PSYCHOANALYSIS OF HUMOUR

A Freudian Approach to Bektashi Anecdotes



Dr. Hasan SAVAŞ | Doç. Dr. Cihat Burak KORKMAZ
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INTRODUCTION

This study examines Bektashi anecdotes in the context of relief theory, which is one of the theories of humour. The Bektashi anecdotes are analysed within the framework of the views of Sigmund Freud, the founder of modern psychology, who is one of the pioneers of relief theory and perhaps one of the leading proponents of this theory. Sigmund Freud sees humour as a safe expression of unconscious desires and conflicts. In other words, the anecdotes were treated with a Freudian approach and an attempt was made to uncover the psychological origins of humour, as well as the impact of social norms on the individual and the expression of this impact as an element of laughter. In this context, it was examined how the Bektashi anecdotes function by expressing the mental aberration of individuals as well as criticising and reshaping social norms.

Since their beginnings (*around the 14th century*), Bektashi anecdotes have been a narrative genre in which social criticism is combined with humour and irony. In the light of Freud's theories on humour and the unconscious, it analyses what these anecdotes actually represent and what kind of relief they offer to the narrator and the listener. This book opens a door to understanding both the political and

psychological substructure of humour and the Bektashi tradition, showing how humour provides illumination in the dark recesses of the human psyche.

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SECTION 1*

1.1. Formation, Structure, Content, Theories and Historical Process of Humour

From the classical period to the present day, many philosophers have approached the nature of laughter and various ideas have been put forward. Anecdotes are interesting for theories of laughter because they usually lead to laughter. In other words, the fact that anecdotes have a feature that makes people laugh makes them theories of laughter. In this regard, certain theories of laughter such as "superiority", "inconsistency" and "relief" have been put forward to better understand how anecdotes make people laugh or what situations in anecdotes make people laugh (Şahin 2014, p. 242; Aykaç 2016, p. 237). One of the relevant ideas was created by the pioneers of relief theory, who sought the nature of laughter in the act of release from psychological pressure. Relief theory appears as one of the most difficult subjects to diagnose, as a result of its dependence on certain psychological conditions, within the framework of the ecology of Turkish laughter. Bektashi narratives, in which the Turkish-Islamic synthesis is intensely seen, probably take the lead among the Turkish anecdote types that can be included in the subject area of relief theory. In the Ottoman geographical region of the

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* This study is an expanded and revised version of the article on Bektashi anecdotes published in 2024 in volume 15, issue 8 of the journal *Religions*. The title of the article published in the relevant journal is "An Approach to Bektashi Anecdotes from the Perspective of Relief Theory: Mental Aberration or Substitution of Humour". To see the article: https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15080977

13th century, Bektashism, which was established with a mystical Sufi understanding based on Hacı Bektaş Veli, started to generate products with an intense subject of laughter over time. It is known that Bektashism, which is the continuation in Anatolia of the Turkish Sufi tradition initiated by Hoca Ahmet Yesevi in the 11th century in the Khorasan region, was also respected by the Ottoman Empire for a long time. Bektashism, which is a continuation of the cultural understanding of Islam, became the subject of anecdotes as a type as a result of certain historical events. In Bektashi narratives, which are reflected in anecdotes as a type, it is easy to determine the situation that causes laughter but difficult to make an analysis of why the matter in question is laughed at. From the narrator's point of view, there is a fear as to why he/she is telling the story, and, from the listener's point of view, there is a feeling of having sinned because he/she is laughing. Bektashi anecdotes, which have an element of laughter other than the classical laughter elements based on equivoke, consist of a suppressed fear in their content. The act of laughter, which occurs when the suppressed fear causes sudden relief, reveals the feeling of having sinned based on the aggressive attitude of the anecdote towards religious figures that has been aroused in the person. This situation brings along the necessity of explaining the laughter element in Bektashi anecdotes with the theory of relief. The interpretation of Bektashi anecdotes based on the views of Sigmund Freud, one of the pioneers of relief theory, on laughter and its relationship with the unconscious has made it possible to evaluate this in the context of "displacement" theory. The theory of displacement, a mechanism identified by Freud on

the interpretation of dreams and the content of anecdotes or jokes, occurs in cases where a statement and its response deviate from the direction indicated by the original statement. For the formation of the theory, which is characterised as a psychological deviation or a product of faulty reasoning, a subject contrary to social norms must be dealt with, laughter must not depend on equivoke and it must be found in the last response of a conversation. Based on these data, five Bektashi anecdotes have been identified using the strafied sampling method in the study and mental aberration or displacement theory has been applied to the identified anecdotes.

Humour appears in the form of a critical attitude that humanity adopts in the face of phenomena that it is unable to reach through sanctification and in order to move away from the responsibilities that existence imposes on human beings. Human beings look for activities where they can escape the worries and pressures of daily life and say something comforting to themselves. They resort to humour to amuse themselves, even in situations that are repugnant to them (Bunsuz 2024: pp. 749-757). There have been situations in which every society needs humour in the face of various phenomena and is able to criticise these phenomena with humorous characters. This is because there can be no critical thinking without humour, and no humour without critical thinking (Özdemir 2010, p. 27). From a social perspective, the dose of humour and criticism increases in cases where oppression and disorder arise. This situation brings along the necessity of evaluating humorous characters according to their period. However, it should be stated that humour, as one of the inseparable dynamics of

society, exists in every period and under every condition. In this context, humour not only reveals the characteristic features of the language but also includes the usage features of language such as concrete–abstract, direct–indirect, metaphor–real and explicit–implicit (Korkmaz 2021, p. 691).

Humour has become a phenomenon that is at the centre of social life as a way to socialise, resolve conflicts, spend time in creative and fun ways. This phenomenon can lead to very disturbing results when it becomes humiliating and degrading through small changes in expression and behaviour. There is no clear and sufficient definition of the phenomenon of mockery, which includes various terms such as humour, wit, irony, sarcasm (Keltner et al. 2001: p. 229). The phenomenon of humour, which we often encounter in social life, serves to criticise shortcomings in social life, but also to reveal talents and entertain. The phenomenon of humour, which fulfils functions such as sociability, fun and conflict resolution, has a complex structure that varies from person to person depending on the situation and perception (Topcu 2019: pp. 63-74).

