

# THE BEKTASHI ORDER IN BULGARIA- A 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY DOCUMENT ON ELMALI (ELMALU) BABA DARGĀH\*

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## Abstract

The spiritual transformation in the Balkans through the efforts of the spiritual masters from Anatolia is also an indication of a profound realisation that bridges the vast historical and cultural heritage of the East and the West. It can be concluded from the historical treatises and the hagiographical accounts that the mentioned transformation led the new settlers of Anatolian origin to establish their own communities even in some remote areas and to practice their own rituals as a continuation of the wisdom innate in their rites.

One of those spiritual masters who helped the spiritual well-being of the muslim community in the Southern Bulgaria is Elmali (Elmalu) Baba. Despite the limited information concerning Elmali Baba's life, his Dargāh served not only as a sufi gathering place but also as a center that fulfilled the religious education for the followers of Bektāshī Order together with the madrasa and the mosque built within the same area.

In this article, we will try to give a brief information on the dissemination of Bektāshī Order in the Southern Bulgaria. Then, we will introduce Elmali Baba Dargāh located in the Momchilgrad Province. Finally, we will give the Turkish transliteration and the English translation of the document that authorises Elmali Baba in fulfilling the needs and the service of the initiates thereof.

**Key Words:** Bektāshīyya, Elmali Baba, dargāh, secret (sirr), ghāzi

## BULGARİSTAN'DA BEKTAŞİLİK- ELMALI BABA DERGAHI'NA AİT 16. YY TARİHLİ BİR VESİKANIN NEŞRİ\*

### Öz

Anadolu'dan gelen mânâ önderleri yoluyla Balkanlarda gerçekleşen manevî dönüşüm, Batı ve Doğu'nun engin tarihsel ve kültürel mirasını birbirine bağlayan derin bir idrakin de göstergesidir. Tarihle alakalı risaleler ve menâkıblardan söz konusu dönüşümün Anadolu'dan gelip yerleşenlerin kimi uzak bölgelerde kendi topluluklarını kurmalarına ve kendi düsturlarında içkin olan hikmetin bir süreği olarak kendi ritüellerini icra etmeye sevk ettiği çıkarımında bulunulabilir.

Bulgaristan'ın güneyinde yer alan müslüman toplulukların manevî kalkınmalarına katkıda bulunan mânâ önderlerinden biri de Elmali (Elmalu) Baba'dır. Elmali Baba'nın hayatına ilişkin sınırlı bir bilgiye karşın, Dergâhı sadece sûfilerin bir araya geldikleri bir yer olmanın yanı sıra aynı yerde yer alan medrese

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ve cami ile birlikte Târik-i Bektâşîyye müntesiplerinin dinî eğitimlerini sağlayan bir merkez işlevi de görmüştür.

Makalede Güney Bulgaristan'da Bektâşîyye'nin yayılımına ilişkin kısa bir bilgi verilecektir. Ardından Momçilgrad'da yer alan Elmalı Baba Dergâhı tanıtılmaya çalışılacaktır. Daha sonra Elmalı Baba'yı orada bulunan müntesiplerin ihtiyaç ve hizmetlerini görme konusunda yetkilendiren vesikânın Türkçe transliterasyonu ve İngilizce çevirisi verilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bektâşîyye, Elmalı Baba, dergâh, sır, gâzi

## 1. Introduction

That the Islamisation process in the western lands – especially those inhabited by the Christian populations- took place through the significant influence of the wandering dervishes on the frontiers is a frequently stated fact in many historical accounts. According to these accounts, Islam reached these lands by means of the traders, travellers and especially by the wandering dervishes who conveyed the sūfî way of life stemming mainly from the views of the spiritual masters such as Khwaja Ahmad Yasawî. However, the common ideal of disseminating the Divine Word was shared by many other sufi orders including Bektashiyya, Naqshbandiyya (Algar, 1971:168-203), Rufaiyya and Khalwatiyya. These orders became effective in transforming the lives of individuals and started a new phase in the later history of sufism in the Balkans. Following the traces of spiritual guides such as Sari Saltuk and Sefer Shah Sultan, a number of shayks and dervishes with “wooden swords” arrived at the Western lands (Evliyâ Çelebi, 2006, III: 548-558) and participated in the Islamisation process in these lands (Barkan, 1942: 293). Thus, these lands gained a vital function of bridging the imagination and the wisdom of great civilisations.

Among the mentioned sūfî orders, Bektâşîyya became quite popular not only in view of the Bektâshî *tekkes* all around the Balkans but also the spiritual training that lasted for centuries. Much of the information concerning the arrival of Bektâshîyya in Edirne and its passage into the Balkans depend on the legends and the oral traditions. Despite the limited data about the lives of these heroic figures, there is also an enormous heritage consisting of hagiographical accounts (*manâqib*) retold and preserved by the followers until the present day. In this sense, these *manâqibnâmas* and *walayatnâmas* provide an incredible amount of knowledge concerning their religious practices and the worldview.

Bektâshîyya's influence in the Balkans became so immense that many *tekkes* were built in each city or province in order to fulfil the religious services for the followers of the Bektâshî Order there. Through this process of spiritual urbanization, the number of *tekkes* and the other institutions related to them increased accordingly until the abolishment of Janissary Corps when most of these institutions were demolished except for the tombs and graves. Following the reigns of Sultan

Abdumajid and Sultan Abdulaziz, the pressure and restraint decreased to certain extent, and some of the *tekkes* were rebuilt and renewed (Maden, 2012: 51, 120-121). Yet, some historians claim that all those sanctions were only for the Janissaries not the Bektāshī, and the veneration for the spiritual guides of Bektāshī Order continued as usual (Ayar, 2009: 36). This veneration was partly due to the respect for the personalities and the shrines of Sufi saints in general.

