death in 1998, the formation has been headless and has become rather diffused. The existing communitas have dissolved to a great extent, while there are

newcomers and a number of new networks which have been founded under the leadership of one or another disciple of Dede, but not frequented or approved collectively. There were hardly any instruments to institutionalise: Dede was very accessible, informal and always at the service of his visitors, he did not create hierarchies and did not assign ranks; people and their deficiencies were made transparent, and the education he gave did not seem to be graduated. The followers felt that they had a special, intimate relationship with him, and most of them were not ready to accept any other authority. Moreover Dede stated clearly that he was leaving not one but many successors. Most people do not consider the formation as a community to be continued.

After Dede's death there were various phases which tended to show a process of disintegration of the *communitas* and a reintegration into society. There is an intensification of friendships from outside the group, interest in political events and professional lives, but the adherents' perception of life is highly influenced by the time they spent with Dede. Although there are differences in the political tendencies of my informants, they show rather sceptical reactions to the radical changes in the political scene in Turkey, which are marked by a polarisation between secular and religious fronts especially since the AKP (The Justice and Development Party) which has an Islamist background and neo-liberal policies came to power. They cannot identify with the causes of either of the fronts. The main points of their critique are the defamation of the Kemalist republic, that the AKP has gained too much power, that Islam has become social capital and that Islam has become identified with the AKP regime and its supporters.

The lack of one instance of authority sometimes causes disputes, especially concerning representations of Dede in the public space or about how to use common property; i.e. the books and the mosque and tomb complex. His son left Ankara because there was a tendency among some of the followers to consider him as Dede's successor. The tomb and mosque complex which was built shortly before Dede's death does not have a central meaning for most of my informants. His family decides about its usage and are cautious about keeping it open to a multiplicity of visitors rather than letting it to become dominated by one faction.

However there is an imaginal community: friends are remembered and included somehow in each other's lives and people remain informed about each other. Contacts with old friends are reactivated quite easily when desired, and the shared discourse enables them to understand each other. There is a shared culture which is based on a similarity of perceptions, practices and attitudes. Dede's leadership continues as my informants are occupied with his teaching, revisit and contemplate their memories of being with him, read

his books and the notes they took during their visits, and have visions and dreams about him —although most of them think that their struggle with their selves and life events have become more difficult to handle and the confrontation with their selves often means disappointment. Their occupation with Sufism for most of my informants has taken a more private and invisible form, which is interpreted as distancing oneself from the teaching by some others.

On the other hand there are newcomers to the formation either through some disciples of Dede or through the dissemination of his books and teachings on Web pages. Some of the disciples hold house meetings where they are visited mainly by the newcomers although these are criticised by some other disciples. The continuation of the formation is an open-ended process.

The implications of the process my informants have gone through are that for them it has resulted in a certain degree of loss of attachment to categories which sharply separate one from others. One has a certain distance to the self and life events, in times of both trouble and pleasure. Boundaries created by identity, gender, culture, ethnicity or power structures have gone through a certain degree of attenuation. One is flexible in trying to adapt various points of view and in attending to problems from different perspectives. One is more alert towards the “hidden agendas” of the self as well as of others. One tries to narrow down the list of one’s needs and to become self-sufficient, feels a responsibility towards society and in handling one’s life. The teaching seems to be headed towards a self that is diffused, less restricted to fixed habits, needs and partial perceptions while holding on to a concentrated stable, unbreakable centre, as against a self which is based on exclusion while considering itself to be the centre of events.

Historically Sufism arose out of an occupation with the Koran and the Hadith where the aim was direct experience of *hakikat* (Reality) and embodied knowledge of the doctrines of Islam through *kashf* (unveiling or immediate finding and seeing) which would unveil the literal meanings, as against the philosophers who depended on reasoning and orthodox dogmatists who dealt with rationalisation of the revelation (Morewedge 1971:468). Sufis believe that the Koran has several layers of meanings from outer/ literal to inward/spiritual which they find through their unveilings and visions. Reason alone was found lacking in capacity to know God because it was delimiting whereas the heart of the mind, the intuitive capacity, could know God as it was open to fluctuation and transmutation as the manifestations of God (Chittick 1989:107).

The Koran points to books of revelation, the self and the universe as signs of Reality. Creation is considered in this framework to be both a means to God and a veiling of God. The *Hadith-i Qudsi* (extra-Koranic holy utterance) says: “I was a treasure that was not known, so I loved to be known. Hence I created the creatures and I made Myself known to them, and thus they came to know Me”³²⁵, Sufism considers the cause of creation as God’s desire to be known, and the role of the human being is determined by creation as the capability of knowing God. The Koran represents God as both transcendent and immanent, and Sufi teaching aims at cultivating a disposition where both of these aspects are perceived, which is mostly expressed as “seeing unity in multiplicity”. The emphasis on the self and the universe as means to Reality, which allows a non-normative occupation with scripture, marks Sufism’s difference from the other traditions of Islam, such as *kalam* (discourse or theology) which is based on a literal reading of Koran and the Hadith.