Since ancient times, philosophers have tried to define the phenomenon of humour arising from the needs of society and then put forward many views on why and how it emerged. In addition to Immanuel Kant (1987, p. 203), who defines the act of laughter as a tense expectation that turns into nothing, Arthur Schopenhauer (1909, p. 76) believes that the situation that gives rise to laughter is the sudden perception of the incompatibility between two concepts and objects. In addition to these, Thomas Hobbes defines laughter as a passion emphasised on unusual

actions and defects (Hobbes 1914, p. 27), John Morreall defines it as a celebration of oneself and seeing oneself as better than one's previous state (Morreall 1997, pp. 10–11), Eric Smadja defines it as a process of defence against emotions in a situation where a person is torn between rejection or acceptance (Smadja 2013, p. 130), James Sully defines it as the unsaleable property of an individual mind (Sully 1902, p. 298) and Charles Baudelaire defines it as a sign of belief in one's own superiority or the superiority of man over nature (Baudelaire 1997, pp. 12–15). Aristotle, one of the philosophers of the ancient times, states that laughter arises from the expression of a new idea contrary to what is expected (Aristoteles 1995, p. 189), while Cicero argues that there is no source of laughter and that humour is found in the flaws that arise in the behaviour of self-righteous individuals (Cicero 1948, pp. 375–85).

Every individual has a sense of self. Although the self can be kept under control by cultural values and religious beliefs, it is indispensable for every person living in a social structure. For human beings who are social beings, loss of reputation brings loss of self-confidence. In this sense, it can be stated that there is no time and place for social punishments. Laughter, which possesses the sanction of social norms, is a mechanism of social control for the society in which it is applied. Laughter is a destructive action that reduces the reputation of the person being laughed at. Laughter, which causes embarrassment by leaving a distressing effect on the person being laughed at, transforms into a mechanism of social control through the penalty of humiliation. The social structure exposes individuals who have partially lost their human qualities by

making them the object of laughter and punishes them with the heaviest penalty through the mechanism of social sanction. The person who performs the act of laughter does not want to be the subject of laughter under any circumstances. It makes people think and become aware of their flaws in order not to adopt behaviours that are not welcomed by society. When people who do not respect human values are warned through laughter, they can see their flaws and correct their mistakes (Öğüt Eker 2017, pp. 49–53).

The phenomenon of laughter, which was interpreted in ancient times as a gift from the gods (Sanders 2001, pp. 22–23), is characterised by specific mental or physical states (Monro 1963, p. 13). It is possible to categorise the theories on laughter in the West from the ancient times to the present day into three groups: superiority, inconsistency and relief (Türkmen 2000, p. 1). In this study, the theory of mental aberration or "displacement", which is a Freudian interpretation of the method of relief, will be applied on Bektashi anecdotes. This method has been one of the least used because of the claims made by Freud. The reason for this should be sought in Freud's claims. Freud gained a bad reputation as a result of his claims on sexuality in general, and religion and child sexuality in particular, and, in this way, there was a resistance formed against him and his claims. The fact that sexuality is taboo for some societies, the dogmatic nature of religion, as well as the Oedipus complex that he put forward in the context of child sexuality constitute the general framework of this opposition. From this point of view, it would be correct to

give the technical details of relief theory in general and mental aberration or displacement theory in particular.

1.2. Anecdotes and Humour

The faults in a community, people who misbehave and all sorts of conspicuous features of society are criticised in a witty way by various types in the context of a case. These short stories, which include different types, are humorous and thought-provoking and contain humour and satire, are called anecdotes (Güzel and Torun 2023, p. 210; Sakaoğlu and Alptekin 2009). Anecdotes, which exist in various cultures, are both a universal form of laughter and a narrative genre (Sevindik 2021, p. 237). In the anecdotes, the expression of some words, thoughts and, above all, behaviours that are forbidden by society, as well as the expression of some wishes and desires in the event that they are not fulfilled, are evaluated in the context of the function of freeing oneself from social pressure (Ekici 2016, p. 89).

Anecdotes are shorter in form than narratives such as fairy tales, stories and epics. Anecdotes do not have a classic narrative style. Anecdotes do not begin and end with specific word patterns. The narrator cuts and shortens the anecdotes according to his own language and expression skills in a form that suits his own taste and places them at a suitable point in his speech. The telling of an anecdote has no time and place, which are determined by the conditions of the social environment. Whether the heroes are humans or animals, the characters drawn by the anecdotes and the themes they narrate are closely linked to the social structure (Başgöz 1986, p. 138).

Every society has its own political, economic, social and cultural views. These can be criticised by those who do not share the same views. Criticism can sometimes be understood as subtle satire in the form of anecdotes. Through anecdotes, societies make fun of other societies that contradict their political, economic, social and cultural views that define their national characteristics. Anecdotes are the main subject of humour and reflect the structures that define the cultural heritage of nations and include all kinds of language arts that can be imagined. All these structures are conveyed to the listener through language, which is a means of communication. In this case, anecdotes are closely related to various language events (Özünlü 1999, p. 94).

Anecdotes evoke a sense of reality because they are usually based on events from everyday life. In anecdotes we find a subtle humour, a sharp mockery or a virtuous interpretation in an aesthetic form that arises from the common creative power of people. However, these three basic elements do not always have to be present in one and the same anecdote. In anecdotes, we see that the judgement is made in short form, without giving details. The main event and the judgement are the prominent aspects of the anecdotal style. The idea to be expressed, the thesis to be defended, can sometimes even be presented in a single word. The two important elements that make up the anecdote can also be referred to as thesis and antithesis (Aça et al. 2016, p. 200). Anecdotes not only provide people with pleasant entertainment, but also lead them to draw lessons from their own lives, i.e. they have the character of a parable (Özer 2023, p. V).