Numerous works were written concerning the Bektāshī Order most which were written by non-initiate ones and also by some orientalist who are partly far from tracing the doctrines and the rites of the Order to its original form. A number of these scholars believe that the Bektāshī Order absorbed some views which are not compatible with the mainstream sūfī thought and they consider the Bektāshī Order as a heterodox sect. According to some scholars, the reason for calling them “heterodox” is due to the lack of a term that could explain their case (Yıldırım, 2008: 9). In fact, these views are to be discussed not only from the historical and sociological perspective but also from that of the history of Sufism without any anachronic tendency. Otherwise, a certain unclarity whether be it intentional or unintentional leads especially some orientalist to define Bektāshīyya with heretic beliefs rather than as a sūfī order. By the same token, it seems quite tragic to consider it with heterodoxy although it is linked with Khwaja Ahmad Yasawī and the Yasawī Order which is quite “orthodox” especially at the beginning.

However, it is not always easy to define the initiatic nature of the sufi orders from their apparent aspects, and the difficulties in defining the rites and the rituals of the sūfī orders stem mainly from the nature of the initiation itself. For, each sūfī order has peculiar rites or trusts which are to be kept secret from “the outsiders”. Some sūfī orders even developed their own language to keep their secrets as we see in the case of “Balaibalan” of the Gulshanī Order. Given this secrecy in view of the practices and the doctrines, it is not always possible to determine all aspects of a sūfī order and particularly that of Bektāshīyya properly (Birge, 1994: 87). Some of these secrets are accessible only to the lovers and the people of the Path, and they cannot be attained by the public. In this regard, Ahmad Yasawī says (*Divān-ı Hikmet*, 2016; 377),

“The secret of the true lover is concealed, the ordinary ones know it not

One should let his tears be witness, and then go straight forward.”

As the initiates have no authority to resist such claims of heterodoxy, these attacks in turn became attributed to the Path as if an innate characteristic. The doctrines then become –so to speak- blurred and even some branches do not accept the views belonging to the other as a result.

## 2. The Path of the Delicate Ones (*Tariq-i Nazanin*)

Generally speaking, The Bektāshī Order is called “the path of the gentle or delicate ones” (*Tariq-i Nazanin*) and is accepted among *Tariq-i Shattāriyyah*<sup>1</sup>. It has some unique features not only in its doctrine but also in practice. It also has some peculiar garments including *hirqa*, *tāj*<sup>2</sup>, *palihang*, *tigh*, etc (Şeyh Baba Mehmed Süreyya, 2012: 23-24). One of the distinctive features of Bektāshī Order is the priority given to the spiritual authority and capacity rather than mere hereditary succession (Hasluck, 1929: 164). Similarly, the children of a Bektāshī dervish are free to choose their own way (Dedebaba, 2010: I/397).

The Bektāshī dervishes<sup>3</sup> perform their services with the general attitude of spiritual poverty (*faqr*) rather than gaining a personal authority. This attitude is mentioned in *Maqālāt al-Ghaybiyya* of Haji Bektāsh Wali like a dictum: “Do not incline to the lieneage or kinsfolk. May thy name be uttered less and do not let your name be written beforehand” (Yılmaz, 2004: 64)

The hierarchy in Bektāshiyya has some peculiar aspects. It is possible for an initiate to exercise the necessary rites of the Order and thus, to become a *dervish*, *baba*, *halifebaba*, and finally a *dedebaba*, who represents Haji Bektāsh Wali for the time being. Taking the sayings of Haji Bektāsh Wali into consideration, it can readily be asserted that a dervish may take over this task without being necessarily a descendant of Haji Bektāsh in view of a blood tie,

“Know it well that being a dervish is an eternal bliss and an everlasting prosperity. Whomsoever owns the secret, the eighteen thousand worlds are surrendered for his service by Allah the Almighty” (Yılmaz, 2004: 49).

The dervishhood is a high rank itself, and being worthy of guidance depends on the required or adequacy (Bal, 2014: 364). This very fact is mentioned in many classical works on the Bektāshī Order. When there is a mention about the services of a “baba”, it is said “This baba is a dervish himself” as an idiom. As a matter of fact, titles such as *baba*, *halifebaba*, etc. denote only the phases of service for the Bektāshīs. A *dervish* does not need to be a *baba*; however, a *baba* has to be a *dervish* of necessity. The local congregations perform their prayers and rituals in the *tekke* where they were initiated by a *baba*, the spiritual master (Hasluck, 1929: 165).

