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DEDICATION

l dedication this book to my teacher Yaşar Çağbayır.

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CHAPTER 7

THE DÖNME-COMMUNITY OF SALONIKI

Assist. Prof. Dr. HATİCE ASLAN SÖZÜDOĞRU

Abstract

This work mainly benefits from the book of Abdurrahman Küçük, because it is the most comprehensive and latest research on this topic. Furthermore, Gershom Scholems articles and boks are used as source. Maurus Reinkowskis article about crypto-Jews and Christians has also much contributed to this. Further the article in the ENCYCLOPAEDIA of Islam (EI) and Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Islam Ansiklopedisi (DIA) have helped in this article. Foreign-language names and terms were written, for practical reasons, according to the rules of Turkish, as well as those of the European Transliteration.

Key Words: Dönme, Crypto, Jewvs, Christian

I. Introduction

I.1. The Dönme Sect

Jews who were exiled from Spain in 1492 were taken to a greater extend in refugees from the Ottoman Empire. These jews who were called the Sephardies settled much more in Saloniki, İzmir (Symrna) and Istanbul. [1]

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[1] H., T., "*Yahudiler*", in: İslam Ansiklopedisi (İ.A.), Bd. XIII., S. 339-342, Íarb, MuÎammed, *al- ÝosmÁniyyÙn fi't-tÁrÐh va'l-ÎaÃÁra*, Damaskus, 1989, S. 108

The deported jews were waiting for he coming of the Messiah with the hope to seize power to restore their former position.[2] After the diaspora of the jews by the Roman Empire (in 70 A.D.) many messiahs appeared in different places and times we can see in history.[3] With the dream of bringing the jews together to the holy land, rebuild the tempel of Salomon and save all man, Sabbatai Zwi proclaimed him as Messiah in the 17th century. To realise his ideals he presented him as Muslim and took his benefits of beeing in such matter. This concerns a big section of a group which came 300 years ago as jews to the Ottoman Empire and converted to Islam by their own decision but not converted really. They presented themselves to the outside world as muslims but within their community they preserved their jewish identity in this double life.

Deeply religious adherents of a jewish-mystic heresy were able to preserve theit identity and keep it secret. There are sects quite well known in the latest history in the world which also existed for long times but weren't kept so secret like the crypto-jewish sect of the Dönme without revealing their identity in their surroundings.[4]

Sabbatai Zwi who proclaimed him as Messiah - for the first time in 1648 with the Symbol of Sohar[5] and for he second time after the expectations of a savior of the christian mytic- he was abhorred by muslims and jews. Although the Ottoman Regime didn't interfere into the affairs of the jews they had to arrest and interrogate the 'False-Messiah'.

After the first questioning he was banished; when he was questioned the second time at the court of the Sultan in Istanbul, he admitted that he willfully misled the Jews but that he would be just an ordinary rabbi.

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2 ibid, p. 107

3 cf.to Messias: Waardenburg, Jacques, "*Mesih*", in: DIA, Bd. XXIX, p. 306-309

4 Scholem, Gershom, *Die Krypto-Judische Sekte der Dönme (Sabatianer) in der Türkei*, Numen, İnternational Review for the History of Religions, Vol. VII, Leiden, 1960, p. 93

5 Sohar: in the Talmud rabbinical literature of a canonical text which could assert itself during several centuries beside the Bible and the Talmud. It is also written Sefer ha Sohar (The book of the shine), see: Scholem, Gershom, The Jewish mysticism in her main currents, Frankfurt a. M., in 1957, p. 171

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After this event he followed the advices of the court physician Hayatizade (Moche ben Raphael Abravanel) who was also a convert. He gave him the advice to convert to Islam what he did and got the name Aziz Mehmet Efendi. [6]

After the event on the 16th of september when he was questioned by the Sultan in Edirne (Adrinopel) the news went around that Sabbatai saved his life by converting to Islam.[7] The confusion came to a critical point when the False-Messiah started the messianistic era. He went to Constantinopel to dethrone the Sultan but was arrested again by the Ottoman council. Surprisingly they didn't excute him but imprisioned him in Gallipoli in a large castle under house arrest.[8]

Nathan of Gaza, in a way the prophet of him, interpreted the converting of Sabbatai as a part of his mission of the progress to rebuild the Kingdom of God in Palestine.

Some of his admirers remained Jewish, but most followed his path and accepted Islam, although they remained internally as Jews. Thus the first foundations were laid for the "Dönme" sect. The death Sabbatai Zwis in 1676 was interpreted as a reincarnation. His widow Aischa stated that her brother Jakob had taken over the soul from Sabbatai Zwi. This was a new option in the sect to determine a new leader. The community assembled under the direction of Jakub Çelebi (Jakob Qerido) in Salonika to consult on which method one should apply in public to appear to the outside world as Muslims.