In times when communication was not as advanced as it is today, there were genres that satisfied the public's need for social criticism and satire. Humorous epics and satires by folk poets, satirical folk songs about certain events or people are some of them. It is even possible to find the purpose of satire and criticism in many of the fairy tales, but these do not have the brevity and sharpness of anecdotes. Satire and criticism come to the fore as defining elements of this genre in anecdotes, in which the people express their opinions about the people and events of the time in the person of a named or nameless hero or in their language. For this reason, anecdotes in popular traditions are mostly the polish of conversations in men's circles, not women's, because social satire and criticism are more the work of men than women (Boratav 1982: p. 292).

People are often aware of their shortcomings and try to compensate for them in various ways. One of the ways to compensate for shortcomings is humour. With overt, covert, passive or active aggression based on humour, people try to hide or eliminate their shortcomings by gaining the upper hand in this way. This situation also gives the person relief. To prove the assumption that humour is a structure built on shortcomings, it is necessary to look at literary products that have the quality of laughter. Anecdotes are one of the products that should be evaluated in terms of humour because they show how shortcomings are created, how attempts are made to compensate for them and how they contain the element of laughter in their content (Deveci 2016, pp. 3-4).

Among the literary genres, the anecdote is a genre that is directly linked to the act of laughter. In this respect, the

anecdote occupies a different position from many anonymous and literary texts that deal with human emotions such as fear, excitement and sadness, because it is based on the purpose of laughter. Since the main purpose of the anecdote, which is to make people laugh, creates an image of non-seriousness of action, its scientific and literary evaluation has lagged behind other genres. The fact that laughter is nothing to think about has also been reflected in stereotypical expressions, and the joke, as it is said in many situations, has remained in the trap of "laugh it off " (Hança 2018, p. 96).

Anecdotes are very rich in humour. Folk narratives in the form of short prose, usually based on true events and told to make people laugh and entertain them, sometimes to make them think and teach them a lesson. The content of the message to be conveyed to the environment in which the anecdote is told determines the humorous or satirical aspect of the anecdote (Gönen 2024, p. 217). Humorous elements are created in anecdotes by going beyond the usual use of language with various puns and subverting the grammatical rules of the existing language (Bekki 2018, p. 1048).

Humour as an effective element of entertainment is a refuge in difficult times such as epidemics, occupations, political oppression, economic difficulties and mechanised life (Sevindik 2023, p. 53). The sharp language of humour has troubled many people in all periods of history. Some feelings and thoughts that cannot be expressed directly and some social criticisms are expressed through types that represent society. In other words: What cannot be said directly is expressed through these types. This group of

individuals who are the voice of society are called anecdotal types (Özkan 2020, p. 1).

There are many situations that make people laugh. Many life events and momentary occurrences trigger laughter, and some laughter situations are tied to traditional rules, time and place. For example, anecdotes can make people laugh if they are told in an appropriate setting and at an appropriate time (Şahin 2014, p. 238). One of the types of anecdotes that contain this element of laughter is the ones with ethnic humour. Ethnic humour appears above all in the genre of wit as a common area. While the Other is negated and devalued in anecdotes, the ethnicity to which the narrator of the anecdote belongs is affirmed in the unconscious of the listener group. In this respect, ethnic humour is an expression of the perceived superiority of the ethnic culture. The fact that ethnic humour occupies a large space in anecdotes can be explained by the socio-political breadth of the Ottomans. The fact that the Ottomans had a multicultural structure paved the way for the emergence of different types of narratives. One of the reflections of this multicultural structure is Bektashi and the anecdotes created by the Bektashi type. Bektashi anecdotes are based on wit and, above all, esprit (Sevindik 2023, pp. 224-85).

The main theme of the Bektashi anecdotes is the phenomenon of faith and a certain religious perception is presented in the anecdotes. The basis for the perception of religion is the relationship between Allah and the servant. In the social context, one of the strongest criticisms of the Bektashi anecdotes is the perception of Allah (Sevindik 2021, p. 242). The individual freedom in the essence of Bektashism, the public-oriented face and the propaganda

ability of the dervishes gave Bektashism a great ability to spread within the Ottoman Empire. The type that appears in the Bektashi anecdotes is a person who is far from the madrasah, who jokes, smiles, is intelligent, drinks, is foul-mouthed and stands for tolerance against bigotry and rigidity. The Bektashi type is influenced by the Melamet understanding that wants to keep away from religious ostentation. According to this understanding, the essential is the essence. Bektashi anecdotes are like little stories or even theatre scenes that contain a funny ending, are realistic and lively (Kontantamer 2002, p. 1145).

In general framework relief is a state that human consciousness desires. In social life, the impositions and pressures imposed on the individual by culture, tradition, custom and all social norms cause various psychological tensions in the individual. These tensions lead the individual to suppress their desires. The individual wants to somehow free himself from this pressure. By freeing himself from all this pressure, he relaxes and this relief leads to laughter (Sevindik 2023, p. 116). For example, social prohibitions of phenomena such as violence and sexuality lead to laughter when they are suppressed. When a person falls down, they can reveal the repressed emotion in the form of laughter. Similarly, when a sexual anecdote is told, the repressed emotion is revealed through laughter. In short, laughter releases the previously accumulated nervous energy in the form of relief (Kumartaşlıoğlu 2017, p. 152). The anecdotes of Bektashism identified by the sampling method will be analysed with various methods of relief theory. However, before proceeding to the identification and

analysis of Bektashi anecdotes, an overview of the Freudian explanation of the theory of relief is necessary.

1.3. A Freudian Explanation of the Theory of Relief: Mental Aberration or Displacement Theory

The first traces of relief theory can be seen in the works of Herbert Spencer in the 19th century. According to the theory, laughter is explained as the release of suppressed nervous energy. However, this theory is best known with the version presented by Freud. According to this version, the energy released during laughter gives pleasure because it saves the energy normally used to suppress mental activity (Critchley 2020, p. 19). The contrasts that are acquired with existence, transformed into action with psychic violence and formed when the urge to attack coincides with reality, cause the release of the repressed libido in the individual. The release from the stress of the excess energy that oppresses the living being enables the psychosomatic balance to be established, and this leads to relief. Laughter, which manifests as an image of relief with the discharge of energy in the organism, satisfies the needs of the living being in terms of ensuring a psychosomatic equilibrium (Öğüt Eker 2009, p. 142).