To become a “baba” and fulfill his duties such as performing the rituals of the Order and accomadating the initiates, the visitors and the travellers, etc. requires an authorisation. This authorisation or “ijāzah” has been given by the authorities of Bektāshī Order in most cases to keep this organization in an orderly manner. Therefore, a *baba* has to fulfill required tasks such as visiting the sacred sites (*Atabāt-i Āliya*) and sacrifice in the *āsītāna* of Haji Bektāsh<sup>4</sup>. When a *baba* is given the

authority to initiate the seekers, he is also given some “trusts” including the prayer rug (*sajjada*), *taj* (*qubba-i alif*), *cheragh*, *sofra* and *alam* as a sign of approval (Bal, 2014: 357-58). These Trusts are believed to be inherited from the descendans of the Prophet from one generation to another. They are of great importance in Bektāshī Order. In some cases, the authorisation is approved by three other *babas* (Dedebaba, 2010: I/403). Bedri Noyan Dedebaba relates from Mücerred Halife Cafer Sadık Bektaş Babaerenler that if a *dedebaba* wishes, he may recite a prayer before giving the *ijāzatnāma* and let the dervish wear his belt around his waist, the *tāj* with *dastār* on his head after glorifying God. Many *ijāzatnāmas* were sent to the authorisation of a *baba* who is far away and cannot travel to the *āsītāna* together with a letter to be given to the *baba* himself. As soon as the *baba* receives his *ijāzah*, he sacrifices (*tigh*) and completes the ritual (Dedebaba, 2010: 402, 7).

### 3. The Bektāshī Order in Bulgaria

Some recent field studies, especially those dealing with the current status of Bektāshīs and Alevis in Bulgaria, indicate the very fact that the rituals of the Bektāshī Order seem to be ignored and thus they are reduced only to a cultural identity. However, once the *sūfī* way of life and the vast literary and practical corpus related to Bektāshīyya is neglected, a certain reduction—at least from the *sūfī* point of view— and an interruption between Bektāshīyya as a living social mechanism and its present-day perception would occur.

The existing *tekkes* and the information about those which were destroyed in time are witnesses of a profound system of *sūfī* way of life in Bulgaria. The *dargāh* of Seyyid Ali Sultan (Kizil Deli) in Dimetoka and the other Bektāshī *tekkes* in the Southern Bulgaria have served for the Bektāshīs and Alevis in this region for centuries and have helped them to preserve their religious and cultural identity. Seyyid Ali Sultan was essentially a *ghāzi-dervish*<sup>5</sup> whom participated in the conquest of Rumeli and rewarded by the Ottoman Sultan (Ocak, 1983: 12-14). Among the *tekkes* founded by these spiritual masters, Elmali Baba *Dargāh* is of great significance in that it includes facilities such as a tomb, a graveyard, a *dargāh*, a mosque and a *madrassa* together.

It can be conferred from the legends and the local studies that Elmali Baba is among those dervishes who came to the Balkans after Seyyid Ali Sultan (Kizil Deli)'s arrival. Elmali Baba tried to disseminate the principles of Bektāshī Order in the Eastern Rhodopes together with his approximately 500 hundred dervishes. These voluntary efforts in the Southern Balkans resulted in an obvious inclination towards the *Sūfī* way of life they represented. Thus, Elmali Baba became a renowned *sūfī* due to his outstanding personality and services. In some local sources, his real name was

claimed to be Abu al-Wafa Sultan (Aydın, 2015: 338). In some sources, it is also stated that Elmali Baba was Seyyid Ali Sultan's brother (Kökel, 2007: 15). Othman/Otman Baba (Haskovo, Trakiets Village, Teketo/Tekke Province) and Elmali Baba (Bivolyane/Mandacilar Village) are among the most venerated sūfī saints in the Southern Bulgaria. The names of these saints are also mentioned in the folk songs:

We arrived at the Elmali city  
And we learnt the rites of love from him  
Then we plunged in the ocean of affection and reality  
Elmali Baba's ocean is deep extreme. (Merkoff, 2015: 140)

That the mention of Elmali Baba in another version of this poem by Uryān Abdāl is believed to be an attribution to either Elmali Baba in Bvolyane or Elmali Baba in Antalya,

I attained the secret of Elmali Baba  
And plunged into the ocean there with loyalty  
It is thereat that I realised the rites of reality  
Thy ocean overflows Elmali Baba. (Ögel, 1971: 470)

In the Ottoman financial reports concerning this area, we see that there are some mentions of Elmali Baba Dargāh. In a document dated 24th Jumada al-akhira 1247/30<sup>th</sup> November 1830, it was stated that a letter sent to Mehmed Emin Efendi, a *qaimmaqam*<sup>6</sup> in Edirne and also to the *Qadi* of Sultanyeri. In this letter, they are told to inform the Palace about the assets belonging to Elmali Baba Dargāh and its share from these assets (BOA, MAD, 9774/178-1).

#### 4. Elmali (Elmalu) Baba and the Elmali Baba Dargāh

The Dargāh of Elmali Baba is founded in Bvolyane village, Momchilgrad (Момчилград/Mestanlı) Province of Southern Bulgaria. This village was formerly in Sultanyeri Province of Dimetoka (Didymóteicho) until 1913. However, it became a village of Momchilgrad, Bulgaria as a result of the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913. According to Ahmed Bādi Efendi, this province was called Sultanyeri in that Sultan Murad bestowed large areas around as a gift in the name of his daughter, Hatice Sultan in the honour of the great saints buried there such as Awhad Baba, Yagmur Baba and Seyyid Mehmed Baba. Elmali Baba Dergāh, which was located between Edirhanlı and Mandacilar (Bvolyane) villages, was among the sixteen Bektāshī tekkes those abolished after *Waqa-i Hayriyya* by the verdict of Sultan Mahmud II. It was recorded only by name and that's why we do not have sufficient information concerning Elmali Baba Dergāh (Ahmed Bādi Efendi, 2014: 3/2263- 1/ 684).