The community decided that every clan leader should do the midday and afternoon prayer in public, for example in marketplaces and shopping centres together with other Muslims to convince them that they were not jews anymore. At the time of pilgrimage those which were able financially, should make a pilgrimage to Mecca. In

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6 Küçük, Abdurrahman, "*Dönme*", in: DIA, Bd. IX, S. 518; Hathaway, Jane, *The Grand Vizier and the False Messiah: The Sabbatai Sevi Controversy and the Ottoman Reform in Egypt*, Journal of American Oriental Soc. Vol. 117, no. 4, oct.- dec. 1997, p. 665-667

7 Scholem, Gershom, *Die Krypto-Judische Sekte der Dönme (Sabatianer) in der Türkei*, p. 96

8 In some books it is written that he was not executed, so that he could not raise as a martyr, see Hathaway, Jane, The Grand Vizier and the False Messiah: The Sabbatai Sevi Controversy and the Ottoman reform in Egypt, p. 665

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circumsicions and ceremonies the members of the Mehmed Efendi (Sabbatai) should fill the mosques and tekkes. At burial ceremonies they should fill the streets with loud exclamations proclaiming God's greatness (Allahu akbar). In this manner people tried to persuade the Muslims of their Islamic faith and also improve the negative image of the sect. However, a part of the Dönme positioned itself against this method and stated that it was too much close to Turkish customs. [9] And so in 1689 the sect split. In 1720 the Dönme split up in three groups. They were named in each case according to their leaders: the first group as Jakobits (Hamdi Beyler), the second as Karakasch (Mumin, Onyollu, Osman Baba) and the third as Kapandschis (Izmirli, Papula, İbrahim Ağa).[10]

Although there have been speculations about the sect in the centuries since its inception, it has at least been succesful at existing as a krypto-jewish community until this day. Although, according to some reports which stated that the sect had nearly ceased to exist, while others again indicated that most Dönmes had resettled in the years of population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1924 to Turkey. Their aim was to emigrate from here to Palestine when, in 1948, the state Israel was established. However, an uncertain number of Dönmes continue to live in Turkey.

I.2. The meaning of the name of the sect.

Dönme: in Turkish; apostates, converts. Especialy a term for the Jews who lived from the 17. century on under the Ottoman regime and concealed themselves for religious and political reasons to protect their own religion. They appeared as converts to the outside world, renamed themselves with Islamic names and dressed like Muslims. This community is known in the West as well as in the eastern world as "Dönme". The sect is also called "avdeti" or after its leader "Sabbataist". [11]

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9 Küçük, Abdurrahman, "*Dönme*", in: DIA, Bd. IX., p. 518

10 Küçük, Abdurrahman, "*Dönme*", in: DIA, Bd. IX, S. 518-519; Scholem, Gershom, *Die Krypto-Judische Sekte der Dönme (Sabatianer) in der Türkei,* p. 107-108

11 Küçük, Abdurrahman, "*Dönme*", in: DIA, Bd. IX., p. 518

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Crypto-jew: a Jew who himself converted apparently to Islam or whose forefather was converted to Islam but who worships in reality consciously or unconsciously in the familiar religion of Jews. The conversion of formal character to Islam made such an ambivalent position easier. To be accepted as a convert to islam, it was enough to say the shahada (confessing the belief that there is only one God and Muhammed is His prophet) in the present of Muslim witnesses. [12]

Of course, it shouldn't be overlooked that in the Islamic culture, those who convert from another religion to Islam, are called "muhtedi" ; those who appear as Muslims but are unbelievers in reality are called "munafiq" and only the crypto-jews were called "Dönme". [13]

However, there is a double conversion with crypto-jews in the formally juridical sense: From the original religion to Islam, from Islam again back to the original religion.[14]

I. 3. The Name of the founder and his development

He preserved his Jewish name Sabatai/Sabbatai Zwi, Zewi, Zebi until 1666. From that date on, he used his Islamic name, Aziz Mehmed Efendi. He was born on the 7th of july in 1626[15] in Izmir (Symrna) as the third son of the businessman Mordehai Zwi, who was known between the Turks as Kara Menteşe and came from Spain over Mora (Peloponnesus) to Izmir. In the Hebrew calendar he was born on the 9th of the month Ab of the year 5386.

He became the student of the famous rabbi Isaak d'Alba of Izmir from whom he studied the Tora and the Talmud. Furthermore he studied with rabbi Josef Eskapa, the leader of the school of Yeshiva, the cabbala[16]. His aim was also to become a rabbi.