Leonard Feinberg, a proponent of the superiority theory, divides the theory of relief into two parts: physical and psychological. He puts Herbert Spencer on the side of the discharge of physical energy and Sigmund Freud on the side of the discharge of psychological energy. He states that there is an aggression in the content of humour and that this kind of humour is described by the followers of relief theory as an effort to avoid psychological pressure (Feinberg 2014, pp. 280–88). Sigmund Freud, who is accepted as the

pioneer of relief theory, suggests that laughter is for a purpose related to aggression and the satisfaction of instinct (Freud 2016, pp. 121–36). However, he also states that there are humour elements that cannot be explained by any sound event other than those established with puns, metaphors and various other sound events. He explains the elements of humour, whose basis lies in the segmentation of successive ideas and in which the psychic emphasis is transferred from the initial subject to another, with the theory of "displacement". In other words, the fact that the humorous element in a narrative is not based on puns, that humour does not disappear even if the synonyms of all the words in the narrative are used and that humour is preserved as long as the meaning of the response is preserved explains the scope of the related theory. He gives the "salmon with mayonnaise" narrative, cited below, as the clearest example of this theory.

A poor man borrows 25 florins from a wealthy acquaintance. The same day, the lender sees the poor man eating salmon with mayonnaise in a restaurant. The lender shouts at him and asks how he could buy himself salmon with mayonnaise with the money he borrowed. The poor man, who had used the money he had been lent to eat salmon with mayonnaise, states that he did not understand what the lender was saying and then says: "I cannot eat salmon with mayonnaise when I don't have money, and I shouldn't eat it when I do. So, when am I going to eat salmon with mayonnaise?"

The man defends himself by saying that he spent the loaned money in good taste and asks when he can eat salmon. However, this is not the right answer. The lender

does not criticise the poor man for eating salmon on the day he borrowed the money. He tries to remind him that there is no room for such pleasures in the poor man's circumstances. The poor man ignores this meaning of the criticism and responds with another question as if he misunderstood the initial criticism. This humorous technique must lie in the perversion of the meaning of the criticism. Here, only the appropriate appearance of a completely incorrect reasoning appears as an element of humour (Freud 2016, pp. 78–86, 92).

Freud, who first discovered mental aberration or displacement theory in the interpretation of dreams and claimed that the basic mechanism of dreams is the related theory, argues that there are examples of displacement in normal life. When a girl transfers her love to animals, or a soldier defends the flag to the last drop of his blood, or when a few seconds of extra pressure during a handshake means happiness for a lover, or when a lost handkerchief in Othello precipitates an outburst of anger—all these are examples of a mental aberration or displacement that we are never able to oppose (Freud 1996, p. 226). The theory of displacement, which is characterised as a psychological deviation, is the transfer of a thought or an emotion to another object by changing its shape as a result of both social norms and individual repression. Humorous elements about displacement are encountered as a result of certain compulsions in the content of the anecdotes. Of course, this situation is realised from the point of view of the narrator. From another point of view, in narratives about laughter, the listener may be nervous because he/she is afraid of going against social norms. The listener, who feels

tension due to the event in the content of the anecdote, feels relieved as a result of the words or actions of the protagonist at the end of the narrative, and this situation creates laughter (Abalı 2016, p. 126).

Humour feeds critical thinking and critical thinking feeds humour. The fact that the main purpose of humour is critical thinking (Özdemir 2010, pp. 29–30) is related to the internal dynamics of society. Humour is a social phenomenon and every nation has its own sense of humour. The reason for this differentiation is that each society possesses different cultural components (Bayraktar 2010, p. 18). In addition, each community within societies has its own sense of humour. As is known, there are norms that must be followed within the community. These norms show the need to suppress sexual impulses, to create pressure on the individual against behaviours that are not traditionally considered appropriate and to conform to the general religious tendencies of the community. In other words, a person who has a weak belief in God experiences the spiritual pressure of not being able to express this in front of the community. In addition, if he/she adheres to another religion or sect rather than the predominant religion of the society to which he/she belongs, he/she does not reveal this in front of the society because he/she is afraid of the reactions that he/she will receive. These coercive pressures constitute the basis of relief theory (Kanat 2017, p. 72). The situation of Bektashis with a cultural religious understanding within the Ottoman society, belonging to the orthodox Islamic tradition, and the taking shape of this situation around the anecdotes

identified with the Bektashi type emerge as a situation that should be evaluated within the scope of relief theory.

SECTION 2

2.1. Bektashi Anecdotes and Mental Aberration or Displacement Theory

Bektashism is a mystical formation that contains many elements of belief attributed to Hacı Bektaş Veli. While not actually possible from a historical point of view, according to the belief in the Sufi tradition, it was Ahmet Yesevi who bestowed the caliphate on Hacı Bektaş Veli. In actual fact, there is not sufficient evidence to state that there was a master–disciple relationship between Ahmet Yesevi and Hacı Bekta¸s. It follows then that Hacı Bekta¸s cannot be seen as a dervish consciously devoted to continuing Yesevi's path. Yassawism is, after all, a sect that was formed after the death of Ahmet Yesevi. Moreover, the institutionalisation of Yassawism coincides with the XVI–XVIIIth centuries (Karamustafa 2014, pp. 80–83). According to historical sources on Bektashism, the place of Wafai, an Iraqi origin formation, in Kızılbaş communities is important. The majority of the pir associations in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia are of Wafai origin. The close relationship of Wafaiis with the Abdals of Rum, a group of wandering Sufis, is known. If the relations with the Safavids and Rum Abdals are also taken into account, the situation that emerges reveals that the Wafais and Rum Abdals were

integrated with the Bektashis over time (Karakaya-Stump 2015, pp. 13–14).