In fact, Bvolyane is not a single village but a group of villages consisting of four

other ones. There are many other Dargāhs<sup>7</sup> in the area where Elmali Baba Dargāh is located including Demir (Temur) Baba Tekke in Mumcular Village, Huseyin Baba Tekke in Adakoy, Ali Baba Tekke in Alvanlar Village, Koclu Baba Tekke in Alvanlar Village, Huseyin Baba Tomb in Alvanlar Village, and Hasan Baba Tomb in Alvanlar Village. According to the local authorities, the services in Elmali Baba Dargāh used to be administrated from Kizil Deli Sultan Dargāh. However, they began to be fulfilled in Elmali Baba Dargāh after the reorganisation of the borders between Greece and Bulgaria after the Treaty of Bucharest.

In this region, some Bektāshīs follow “Musahipli” branch whereas some others follow the “Babagān” branch. The Bektāshīs in this area are members of various communities such as *Babāi* (Pazartesili) *Sharifs*, *Bektāshī* (Carsambali) *Seyyids*. The latter group is also called the *Chalabis* (Aydın, 2015: 335). In some sources, The Bektāshīs of Elmali Baba village are defined as “Musahipli” just as those who are initiated by the Seyyid Ali Sultan Dargāh and the other dargāhs in the same region. It is also expressed that the *babas* in Elmali Baba Dargāh appealed to Seyyid Ali Sultan Dargāh for the authorisation (*ijāzah*) for their services during the Empire Period (Küçük, 2010: 319).

The tomb within Elmali Baba Dargāh was built in the woods where it served as a crossroads (*darband*) for the travellers. It has a distinguished place among other tombs due to its peculiar architectural style such as the octagonal wooden dome. Another significant feature of the Tomb is the tombstones with *Husaynī taj*<sup>8</sup>, which is quite rare in that area. The tomb has two main parts: the one consisting of 6 graves belonging to the male dervishes, and the one believed to be the station or *maqam* of Fatima. Prior to its restoration in 2011, both parts had no roofs and had a rectangular shape in 1960s. In 1965, the part in which the male dervishes were buried was covered with timbers (Minkov, 2008: 87-92).

There are wooden coffins over the male graves. Their tombstones are made of roughly cut limestone, which have a flat surface whereas the 17<sup>th</sup> century tombstones in the Eastern Rhodopes are either biconical or cylindrical marble columns. The *tajs*<sup>9</sup> on the tombstones are different from each other in shape. Some of them have *dastars*<sup>10</sup> which suggests that they belong to the spiritual masters there. The greatest of these tombstones is believed to be belonging to Elmali Baba. It is stated by the local people that Elmali Baba's Tomb was built in the same period with those of Ahat Baba in Postnik village and Zakiya Baba in Devintsi Village.

The mosque next to the Tomb was originally a wooden one. However, it was burnt and rebuilt by stone bricks. There was also a madrasa next to the mosque which was closed in 1930-35. The existence of Dargāh, mosque and madrasa side by side constitute a significant religious and cultural reminder for those who live there.

Within the *hamushan*<sup>11</sup> near the Dargāh, there are many tombstones belonging to the deceased dervishes most of whom died after a plague. Katerina Venedikova states that a tombstone dated 1030 A.H./1620-1621 A.D. belongs to Agah Efendi, son of Elmali Baba. The inscription on tombstone is believed to be the oldest one in the Eastern Rhodopes (Taş, 1999: 9/333)

Following the restoration in 2011 by some local businessman and charity organisations, a number of facilities were restored such as *cemevi* (this chamber is also called *meydanodasi*, *meydanevi*), the chamber of Dede (*Dede Odası* or *Halife Odası*), the library, two guest rooms, *kesimhane* (where the cattles are sacrificed), *Aşevi* (where the meals for the guests are cooked), a *chilahana*<sup>12</sup>, etc (Aydın, 2005: 339-340).

In Elmali Baba Dargāh, an annual gathering called *meye*<sup>13</sup> is organized at the first weekend of September. Not only the Bektāshīs of this district but also those from all around Bulgaria gather in this ceremony and participate in some rituals there. Almost all the inhabitants of the village are Bektāshīs, and they visit the Dargāh on Sundays.

There are many other *Bektāshī tekkes* in this region including Kazer Baba (in Kazerler village), Hasan Baba (Kecek), Hüseyin Baba (Mandacı), Azgıncı Baba (Mandacı), Ahat Baba (Tekke Köy), İbrahim Baba (Kedikçal), Akçeli Baba (Durgutlar), İbrahim Baba (Ağcaoluk), Taşeren Baba (Bayramlar), Zekiye Bacı (Uzunclar), Umur Baba (Umurclar), Abalı Baba (Abalılar), Hasan Baba (Çal), Yaren Baba, Balım (Ballı) Baba (Kışla), Nalbant Baba (Kedikçalı) (Aydın, 2015: 340-341).