Already, as a child he had been interested in cabbala and he had concluded his education of the cabbala at the age of fifteen. He was

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12 Reinkowski, Maurus, *Kryptojuden und Kryptochristen im İslam*, p.15-16

13 ibid. p.518

14 Reinkowski, Maurus, *Kryptojuden und Kryptochristen im İslam*, p. 17

15 Reinkowski writes he is born in 1625, p.29

16 Íarb, MuÎammed, al- ÝosmÁniyyÙn fi't-tÁrÐh va'l-ÎaÃÁra, Damaskus, 1989, p. 108, Scholem, Gershom, Sabbatai Ñevi The Mystical Messiah 1626-1676, London, 1973, p. 104.

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also married at the same age. However, it is said that he never loved his wife why she separated from him. Because his family thought that he had not loved her, they got him married with a second woman. But for him nothing had changed, and he stated that none of those were suitable for him, because he could only marry the Tora. At eighteen, he gave lessons to adolesents.[17] He dealt intensively with mysticism. In 1648 Sabbatai Zwi decided to proclaim him as the Messiah. Because the people were expecting a Messiah and because nobody stated himself as one, he could proclaim himself as the true Messiah. He said the Tetragramme[18] openly in the synagogue.

As a result he was kept away from the synagogue and the municipality. The upper rabbi asked two members, the Bet-din[19], to convert him. However, also to the envoys he announced that he was the long desired Messiah. After he aroused the hostility of the population in Izmir, he was forced to leave the town and to find another place in which he could continue his messianic movement.

First he went to Mora (Peloponnesus) in 1649-1650, then to Athens, Salonika and afterwards to Istanbul in 1650-1651, with the hope of finding followers there. In Istanbul, Zwi received the "mezamiri Süleyman Tefsiri" document from the rabbi Abraham Jachni who had written the document, in which it was written that the true Messiah would come in 1666 and he would be called Sabbatai Zwi.

After remaining three years in Istanbul, he went to Salonika in 1654 where he was received very well. After he openly made known the Tetragramme it did not last long that he had to leave the town as its result. In 1658 he went to Athens where he was again met with hostility. Then he went back to Izmir, where he could also not remain long. Following his brief stay in Izmir, he travelled to istanbul for a

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17 Cf. Scholem, Gershom: Die jüdische Mystik in ihren Hauptströmungen, p.128-170.

18 Tetragramme: four letters which only the Messiah (Jehovah-YHWH) can say openly in the synagogue which is seen as a token of the rescue. Cf.: Scholem, Gershom, Sabbatai Ñ evi The Mystical Messiah in 1626-1676, p. 119-122

19 Bed-dinar: Jewish organisation which consists of four members and upper rabbi. Küçük, Abdurrahman, Dönmeler (Sabatayistler) Tarihi, Ankara, in 2001, p. 228 footnote

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second time. Although he was tormented by the rabbi, he remained there and counted all this as part of his messianic burden.[20]

In 1659 a big fire broke out in Istanbul in which the Jews suffered damage. People believed that the fire broke out because of Sabbatai's false-messianic proclamation and made him responsible for this disaster. As a result he left Istanbul and returned to his family in Izmir in 1659. There he remained quiet during the three years. In 1662/3 he travelled by a ship to Palestine, where he searched for a new place in which he and his movement could freely move. When the ship of Tripoli past in Syria, he changed his opinion and thougt to go better to Egypt. When he came in Cairo he found a rich jeweller named Raphael Josef Çelebi who had devoted himself to the cabbala as a sympathizer.[21] Also he believed in the fact that the Messiah appeared in 1666. After Sabbatai could win him for his aim, he went to Jerusalem. In 1663 he arrived there. Because Sabbatai had fancied as a devout rabbi, he was estimated there very much. The Jews in Jerusalem were in this time in big need and they knew that he had a very good respect with rich Josef Çelebi why he was chosen by the Israels as an ambassador. He accepted this job with a big pleasure. Thus he succeeded in fame and power. In 1664 he went to Cairo to collect donations. With the help of Josef Çelebi he succeeded in collecting a very high sum in donations in Cairo.[22] He wanted to use this opportunity and announced Josef Çelebi that he himself carries the signs of the expected Messiah. In the meantime, Sabbatai married a woman called Sara. She claimed to have married in the dream with the Messiah and he would be called Sabbatai Zwi.[23]

He used this opportunity again for himself and showed this to his supporters as another sign for his true identity as Messiah. With the

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20 Scholem, Gershom, Sabbatai Sevi The Mystical Messiah 1626-1676, p. 152-177

21 Íarb, MuÎammed, al- ÝosmÁniyyÙn fi't-tÁrÐh va'l-ÎaÃÁra, Damaskus, 1989, p. 108-109

22 Hathaway, Jane, The Grand Vizier and the False Messiah: The Sabbatai Sevi Controversy and the Ottoman Reform in Egypt, S. 667–68; Küçük, Abdurrahman, *Dönmeler (Sabatayistler) Tarihi*, p. 211–42