If it becomes necessary to return to the narrative in the Sufi tradition, Yesevi gave his own wooden sword to Hacı Bektaş Veli, whom he appointed as his caliph (Ocak 2002, p. 43; Ocak 2003, p. 180; Ocak 2014, p. 196; Ocak 2016, p. 174), and sent Hacı Bektaş Veli to Anatolia to provide spiritual guidance. The Turkish mystic fought against enemies with a wooden sword and defeated armies of hundreds of thousands of men with just a handful of followers (Köprülü 1976, pp. 253–54). It can be seen that, in some narratives, a "pitch fork" takes the place of the wooden sword; for examples of this, see Yeşildal (2019, pp. 11–27). The wooden sword referred to in the Bektashi works attributed to Hacı Bekta¸s Veli is the sword that Ahmet Yesevi equipped his agents with. Wise men armed with wooden swords were sent from Khorasan to Anatolia. The purpose of being equipped with a wooden sword is to emphasise that the Anatolian lands would be guided in a spiritual sense. The first Bektashi custodians who came to Anatolia from Khorasan settled on a mountainside for the sake of public order and the safety of the journey and were exempted from taxes in return for their services. On this occasion, the Bektashi custodians were given ownership of a ruin on a mountainside. The Bektashi dervishes, who settled on mountain tops and barren lands to cultivate them, established villages over time and gradually developed the lands that they settled in. Coming to a newly conquered region and settling on a mountainside, they engaged in the reconstruction and security of the area and

spread their beliefs and culture in the centres that they established (Barkan 1993, pp. 32–33).

From its beginnings to the present day, the Turkish narrative tradition can be recognised in the works created in the context of Islamic mysticism. The Turks, who joined the circle of Islamic civilization and came under the influence of the new religion, brought this tradition to Anatolia (Çeribaş 2011: pp. 27-29). Cultural Islam emerged in Anatolia around the 12th century. It draws its source from Central Asian and Middle Eastern cultures and Sufism. This type of Islam, which continues to exist in Anatolia as a form of religious life, can also be called popular Islam. It is known that this understanding is widespread in rural areas and generally persists among Alevi–Bektashi communities. The popular understanding of Islam has been one of the factors that paved the way for the formation of a strong cult of saints in Anatolia. This way of life, which is accepted as cult-centred Islam, is often outside the basic principles of Islam without any awareness of that fact. In addition, this lifestyle has a conservative character woven with mythological and traditional elements (Ocak 2016, pp. 15–72). In short, Bektashism is a product of syncretism. There are many elements of beliefs that Turks have encountered, including the old Turkish belief system. The beliefs and rituals of the early Bektashis are different from those that emerged in later periods. Early Bektashism was established from the daily beliefs and old customs of nomadic Turks (Melikoff 2015, pp. 23–38). Bektashism, which is a synthesis of ancient Turkish belief systems and Islam, has become sacred, with various functions in verbal culture. The motifs of miracles attributed to the custodians contain the

extraordinary. Generally, within the body of the epic legends, which are woven with the motifs of miracles, the extraordinary behaviour of the custodian both during his/her lifetime and after his/her death is revealed. This situation has both increased the respectability of the custodians in society and resulted in them being perceived as sacred (Savaş 2023, p. 263).

The cultural system is built on values consisting of a series of institutional structures. Certain events that a society experiences in the course of its history trigger a change in cultural dynamics (Çeribaş and Köse 2018: 14). Narratives that are part of social transformation are popular products in which the social and cultural events of the society in which they originated are reflected in various forms. For this reason, narratives establish strong links with the society of which they are a part. Through these connections, which also ensure communication between narrative and society, every change in the structure of society also manifests itself in the narratives. Social criticism, which can be seen as a reflex that societies undergoing various changes develop towards the conditions they are confronted with, is generally found in anecdotes, one of the narrative genres (Demirtaş 2019, pp. 257-258).

The process of Islamization that the Turks have experienced is one of these transformations. Thus, the reflection of Bektashism and the Bektashi type in anecdotes as a result of its formation at the historical level dates back to the acceptance of Islam by the Turks. The tradition of Turkish humour has survived to the present day, as it has been produced in various forms according to the needs of the time. The anecdotes, which are part of this tradition and

were created very early compared to other examples in the world (Çelik 2021: p. 816), have combined with the bektashi type and created the best examples of the genre. In the process of shaping the Anatolian Seljuk State with the conversion of Turks to Islam, the founding population appears as Turkmens. The Ottomans, the continuation of the Seljuks, also went through a similar process, and the main mass of the population was again composed of Turkmens. The Ottomans moved away from the founding population as they adopted a multinational structure in the process leading to the empire. However, the Bektashi Turkmens changed sides as a result of the activities of the Safavids in Anatolia. With the abolition of the Janissary Corps during the reign of Mahmut II, the roots of the cultural understanding belonging to the Bektashi tradition were completely severed from the palace and a social transformation began. City dwellers, who were influenced by the state ideology, introduced the concept of the other, which was identified with Bektashism, as negative and against religious values in anecdotes. The shaping of the written culture on the axis of official ideology was especially centred around the urban masses. In this way, the Bektashi type of anecdote in today's written culture was formed by the new urban masses in the period when the Ottomans became modernised (Öncül 2018, pp. 1220–21). The fact that Bektashism and thus the Bektashi fathers played a direct role in the formation and development of the Janissary Corps and that the Bektashi lodges were also closed when the Janissary Corps was closed is sufficient to prove the connection between the Janissary Corps and the Bektashis (Çapraz 2019, pp. 1045-1046).

One of the reasons for the abolition of the Janissary Corps was that they had become degenerate in the military sense. Economic and legal transformations were the main reasons for the degeneracy that had begun especially after the 16th century. While the Janissaries were previously detached from the social environment, were not allowed to marry and had no concern for their relatives, this situation changed with time. As servants of the dynasty, they were only concerned with their military and administrative duties; however, they became involved in commercial production, and this led to a reduction in their military capabilities to a great extent. In other words, instead of fighting for the Ottoman Empire, they preferred to take care of their own businesses (Kafadar 1991, pp. 273–76). Hacı Bektaş Velî was adopted by the Janissaries and thus became permanently accepted in the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, when the Ottoman Empire established its sovereignty in Anatolia and prioritised sharia, the majority of the dervishes, who were considered non-sharia by the ulema, came under the umbrella of Bektashism. Between the 13th and 14th centuries, some Sufi groups such as the Kalenderis, Haydaris and Camis weakened considerably in Anatolia and it was not difficult for them to become assimilated under the umbrella of Bektashism (Karamustafa 2015, pp. 49–50). With the start of the modernisation movements by the time of Mahmut II, the Bektashis were marginalised by the new urban masses that emerged with these and became the subject of anecdotes as a comic type. The Bektashi type, which emerged as the representative of a religious movement in the formation of the Turkish world of thought, was given the position of spokesperson in