## 5. A 16<sup>th</sup> Century Edict Concerning Elmali Baba as The Shaykh of the Elmali Dargāh

The following edict (*nīshān*) dated Safar 978 A.H./ 1579 A.D was given by Hilmi Şenalp, a renowned architect and a scholar on Islamic Art, to Nafi Baba Tekke in Istanbul. The edict was well-preserved one and has some significant characteristics. It consists of 25 lines written in *Tawqī* style. Three different colours were used in the text (black, red and deep blue). The names of the Prophet, Fatima, the twelve Imams and Haji Bektash Walī were written either in red or blue as a sign of reverence. Another important fact is the usage of Ottoman, Arabic and Persian, which marks the competency of the Shaykhs who sealed the edict. It was submitted to Dervish Shaban, a *dervish* in the proper sense of the word. For, he visited the sacred sites called "Atabā-i Āliyah"<sup>14</sup> including Kerbala. and he fulfilled the required tasks of the Path of *Murtadha* (*tariqāt-i Murtadhawī*, the Path of 'Ali). According to the text, Dervish Shaban had certain merits and a deep respect. That's why he was described

as one who visited those sites “on his head rather than on foot”. We confer from the edict that Dervish Shaban was appointed by Elmali Baba to receive the edict and the “trusts” of the Path due to his meritorious character. It is probable that Elmali Baba could not leave his *tekke* due to his duty as a spiritual guide there, and sent Dervish Shaban on behalf of himself. Having completed the the visits and the required rites, Dervish Shaban was submitted the trusts to be given to Elmali baba together with the following edict as an authorisation for the duty of guiding the seekers in his tekke.

The edict was sealed by three *babas*. It was written in an early period and is a sign of the existence of the Bektāshīs in Momchilgrad as an organized community. The edict is also an affirmation of the name of the village where Elmali Baba Tekke is located.

### 5.1. The Turkish Transliteration of The Document

#### Mine'l-'Atebâti 'Âliyât

#### 'Ala Müşerrafihâ's-salâvât

Şükr u sipâs ol Meliki'n-nâsa revâdır ki enbiyâ-yı 'izâmı merâküd-i şerifleri kiblegâh-ı kâffe-i enâm kıldı. Ve evliyâ-yı kirâmın meşâhid-i münîfleri mu'tekif-i her hâss u 'amm eyledi. Ve dürûd-ı nâ-ma'dûd ol Rasûl-i Emin'e lâyıkdır ki cemî' akvâlinde sâdik ve emrâz-ı 'isyân devâsında tabîb-i hâzıkdır. Ve tahiyât-ı nâ-mahdûd âl-i münteceb ve ashâb-ı müntehabine ki her birine âsumân-ı risâletde kevkeb ve felek-i hidâyetde necm-i muzîdirler siyyemâ el-Vasî ve'l-Betül ve's-Sıbteyn ve's-Secâd ve'l-Bâkır ve's-Sâdik ve'l-Kâzım ve'r-Rızâ ve't-Takî ve'n-Nakî ve'l-'Askerî ve'l-Mehdî salevâtullahi 'aleyhim ecma'in. Bu sutûr-ı fâyizu'n-nûr-ı mevfûru's-sürûr tastîr u tahrîrinden garaz oldur ki işbu râfî-i sahîfe-i ihlâs Dervîş Şa'bân sa'âdet-hilesi muktezâsınca meşyen 'ale'r-re's lâ-'ale'l-akdâm ikdâm-ı tamâmla diyâr-ı dârü's-selâmda vâkî' olan merâküd-ı 'alî-makâm ve meşâhid-i lâ-remzü'l-ihtirâm evliyâ-yı kirâmı yegân yegân 'ale'l-icmâl ve't-tafsîl telsîm u takbîl etdikden sonra Hazret-i Sultân-ı Kerbelâ ve hâmis-i âl-i 'abâ ve şâh-ı şühedâ ve kurretül-'ayn-ı Murtezâ sıbt-ı Rasulü's-sakaleyn Ebi 'Abdullah El-Hüseyn -radiyallahu anh âsitâne-i felek-medâr ve 'atabe-i 'aliyye-i melek-mezârlarına ki kible-i münâcat-ı erbâb-ı safâ ve ka'be-i hâcât-ı ashâb-ı vefâdur- vâsıl olub turâb-ı bâb-ı sa'âdetlerin ki reşk-i âb-ı hayâtdur kuhl-i basar-ı basîret edüb ve âsitâne-i müteberreke ve mutahharede vâkî' olan sultân-ı serâirde vilâyet-i kutb-ı erbâb-ı hidâyet mazhar-ı esrâr-ı hakikat sırr-ı 'alî Sultân Hâcî Bektâş-ı Velî kaddese sırrahu'l-celî tekyesi fukarâ ve sulehâsının meydânında adâb-ı ashâb-ı fakr u fenâ ve üslûb-ı tarikat-ı evliyâ muktezâsınca kazgan kaynadub cânına ve başına nazar-ı safâ olundukdan mâ'ada Dimetoka nâhiyesinde cemâ'at-ı Elmalu'da Elmalu Baba Zâviyesi'nde tekye-nişin olan Ekber Baba oğlu Elmalu Baba'ya ber-muktezâ-yı tarikat-ı murtezâvî sofrâ ve çerâğ-i seng u tiğ havâle olunub Dervîş Şa'bân yedine bu nişân-ı 'âlîşân verildi ki Elmalu Baba âsitânesine