From the beginning Sufism has not been a homogeneous movement. Different teachers have emphasised different aspects according to their approaches, experiences and historical contexts. In the founding period it was common that students of Sufism went from teacher to teacher. There have been attempts at coherence and compilation since the 10th century, although these attempts did not aim at making it normative and monolithic. There have always been debates both among Sufis themselves and with other traditions such as traditionalists and literalists (Karamustafa 2007, Weismann 2007).

The Sufi doctrine on self as expressed in Dede’s books teaches that the selves and perceptions are *zan* (presumptions or presuppositions) constructed by self-interest, lust and avarice, the distortions of the sensory organs, and that they change according to states of mind, emotions and the realms of perception which move from the phenomenal towards noetic subtler realms where the influence of the constructions and distortions decreases. *Fana* (the loss of self) is the way to the reality of things which are the names of God, the archetypes or the existential core of things. Someone who has lost her/himself in God (*fanafillah*) becomes a locus of manifestation of the names of God and his/her actions become the actions of God (*baqa*).

³²⁵ Translated by William Chittick

My informants are intensively occupied with the Sufi literature and use it to make meaning of Dede, the self and the world. Dede embodies for them the prophets, the Sufi saints, the knowledge of the sacred books here and now; he is understood to be the mediator to *Haq* (the Real), and between the noetic realms that are the realities of things and the phenomenal realm which are the realities in form. Such a person is called in Sufi literature an *Insan-ı Kamil* (the perfect human being) and this is how the disciples of Dede considered him. He is understood as the embodiment of Sufism's aim and the living transmitter of knowledge.

The difference between Weber's "pure charisma" and the *Insan-ı Kamil* of Sufism is that while according to Weber charisma is regarded to be of "divine origin" and is "not accessible to the ordinary person" (Weber 1978: 241), it is here transmissible and practical. Sufism, although it approves of the necessity of a talent, "preparedness" and "spiritual intelligence", emphasises education by "charismatic" masters –dead or alive- and practices which are aimed at revealing qualities and activating capacities which lie dormant in every human being.

The institutionalisation of Sufism was a historical process as the various schools were organised as different paths, became normative and ritualistic, and in time they also became highly hierarchical. These were called *tariqahs* (Sufi orders or brotherhoods), and were also divided into various branches in the same geographical place or in different parts of the world (Trimingham 1998). Simultaneously with institutionalisation came reactions to it. The Malamatiyya movement insisted on showing no external signs as against some orders where the attendants differentiated themselves from others in society with special garments and behaviour or leading their lives in seclusion (Sviri 1999, Karamustafa 2007). The Naqshbandiyya path was also against institutionalisation in the founding period although it also became institutionalised soon after to a great extent; but non-institutionalised forms of Sufism were concurrently preserved here and there (Karamustafa 2007).

Dede (Ahmet Kayhan) practiced a non-institutionalised form of Sufism. He brought to the forefront neither his roots, nor any other sectarian approaches, embracing instead a non-sectarian understanding of Islam and other religions. Sufi concepts are intact in the formation, as against some Naqshbandi branches where these have disappeared to some extent –as in the example of Silverstein 2007, 2008 where for example the concept of *fana* is left out and the practice of Sufism is mainly a means to becoming compatible with modernity without violating ethical principles. Through anti-structure, migration, diffusion and the ambiguity of succession the Samini branch, where Dede is from, has resisted routinization as against the institutionalised orders where succession is important for the continuity of the

community. His formation as a whole is diffused and inclusive of various manifestations of Sufism. He was visited by people who had various motivations and tendencies: some searched for remedy for their troubles and this form is mostly categorised as popular Sufism, and there were others who were imbedded in the Islamic and Sufi tradition. My informants represented yet another category. They were not embedded in the traditional, popular discourses of Sufism and found love, freedom, knowledge, self-discovery and an ethical ground in Dede and emphasised the deconstructive aspects of Sufism.

The Naqshbandiyya emphasises a liminal condition which is expressed in the motto “solitude in the crowd” or “the outer with the created and the inner with the Real” which implicates that its adherent remains within social structures or multiplicity while engaging with the uncreated Real One that is behind all multiplicity. This is a both-and disposition which finds its expression in the Sufi saying “being in the world but not of the world” where the “world” is marked by both multiplicity and separation. Inclusion of various Sufi brotherhoods, and adaptability to context are characteristics which mark Naqshbandi Sufism according to Weismann (2007), and they are to be found in the formation.