spiritual affairs. There are criticisms directed against the obligations of Islam, such as prayer and fasting, in the anecdotes based on this type. The definition of the Bektashi type in the anecdotes as a blasphemer is related to the fact that their behaviour is critical. The Bektashi type is against perceiving the commands of God or the words of religious leaders with their original meaning. They see these concepts as symbols used to facilitate the comprehension of the truth in their essence. The Bektashi criticises those who adapt God's rules to suit themselves. The fact that people who do not know how to respect freedom of thought are accused of irreligion and get into trouble is a situation that is constantly encountered in anecdotes (Boratav 1982, pp. 318–22).

When we look at the formation process of the Bektashi type, we see that two different factors, such as marginalisation and assuming the position of spokesperson of a certain community, emerge. Since these two factors are common in almost all societies, it is likely that similar types to the Bektashis are seen in the narratives of various nations. Anecdote types of Persian origin stand out with their closeness to Bektashi culture in the tradition of Turkish narratives. The anecdotes of Daho, a Persian origin type, show similarities with the Bektashi type (Türkmen 1996, pp. 6–7). In addition, the anecdote type known as Behlül Dânâ, which belongs to Iranian Turks, has similarities with the Bektashi type present in Anatolia (Solmaz and Sarpkaya 2021, pp. 95–100). It is also known that Kemine, a Turkmen anecdote type, has similar narrative features with the Anatolian field anecdote type of Bektashi (Duymaz 1998, p. 225). In general terms, it can be said that

the Bektashi type is the spokesperson of a group that adopts a different world view from Sunni Muslims (Türkmen 2000, p. 8). It can also be said that the Bektashi type is weak in terms of belief in God and that this type is formed as a personality that is distant from spiritual values such as prayer and fasting, heaven and hell, ablution, prayer and sacrifice (Işık and Erdem 2015, pp. 278–79).

It can be seen that the humour of the Bektashi type in their relationships with statesmen and administrators, religious figures and members of the popular stratum in the Ottoman period sometimes increased loyalty and interaction and, at other times, led to the ridicule of others through negative humour. With the style of humour that they used, the Bektashi type dealt with the conflicts that they experienced with the figures that were the source of fear and authority in society, especially the sultans, on a social level (Yazıcı 2022, p. 153). In societies where the pressure of power is intense and religious communities are the ones that have a say, rather than individuals, the Bektashi type is the spokesperson of an implicit protest. The thoughts that the people are unable to express against power due to religious or social pressures are expressed through this type (Sağlam 2013, p. 106).

It is possible to say that Bektashi anecdotes cause the listener to laugh as a result of relief. In many anecdotes, the Bektashi is confronted with people who want to clash with them or judge them. Most of the time, the Bektashi's position appears weaker than their interlocutors. This inevitably creates pressure on the listener, and the listener's religious and cultural perception or experiences increase this pressure even more. In other words, the introductory

parts of Bektashi anecdotes are a source of tension for listeners, but this tension is soon replaced by relief, which results in laughter (Şahin 2010, pp. 264–65).

2.2 An Examination into Bektashi Anecdotes within the Context of Mental Aberration or Displacement Theory

The theory of mental aberration or displacement appears as a mechanism that Freud identified in the interpretation of dreams. Later, he also identified this mechanism in the content of anecdotes. The general characteristics of anecdotes possessing the displacement mechanism can be stated as the presence of contradiction to social norms, the absence of any humorous element based on any word play or the fact that the humour element does not disappear when the words in the sentence that causes laughter are replaced with synonyms, and the element of laughter is found in the answer part of the mutual speech sentence. It is possible to state the situation subject to mental aberration or displacement theory as an illusion, a result of wrong reasoning or a psychological deviation.

A qualitative research method was used to determine the anecdotes to be discussed in this section. This approach is one of the forms of knowledge production developed in qualitative research to understand one's own potential, to unravel its secrets and to explore the depths of social structures and systems built with endeavour. In studies designed using the qualitative method, there is an effort to reach a deep perception concerning the event or phenomenon being analysed (Morgan 1996). The five Bektashi that have been analysed were determined by using purposive strafied sampling (İsaoğlu 2020, pp. 1438-1440). In sample selection, suitability to the research subject is

also important rather than the degree to which it represents the universe (Sandelowski 1986). The anecdotes were analysed through document/text analysis. Document analysis, which includes a literature review on the subject being researched, enables the systematisation of observation and interview records and other documents conducted by the researcher. While this method of analysis saves time and other resources for the researcher, it also facilitates the creation of the order of importance of the facts and events that were examined, the classification of data sources and the creation of new data sets (Baxter and Jack 2008; Kuzel 1999; Guba and Lincoln 1994). From this point of view, the analysis of the texts of the anecdotes, which were identified using the qualitative method and are subject to the theory of displacement in terms of humour, is presented below.

2.2.1. He was Doing the Opposite of What I Asked Him

A man called a Bektashi figurehead asking him to pray for his sick and bedridden child. The Bektashi came, prayed, touched the child with his hands, and said,

"I pray this child dies."

The father became upset at this but sent the Bektashi off without saying anything. After a few days the child recovered and got up. The father came across the Bektashi again and said to him, in distress,

"I took you home and asked you to pray for our sick child a few days ago. But instead you placed a curse on him. But, thank God, the child got better. Your evil didn't pay off."