vüsûl buldukda mezkûr emâneti Elmalu Baba'ya teslim eyleye mezkûr Elmalu Baba ol zâviyenin şeyhi olub ol âsitâneye gelen 'ulema ve fuzalâ ve etkiyâ ve sulehâ ve âyende ve revende ve ebnâu's-sebile 'izzet u hizmet eyleye ve ol diyârda olan sâdât-ı kirâm ve nukebâ-yı 'izâm ve mevâli-i enâm ve firka-i sulehâ-i zevî'l-ihtirâm ve ehıbbâ-yı hânedân-ı nübüvvet ve esdikâ-yı dûdmân-ı velâyet ve mâlikâne-i memâlik-i tarikat ve sâlikân-ı mesâlik-i hakikatden me'mûl ve mes'ûldür ki merkûm Elmalu Baba'yı bu âsitâne-i melâ'ik-âşiyânenin nazar-gerdelerinden 'add edüb min külli'l-vücûh müşârun-ileyh levâzım-ı ta'zım ve tekrîmi bâbında dakıka fevt etmeyüb in'âmât u ikrâmât ve tasaddukâtlarından hursende ve behre-mend ideler ki merkûm Baba hakkından sâdır ve mütebâdir olan eltâf-ı kâmile ve a'tâf-ı şâmileleri mahzâ cânib-i dâ'ilerine 'âid ve râcî' olduğundan mâ'adâ masdûka-i kerîme "men câe bil'l-haseneti felehu aşre emsâliha" fehvâsına 'indallahi ve rasûlihi ve e'imme-i kirâm zâyi' olmaz... ve's-selâm 'ala meni't-tebe'a'l-hüdâ.

Hudâ zâyi' nemîgerdâned ecr-i nıku-kârân râ  
 Der-în mezra' bûd ârî nekukâri nekukâri  
 Tahrîren fî sâbi' şehri Saferü'l-harâm sene seb'a ve semâniye ve tis'a mie  
 Zalike sahîh hurrîre el-fakîr  
 Hasan bin Ali el-Hüseynî el-Hâmevi

\*

Mâ huve'l-merkûm fih sahîh hurrîre el-fakîr  
 Cihân Dede nâzır-ı âsitâne-ı İmâm Hüseyn radiyallahu anh

\*

El-mücavir-i Kerbela hadimü'l-fukara el-fakîr Pîr Ahmed Dede

## 5.2. The English Translation of the Document

Praise and gratitude be to the Lord of the human beings that He made the tombs of the great messengers as a *qibla* for all humanity. It is He Who made the holy graves of the great saints as a retreat ['itiqaf] place for each select and ordinary person. Countless praise behoves that trustworthy Messenger, who is the loyal one in each of his word and who is the skillful physician for the disease of insurgence. May infinite spiritual gifts be on his blessed family and on his distinguished companions each of whom is considered a star on the firmament of Prophethood and a star on the sky of guidance. May peace be upon especially on al-Wasi ['Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet] and al-Batul [Fatima, daughter of the Prophet and Wife of Ali] and Sibtayn [the grandsons of the Holy Prophet, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn] and al-Sajjad [Imam Ali b. Al-Husayn] and al-Baqir [Imam Muhammad al-Baqir] and al-Sadiq [Imam Jafar al-Sadiq] and al-Kazim [Imam Musa al-Kazim] and al-Ridha [Imam Ali al-Ridha] and al-Taqi [Imam Muhammad ibn Ali al-Taqi] and al-Naqi [Imam Ali al-Naqi] and al-Askari [Imam Hasan al-Askari] and al-Mahdi. The goal of

composing and inscribing these lines from which the light full of delight overflows is that the possessor of this page of sincerity Dervish Shaban, as a requirement of his good qualities after kissing the tombs of personalities of higher stations and the graves of the saints whose graves have no signs of esteem which are located in the lands of peace by walking on his head -rather than on his foot- one by one and also in groups, he reached the âsitâna of the great threshold of the beatific tomb of the grandson of the Messenger of both the human beings and the jinns, Abi Abd Allah al-Husayn –may Allah be content with him- who is the Sultan of Karbala and the fifth one of the People of the Cloak<sup>15</sup> [âl-i ‘abâ] and who is the quintessence of the martyrs and the light of the eyes of Murtadha [‘Ali] –this tomb is a *qibla* of prayers for the people of purity and the *ka’ba* for the needs of the people of loyalty- applied the earth of his door of felicity –which is akin to the elixir of life- on his eyes as kohl; and as requirement of the manners of the people of poverty [faqr] and extinction [fanâ], and of the rites of the path of the friends of God, he [Dervish Shaban] boiled the caldrons [*qazghans*] in the *maidan* of the takka of Sultan Haji Bektash Walî –may Allah sanctify his obvious secret- who is the locus of the secrets of the Truth and the supreme secret in the blessed and purified âsitâna and who possesses the sainthood of the pole of the people of guidance, and his (Dervish Shaban) soul and body became blissful. Besides, a *sofra* and a *charâgh* and *sang* and a *tigh* was sent to Elmalu Baba, the son of Akbar Baba who is the shaykh (takyanişîn) of the Elmalu Baba Zawiya of the dwellers of Elmalu in Dimotoka Province as a tradition of the Path of Murtadha, and this edict of higher glory was submitted to the hands of Dervish Shaban so that he may give the mentioned trust to Elmalu Baba as soon as he arrives at the âsitâna of Elmalu Baba; the aforementioned Elmalu Baba is the shaykh of that zawiya; thus, Elmalu Baba is expected to serve excellently to the coming and going scholars, and to the people of merits, the pious and the devout ones, and to the travellers. He is responsible for the noble descendants of the Prophet, their great representatives, the officials among the people, the people of piety, the honorable ones and the friends of the descendants of the Prophet; and for the loyal ones to the lineage of the sainthood, the home of the lands of the path and the seekers of the path of the truth; May they consider the aforementioned Elmalu Baba as the regarder of this âsitâna of the dwelling place of angels, and never foregoe even a single moment the required respect and homage in all aspects and be content and participate in helping, serving and almsgiving for him. As his extensive kindness and the perfect blessing belong and return only to the direction of his inviters, they never become in vain “in the presence of God, His Messenger, and the great imams” in accordance with the meaning of the following true words, “Whosoever brings a good deed shall have ten times the like thereof.”<sup>16</sup>