The branch has remained outside the scope of scholarly work and the media apparently because of its non-institutionalisation, invisibility and the followers’ stand in the public space as individuals rather than as members of a community. This must have also hindered rationalisation for the aims of justification or the enabling of a more or less homogenous community.

Both Marsden (2005) and Ewing’s (1997) works share some findings similar to those of this research. They also denote an activation of intellectual and emotional capacities and the raising of subjectivity through various combating discourses in Islamic contexts where Sufism is one of the discourses. Ewing delineates Ghazzali’s deconstruction of the discourse of the self as a means to truth (ibid.: 258-259) and Sufism as constituting “lines of flight” to escape from the historically contingent hegemonic discourses (ibid.: 14). Plurality and combating discourses are means to subjectivity also according to the findings of this research.

In this study, the applied method of inquiry was the revised versions of Grounded Theory Method (GTM), a method where theory should emerge from the data. The Multi Grounded Theory Approach advised the researcher to deal with the data critically, to read extensively before and while in the field but to delay the close reading of existing theories so that the researcher did not impose a theory upon the field but could still check if the evolving theory matched the empirical data and with other theories in the field (Goldkohl and Cronholm

2003). Constructivist Grounded Theory Method (CGTM) emphasised that the researcher should be reflexive about his/her own role in the research both during data collection and in constructing theories (Charmaz 2006) –my insiderness made distancing from the field a crucial issue and also made me sensitive to the biases of the anthropologist, my own as well as those of others. The method encouraged remaining flexible during data collection and directing the research according to the pre-analysis which should be done simultaneously with the field research. Against the advice of the method, I entered the field with a research question which arose out of the field because I was already grounded in the field, so that I could remain focused. This question was directed to the non-institutionalised aspect of the formation, and enquires and analyses its grounds, take and impact on the participants which changed only slightly during the field research.

A phenomenological mode of interviewing was used where the experiences and perceptions of the informants could be brought to the forefront in detail as they understood them to reveal the phenomenon rather than focusing on the development of an emerging theory. Beside the anthropological/sociological studies on Sufism, historical studies about Sufism, Sufi texts and philosophical texts were used for reasons of raising an understanding of the field, contextualising the field within the Islamic and Sufi traditions, and to prevent the research from being dominated by my personal views and biases. Collaboration was sought from the group's participants and from nonparticipants in the research to check whether the findings and analysis belonged to the collective knowledge of the group. At times total seclusion was necessary as the field was partly my social environment and I needed distance from the discourses in the field.

9.2 Sufism as a Deconstructive Discursive Tradition and Practice

The brand of Sufism we have encountered in this research is a “discursive tradition” because, as with the other traditions of Islam, it “includes and relates itself to the founding texts of Qur’an and the Hadith” (Asad 1984: 14) and relates to the concepts and practices of Sufism throughout history. The main principles and concepts which had been raised in the founding years of Islam until the 15th century are referred to, unveiled (deconstructed), revised and practiced. This brand of Sufism continuously acknowledges and deconstructs the contexts it comes into interaction with, such as the self, the scriptures and power structures. Because it is deconstructive it also deconstructs Sufism’s own concepts and institutions, and hardly allows institutionalisation or rationalisation. The norms are reduced to a few practical and ethical rules and allow flexibility when it comes to cultural and individual differences. On

one hand it furthers the subjectivity and on the other hand it teaches people to exist side by side in spite of differences.

It seems that Sufism as it confronts us here operates on things or bodies it comes into contact with in two opposite ways, which is possibly what was meant by Dede when he said: “everything is *Hak* but there is *Muhammadiyah*”. In the first, the various elements –or, if it can be done, everything- which construct bodies are revealed or unveiled where things are considered in themselves as closed systems. In this framework, the world outside the system is a mirror in which the body watches itself rather than interacting with it. Many of the aspects which have lain dormant, were suppressed, ignored, forgotten or considered to be distant are found in the body. Various cultures and their discourses, historical times, the phenomenal and non-phenomenal worlds, noetic entities, spaces and qualities belong to the unveiled aspects. Acknowledging an entity as being *Hak* (the Real or True) arises from an understanding that things are true to themselves; i.e. they behave according to their own realities, which are in effect neither good nor bad. This process is the ground for objectivity. An effect of this process is that it loosens categories and identifications; bodies become plural and floating: “*Hak* manifests itself in an endless flux” (Koranic verse). As realities unfold, differentiate and diffuse according to the possibilities they entail, it seems, infinitely, that information about them can never be complete. A body that allows its reality to manifest or unfold is ambiguous. Objectivity in this sense is seeing things in themselves, and in their differentiations and possibilities. In the case of Dede, the self becomes inclusive of everything, he knows everything through himself. This process can be called the “deconstruction of inclusion” or “deconstruction of unfolding”.