The Bektashi replied, seemingly without a care, "My son, I was not on good terms with God at the time. He was

doing the opposite of what I asked him. I asked him to take the child's life so that the child would actually recover". (Yıldırım 2016, p. 128)

There is a general violation of social norms in the first anecdote examined. The Bektashi, who acts outside the religious perception of the community with a Sunni tradition and exhibits a closeness with God, gives rise to a perception of having sinned in the person listening to the anecdote. The Bektashi, who was called to heal a sick child by praying for him, places a curse on him instead. It can be seen that the Bektashi has cursed when he should have normally prayed, but the child recovers anyway. Here, the element of laughter is in the last response. The response involves a spiritual deviation. The Bektashi's statement that he has placed a curse on the child by stating that God has been carrying out the opposite of what he says because he was on bad terms with God appears as a situation contrary to social norms and orthodox religious perception. This act, which is the product of an illusion or incorrect reasoning, is criticised by the child's father. The father states that the Bektashi did not get away with his evil deed and that his child had recovered. Up to this point, it is clear that no humour has emerged and there has been no play on words. Humour is in the Bektashi's last response, and this is an example of displacement. An illusion emerges when the Bektashi curses the child instead of praying. This illusion is not explained until the Bektashi's response. The anecdote, which ends with the Bektashi's unexpected response, results in the act of laughter.

2.2.2. We're not on Good terms at the Moment

A Bektashi was passing through a small town. He saw that all the residents of the town, including the children, had gathered together and were lamenting. The Bektashi asked,

"What's going on?"

They said, "We're going to pray for rain."

He responded, "There's no need to lament so much just for some rain. I can get it to rain all you want."

They told him to go on and do it.

The Bektashi asked for a bowl of water and when it arrived, he took off his shirt and placed it in the bowl, took it out and wrung it to dry, and then placed it on some bushes waiting for it to dry. A few minutes later it started to rain very heavily. The people came and kissed the Bektashi's hand, paying him their respects, and said,

"Are you a saint? What are you?"

The Bektashi pointed to the sky and responded, "We're not on good terms at the moment. He did it so that my shirt wouldn't dry. I'm no saint and I don't have anything to do with miracles". (Yıldırım 2016, pp. 131–32)

There is also a violation of social norms in the second anecdote. The Bektashi, who mocks the dominant perception of religion in society at every opportunity, criticises the custodians in a humorous manner in this anecdote. In addition to this, he also does not skimp on speaking as if mocking God. As can be seen from the content of the anecdote, there is a situation related to making it rain. The Bektashi tells the villagers that he can make it rain as much as they want. After filling a bowl with water, the Bektashi dips his shirt into the water and hangs it

on a bush to dry. As a result of this practice, which resembles an imitation of magic, it begins to rain heavily. The Bektashi tells the people who think that this might be the miracle of a custodian and expresses that he has a bad relationship with God. While criticising the custodians, he expresses sincerely in front of the villagers that he is on bad terms with God. Humour appears again in the last response in this anecdote. It is obvious that the element that causes laughter is not based on any word play. The laughter that appears in the last response of the conversation is the product of a mind that works contrary to what is expected or that has undergone a spiritual deviation. Normally, he is expected to state that God has given him a miracle and made it rain, but the mechanism of displacement is activated by an illusion. The event deviates to the thought that he has a bad relationship with God and that is why it rains, resulting in laughter.

2.2.3. I am the only Dervish

A hodja and a Bektashi dervish become travelling companions. The hodja had a horse and the dervish had a donkey. Since it was summer, when they reached a meadow in the evening, they decided to spend the night there. When it was time to go to sleep after eating together from the food in their saddlebags and talking a little, the hodja says:

"O Lord, I have entrusted my horse to you; take care of it."

The Bektashi responds, "Then I ask that my sheikh looks out for my donkey."

The hodja is looks in astonishment and says, "Entrust it to God; you are committing a sin." But the dervish does not care. They lay down and sleep. When

they wake up the next morning, the hodja's horse is not there, but the Bektashi's

donkey is grazing. Seeing this situation, the hodja is once again astonished, and

begins to grumble, saying,

"What is this? The horse I entrusted to God is gone, but the Bektashi's donkey is still there."

The dervish responds, "There is nothing to be amazed at. You are not the only servant of God. He has given the horse to another of his servants. However, I am the only dervish of our sheikh. Of course, he looked out for my property until morning". (Yıldırım 2016, pp. 144–45)

One of the most important necessities of social life, religion, faith and worship Sections which give spiritual strength to the human soul, religious customs and sanctions, and the treatment of clergymen who abuse their duties in connection with faith, are the subjects of the anecdotes under this heading. The anecdotes here are in the nature of a kind of lament with the sincerity of man's closeness to the Creator who recognises the injustices, inequities and wrong practises in the society (Eker 2003: 81).

A Bektashi appears with a subtle wit in the third anecdote. When a hodja and a Bektashi set off, they tie their mounts while they sleep. The hodja entrusts his mount to God and the Bektashi to his sheikh. Upon this behaviour, the religious individual states that Bektashi has sinned and he should entrust his mount to God too. Thereupon, the mount of the hodja who entrusted it to God is stolen, but the mount of the Bektashi who entrusted it to his sheikh remains in its place, grazing. The humour begins at this

point. The Bektashi's behaviour against social norms is seen in the text of the anecdote, where the element of laughter is not based on any pun. The Bektashi, who criticises the tradition of connection of the members of the sect, mocks in a subtle way to indicate that no one can come between him and God. When the hodja asks him why this has happened, he states that God has many servants and has given his mount to his other servants, but he is the only dervish of his sheikh, so he has looked out for his donkey until the morning. There is an incorrect reasoning here. This response, which goes to the extreme of contradicting social norms, causes laughter. In other words, the humour is in the final response. This situation appears as an example of displacement.

2.2.4. You're Indulging Him

The weather was extremely hot and Bektashi was feverish. He went to the bazaar and bought a watermelon. He found a cool area of shade and sat there. He got ready to eat the watermelon, but as soon as he cut it and took a bite, he became extremely angry and first cursed the watermelon seller and then said,

"O Allah, when you created this watermelon, did you withhold that little bit of sugar? You bestow a blessing on your servants, but you never give it in full".

The watermelon was extremely tasteless, but Bektashi, feeling sorry due to the money he had paid, could not bear to throw it away. He ate the inside and threw the rinds aside. The rinds of the watermelon caught the eye of a poor person passing by. The pa, immediately squatted there. He took the watermelon rinds and started gnawing and every time he gnawed, he said,

"Thank you, O Lord! You have given me a blessing today too. Oh, what a delicious watermelon".