May Allah never deprive the people of good deeds from their rewards  
To commit good deeds, in fact, means to execute them in this domain.

Written in the Month of Safar of 978 A.H./April, 1579 A.D.

Approved by

al-faqir Hasan bin 'Ali al-Husayni al-Hamawi

Jahan Dede, the administrator of the asitana-i Imam Husayn

(May Allah be content with him)

The servant of the faqirs in the neighborhood of Karbalā, al-faqir Pir Ahmad Dede

## 6. Conclusion

Historical places not only reflect the refineness and aesthetical values but also function as reminders for the subtlety of a civilisation. In this context, conveying these values from one generation to another is of great importance in that the history of a nation is closely linked with the religious life, architecture, music, book-arts, and so on. Among these places, the *tekkes* served for the spiritual and cultural development of the societies. Once the number of the *tekkes* are taken into consideration, one can comprehend the deep-rooted education and training in a community in question.

Elmali Baba Dergāh in Bvolyane Village of Momchilgrad is one of these spiritual centers. Despite the limited data concerning Elmali Baba's life, the existence of the Dargāh is strong proof for the spirituality in the region. Elmali Baba, who gave the Dargāh its name, was among the spiritual masters those strived for the well-being of the human beings in that region. As seen from the translated edict, he was appointed as the administrator for religious duties and social organisation there. We used the term "edict" in that it is defined as a "nishān" by the shaykhs who composed it. The edict was written in an early period and has some peculiarities. Unlike the later examples of the authorisation given by the shaykhs, it does not begin with *basmala*. It is quite significant that the name of the Path is described as the Path of Murtadha, a name attributed to 'Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet and the first Imām. Similar documents include the spiritual chain (silsila) of the order whereas this edict includes only the names of the Prophet, Fatima, the twelve Imams and Haji Bektash Wali.

As the circumstances of the period is taken into consideration, the importance of this edict becomes evident. For, it was written in Karbala, which is far from the mentioned *tekke*. In addition to the usage of the term *tekke*, it is also called an *asitana* which is used for the central *tekkes* of Sufi Orders. Seen from this perspective, it is quite natural that Elmali Baba was called as such due to its location in that period. There are two possible reasons for the submission of the edict by Dervish Shaban: either Elmali Baba could not leave his *tekke* due to his religious duties and responsibilities or it was physically difficult for him to journey such long distances. However, his

merits were described in a detailed manner. There are long explanations concerning his duties and services within the text such as serving for the people thereof. These services are intended for not only the initiates who visit the *Tekke* intentionally but also for those travellers who come there as a station on their way. Due to the geographical position, it can also be stated that the *tekke* serves as a *ribât* in that area. According to the edict, Elmali Baba should fulfil his services for the sake of God without any material expectation.

The edict makes it evident that the service and the duties of a dervish is to be fulfilled without any worldly expectation or benefit. By means of this ideal, the spread of sufi world view became possible in these lands and influenced the people there. The practices of the Bektâshî Order continued to be performed until the present day due to this devoutness. We hope that many historical accounts would help us to understand the course of religious and social life in these areas.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This expression is used for the sūfî orders whose theories and practices are difficult to observe.

<sup>2</sup> The forms the Bektâshî *tâj* vary in different periods and in accordance with the degree of the initiates and masters, and are named *Husaynî* or *Shamsî* according to these forms.

<sup>3</sup> Dervish: Pers. threshold. Being a dervish denotes the absolute poverty before God.

<sup>4</sup> After sacrificing, the baba cooks the meat of the sacrificed animals in a caldron called "kazghan" (Dedebaba, 2010: I/405-406)

<sup>5</sup> The term *ghazi* denotes fighting for the sake of God which indicates the the lesser struggle, and the term *dervish* expresses the spiritual aspect or the greater struggle. Both struggles were defined by the Prophet on the day of returning from the Expedition of Tabuk. They became an ideal for the *alp-erens* (ie. The fighter-the attained or the saint).

<sup>6</sup> An official who is charged with the governing of a provincial district.

<sup>7</sup> *Dargâh* is a sūfî gathering place.

<sup>8</sup> Five main *taj* styles are used in Bektâshî Order: *Alifî*, *Khorasanî*, *Husaynî*, *Qalandarî* and *Adhamî*. However, the *Husaynî Taj* is being used in recent times.

<sup>9</sup> A *taj* is cap worn by the shaykhs and have distinctive shapes and figure peculiar to the Order so as to designate the rank.

<sup>10</sup> *Dastar* is a kind of turban worn around the *taj*. The colour and the shape can indicate of the rank of a dervish.

<sup>11</sup> ie. The silent ones, the deceased people.