In the second way things are considered in their relationships with each other. This process heads towards the opposite direction of unfolding because bodies assert their existence and want either to escape each other or to eliminate each other. They seek equilibrium in such a way that incompatible attributes clash and want to reduce or destroy each other continuously. A body that finds incompatible aspects in the self has to find a way to attain equilibrium among the elements without hindering the flux. It seeks ways of existing together. If it turns to the self and gives away the elements that are not existential, a process will begin towards a minimum existential core. This I call “annihilative deconstruction” or the “deconstruction of reduction”. It continues until the body becomes stable at its irreducible existential core which is its subjectivity.

These two processes of deconstruction are simultaneous and continuous. When the first step is cut short, reduction becomes suppression; when the second step is skipped one remains in

multiplicity, diffused and in a state of internal and external fight. Hence reduction, although it is annihilative, is actually the condition for existence. Someone who is in his/her irreducible core can handle multiplicities without really being included in the fight. The sum of irreducible existential cores comprise the realm of *Wahdaniyyat*, the unity of multiple realities, and when these are reduced again to the One irreducible existential core, it is *Ahadiyyat*, the Oneness, and this is the Ultimate Subjectivity. Someone who has realised this two-way deconstruction is an *Insan-i Kamil* in *Ahadiyyat*, and has no attributes; s/he is colourless, proper and unalterable like a piece of diamond. S/he disperses things and gathers them together. Dede reminded people repeatedly that “the *Jamal* (Beauty or Bliss) of Allah prevails over His *Jalal* (Majesty or Wrath)”, and that there were eight gates to paradise whereas there were seven to hell. This is the law that hinders things from finding equilibrium in total destruction.

Sufism’s emphasis on embodiment and experience arises from a conviction that one has to go through the process her/himself. The deductions and inductions of someone who has gone through the process are doctrines which hint at the possibility of the journey and are signs to guide one through the process. Yet they must be deconstructed through experience. Dede’s formation shows both “deconstruction of unfolding” with its inclusivity of various manifestations of Sufism, being diffused ambiguous and open ended, and “annihilative deconstruction” because it has given away the norms, ritualistic aspects, institutions, and other formalities and has no succession.

What is general to every form of Sufism, it seems, is an attraction to and love for the master and, in many, also *fana* (annihilation). The endorsement of a *nafs* with higher and lower qualities, i.e. the other and the friend in one body, and encouragement to activate and develop the higher qualities, and silence the lower ones is theoretically common to all traditions of Islam. But wanting to apply rules without acknowledging the self means suppression and projection and may lead to a will of destruction of others whereas seeing myself in others will unite me with them.

I shall conclude this section with a poem by Ibn Arabi as he deconstructs religion:

My heart has become able
To take on all forms.
It is a pasture for gazelles,
For monks an abbey.
It is a temple for idols
And for whoever circumambulates it, the Kaaba.
It is the tablets of the Torah
And also the leaves of the Koran.

I believe in the religion
Of Love
Whatever direction its caravans may take,
For love is my religion and my faith³²⁶.

9.3 Restrictions of the Research and Suggestions

This thesis may be considered to concentrate too much on “Sufi topographies” as the researcher is an insider, but this, at the same time, has enabled her to compile a text that reveals this “hidden” world. It has limitations in terms of giving a broad picture of the formation because of its restriction to a particular milieu. A study that includes the more traditional or uneducated followers of Dede as against the non-traditional and educated group studied here would bring to light how far the background instructs the interpretation. Another area of research within this field might be to study the sub-groups which have been developed after Dede’s death to see if, how far and why the practices and representations differ from group to group. A follow up in some years with a broader sample group could show in what ways the formation and the understanding and practice of Sufism have been transformed in the formation. I might personally be interested in performing a conceptual research where the informants are not restricted to the followers of Dede and Sufi texts are studied comparatively with Western philosophical traditions, to analyse Sufism’s methods of deconstruction more thoroughly. The relationship between love and a desire for *fana*, loss of self also calls for further research.

³²⁶ English version by Maurice Gloton taken from www.Poetry-Chaikhana.com

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APPENDIX

TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

YAZARIN

Soyadı : AVANOĞLU.....

Adı : AYŞE SERAP.....

Bölümü : SOSYAL ANTROPOLOJİ.....

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : VEILED ISLAM: A DECONSTRUCTIVE SUFI FORMATION

.....
.....

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans

Doktora

1) Tezimden fotokopi yapılmasına izin vermiyorum.

2) Tezimden dipnot gösterilmek şartıyla bir bölümünün fotokopisi alınabilir.

3) Kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla tezimin tamamının fotokopisi alınabilir.

Yazarın imzası

Tarih