Bektashi could not stand it. He immediately jumped out of where he was sitting and shouted,

"I ate the inside of the watermelon, but I did not thank Allah because it was tasteless. You ate the rind and thank Allah continuously. This is how you flatter him for no reason, you're indulging Him!" (Yıldırım 2016, pp. 146–47)

The fourth anecdote begins with Bektashi's reproaches to God when the watermelon he buys turns out to be tasteless and he curses the person who sold it to him. Bektashi eats the tasteless watermelon so as not to waste his money and throws the rind aside. A poor person passing by eats the rind and thanks God for this blessing. Bektashi then explains that he did not thank God because he ate the inside of the watermelon and found it tasteless, but the poor man who ate the rind thanked God and spoiled God. As you can see, the content of the Bektashi anecdote does not contain humorous elements such as paronymy, misunderstanding or imitation. One of the reasons why this anecdote falls within the realm of the theory of mental aberration or displacement is that the element of laughter is contained in the last sentence of speech at the end of the anecdote. Furthermore, it is against social and cultural norms to speak as if one is mocking God. This contradiction is considered in the context of a taboo. The existence of a taboo also gives the possibility to evaluate within the framework of this theory. In short, the fact that the laughter occurs in the last sentence of the speech, that there is no humorous element with a paronymy in the text and that the

laughter comes after a taboo, allows it to be included in the scope of the theory of mental aberration or displacement.

2.2.5. Brood Stock

After the Janissary Corps was abolished and the Bektashi lodges were shut down during the reign of Sultan Mahmut II, the Bektashi dervishes and fathers were quite frightened and each of them either fled to one side or hid. One day the Sultan was astonished to see a Bektashi walking around Bahçekapı without fear or hesitation. He came to him and asked,

"Father, every one of your people has fled to one side. What are you doing wandering around here all alone?"

Without thinking, the Bektashi responded,

"Sultan, they left me as brood stock." (Yazıcı 2013, p. 290)

The use of humour as a silent weapon against social oppression can be found in almost every society. The fifth anecdote is about an event that is essentially a historical fact. During the reign of Mahmut II, with the closure of the Janissary Corps, the social and political pressure on Bektashism and the Bektashis increased and the cultural traces of Bektashism were erased from the palace. As a result of this practise, the Bektashis began to deal with the political authority through anecdotes. The content of the anecdote is about a single Bektashi dervish who bravely walks through the palace garden after Sultan Mahmut has dissolved the Bektashi organisation. The Sultan asks him how he can still walk around so bravely despite everything that has happened, and the Bektashi replies that he was left behind as a brood stock. The anecdote ends with the element of laughter in the last answer. The interpretation of

the anecdote in question from the Freudian perspective, known as the theory of mental aberration or displacement theory, can be evaluated from several points of view. Firstly, the element of laughter does not appear in the text of the anecdote with a play on words. Secondly, the element of laughter appears after the prohibition and in the last speech. The forbidden element in this text is the closure of the Janissary Corps and the removal of Bektashism from the palace. They could not have a say in the administration or even walk around the palace. The forbidden element appears as a political decision rather than a sacred taboo. This, of course, does not pose a problem for the theory's applicability. Based on all these data, the related anecdote also falls within the scope of the theory of mental aberration or displacement.

2.3. Conclusions

Bektashism has emerged as a type that criticises religious and authority figures on the social plane. In this respect, the Bektashi type, which is the subject of anecdotes, was created as a result of the needs of society. The pressure on society as a result of respect and fear for religious and political authority has led to the need for humorous criticism. Fear has emerged as a factor that prevents the need for criticism in societies, and various types have been created for this action in the literary sense. The Bektashi is one of the types that society has created in order to free itself of oppression. In other words, society has expressed the criticism that it hesitated to express in the face of religion and political authority figures through the Bektashi type, and, in this way, the pressure brought by fear has been expressed and a spiritual relief has been

experienced. One of the reasons for why Bektashi anecdotes are the subject of the study is that they are suitable for examination with the theory of relief, which is one of the humour theories.

Sigmund Freud's humour analysis mechanism, which is known as psychological deviation or displacement, was used in the relevant study, which was created by taking an approach to Bektashi anecdotes in the context of relief theory. The Bektashi anecdotes entitled, "He was doing the opposite of what I asked him", "We're not on good terms at the moment", "I am the only dervish", "You're indulging Him" and "Brood Stock", which were determined using the sampling method, have been analysed using the theory of displacement. Among the criteria used in the determination of the relevant theory are the presence of contradiction to social norms, the absence of any word play that reveals the element of laughter, the presence of mutual conversation in the text and the presence of the humour element in the last response through spiritual deviation. When the Bektashi anecdotes analysed using the theory of displacement are examined from a historical and sociological point of view, it is seen that they have a temperament that coincides with the type that they fall into in general. The result derived from the analyses is related to the adventure of Bektashis in the historical process. Bektashism gained prestige and was able to reach large masses of people with its process of establishment. The understanding of Bektashism, which kept the communities together in a period when the Seljuks were in the process of disintegration due to Mongolian pressure and ensured the participation of the masses that it kept within its structure in the re-establishment of the

state, continued to maintain its importance after the establishment of the Ottoman Empire. One of the conditions for becoming a Janissary, a military division in the Ottomans, was to be a member of Bektashism. However, this situation underwent a compulsory change during the reign of Mahmut II, with the reform movements and Bektashi lodges and Janissary associations being abolished. As can be understood from this, Bektashi anecdotes probably started to emerge after these events during the reign of Mahmut II. This led to various social tremors on Bektashis. They rebelled against this by taking refuge in the harbour of humour and opposed the Ottoman system of religious and political administration. This opposition could not be openly expressed and was performed by way of mocking the palace and its surroundings by revealing the Bektashi type. In other words, in a way, they used the power of humour to oppose religious and political authority. The Bektashis, who were punished by the political authority, benefited from the function of humour in balancing mass psychology on the social plane and saw humour as a spiritual refuge. In other words, it is possible to evaluate these anecdotes as a result of the fear and anxiety caused by the sanctions imposed by the political authority to punish the Bektashis.

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