<sup>12</sup> *Chila* is a necessary phase of the spiritual journey in some sūfî orders. In *chilakhanas*, the dervishes or the initiates busy their selves for a certain period varying from one sūfî order to another one. It is here that the initiate spends his time only with invoking the Supreme Name and with contemplating.

<sup>13</sup> *Maye* is celebrated during the first weekend of September each year. Some rituals are organized including sacrifices.

<sup>14</sup> *Atabâ* means threshold and denotes here the four Shiite sacred sites: Najaf, Karbala, Kazimiyya and Samarra (Îlhan, 1991: 4/49-50).

<sup>15</sup> According to a well known Hadith, the Prophet gathered his daughter Fatima, his cousin and son-in-law 'Ali, his grandsons Hasan and Husayn under his cloak and said, "These are the People of my House. For this reason, Allah took away any uncleanness from them and purified them." The People of the Cloak are called also as *Ahl al-Kisā'* and *Panj-tan-i Āl-i Abā*. Cf. Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Muthnad*, 16374

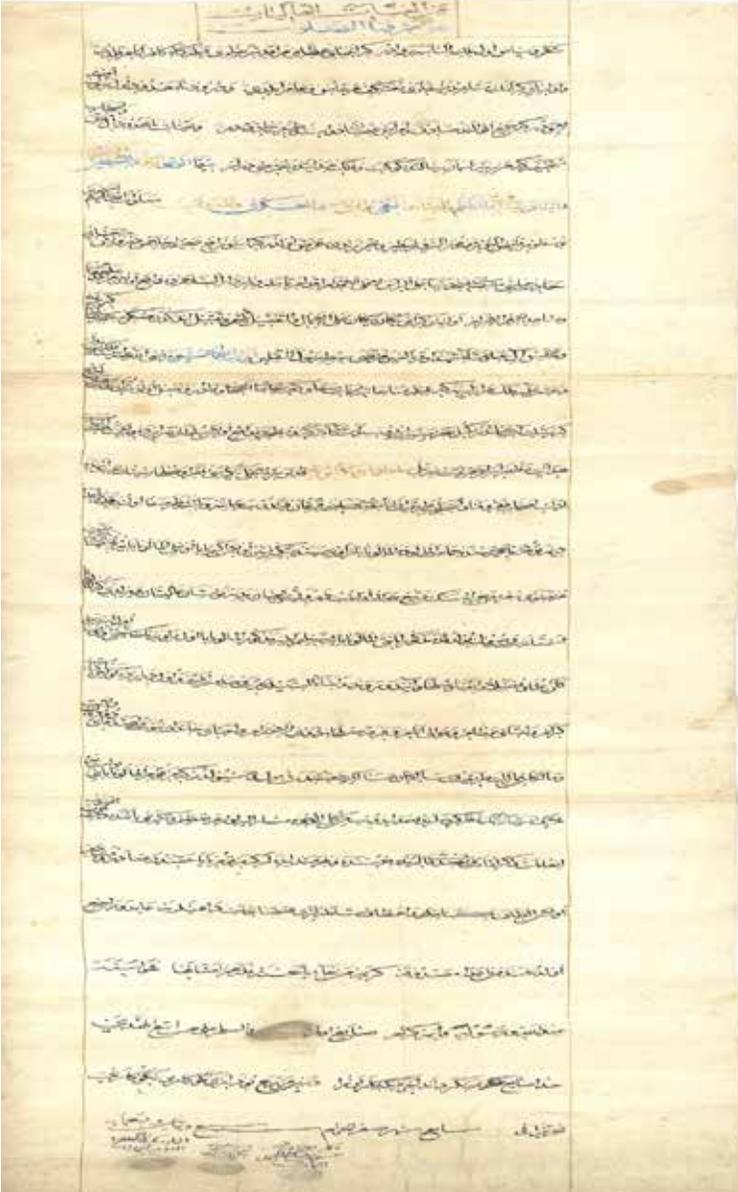
<sup>16</sup> Quran, 6/165.

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## Appendix A



Picture 1- The document sent to Elmali Baba from *Atabâ-i Âliyah*



Picture 2- Elmalı Baba Dargâh (photo by A. Bozov)



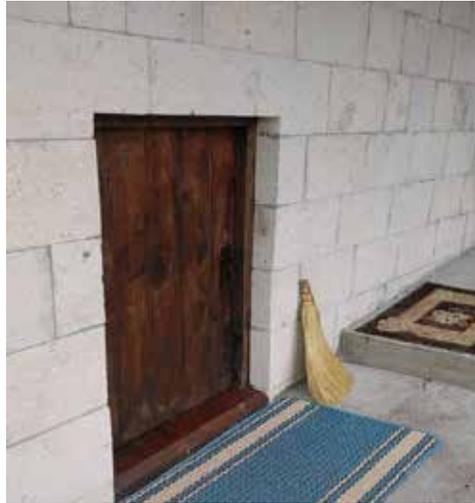
Picture 3- Elmalı Baba Dargâh Entrance



Picture 4- Elmalı Baba Dargâh (Aşevi)



Picture 5- Elmalı Baba Dargâh (Library)



Picture 6- Elmalı Baba Dargâh (the Threshold of Meydanevi)



Picture 7- Elmali Baba Dargah (graves)



Picture 8- Elmali Baba Mosque



Picture 9- Elmali Baba Dargah (Meydan)