23 Scholem, Gershom, Sabbatai Zevi The Mystical Messiah 1626–1676, S. 177–198; Küçük, Abdurrahman, *Dönmeler (Sabatayistler) Tarihi,* p. 244–245

return to Jerusalem via Gaza he met Nathan from Gaza who wanted to proclaim himself as the prophet of the Messiah. He promised to Sabbatai to proclaim him as a Messiah if he would explain him therefore as his prophet. Nathan was young and wealthy; Sabbatai could not resist him. In 1665 he was known in Jerusalem with fame and glory. He had a friend like Josef Çelebi, a prophet and a friend in Istanbul, Abraham Yachni who all stood in his services. So remained to him only one thing; to proclaim in public himself as the Messiah what he also did officially in Jerusalem. Shortly after he had to leave the town, because the rabbis met him with hostility. In September, 1665 he came in Izmir and was received by his followers with a big celebration. In the beginning of 1666 he proclaimed for the second time that it is the Messiah. After some people complained about Sabbatai few times, he was interrogated by the judge in Izmir. With his statement that he had intended nothing else than to be a rabbi he was released. He could remain not long in Izmir because he was called to Istanbul by the Sadrazam. In the beginning of 1666 he was in Istanbul where he could receive visitors under observation.

At the same time another man called Nehemya Kohen proclaimed that he was the Messiah and led a hard discussion with Sabbatai. As a result he proceeded to the Sultan Mehmed IV (in 1648-1687) where he was interrogated. He accused Sabbatai, with the foundation of an organisation against the Ottoman Empire and that he would provoke his followers against the government. Sabbatai was ordered to Edirne where he was interrogated on the 16th of september in 1666 at the divan of the sultan and converted after all to Islam. They gave him a work at the court where he was active as a Kapıcıbaşı.[24] After it came out that he had converted only externally and announced furthermore himself as a Messiah, he was arrested and exiled in 1668 to Istanbul. Then he was exiled to Ulcinj (Ülgün) in Albania in 1672 where he died there in 1676.[25]

[24] H., T., "*Dönme*", in: İslam Ansiklopedisi (İ.A.), Bd. III., p. 646

[25] Küçük, Abdurrahman, *Dönmeler (Sabatayistler) Tarihi,* p. 249–62, 274-285, 285-315; Derviş, A. Halûk, Sabbetay Sevi olayı ve "Dönmeler", in: Tarih ve Toplum 30 (Haziran 1986), p. 11-12

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II. Origin of the sect and its spreading

II.1. Origin of the sect of the Sabbataisten

In 1666 the leader Sabbatai Zwi got a place as Kapıcıbaşı at the court after he was converted. Because of this position which he received from the sultan he could persuade his followers to the fact that they convert only externally to Islam, but internally they went on praying and practising like in Judaism. This false conversion led to the origin of the Dönme sect.

Big groups of his supporters followed him furthermore without leaving the Judaism. Nathan of Gaza who had substantial abilities could interpret the old books and texts anew. The new theses helped Sabbatai to win more believers. He would be bound to the fact that the Messiah goes to the people to accomplish there a mystic mission, namely the sparks of the holiness and the holy souls which are also among them, to get out and "to raise" them. A kind of Jewish messianic sub-movement started to origine which was rejected by official rabbinical authorities and was pursued but found still followers in many groups and countries of the Diaspora.[26]

Their head courter shifted after the death of Sabbatai to Salonika. His widow Mrs. Jochebed (her islamic name was Aischa) also turned back to her family whom he had married two years before his death in exile in Albania. Her father, Josef Philosoph, belonged to the most respectable rabbis of Salonika and stood together with the respectable scholar Salomo Florentin and Barzilai, one of the first students of Sabbatai Zwis from his youth, at the head of the strong sabbataistic group in Salonika.

The widow proclaimed her brother Jakob Qerido as a mystic vessel in which the soul Sabbatai Zwis would have taken a seat.[27] Now the apostates organised as own groups which accepted the oldest eighteen orders also for themselves as obliging. (…)

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26 Scholem, Gershom, *Die Krypto-Judische Sekte der Dönme (Sabatianer) in der Türkei*, p. 97

27 Cf., p.101

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Smaller groups in Edirne (Adrianopel), Istanbul and somewhere else followed the example of Salonika. Here a whole number of the Sabbatianer remained Jewish. At least, the Dönme-group increased by crossing and immigration of sabbatianic families from outwards. In the course of time, probably in the second half of the 18th century, Polish Sabbatianer also encountered to them. In 1915 a group was known by Dönme-families as Lechli, that is Poland.[28]

While the Ottoman authorities welcomed this mass defection to Islam certainly with joy and hoped with big effects on the Turkish Judaism, they soon had to see that they dealt here by no means with real converts whose wish was to rise among the Muslims. But Neophytes testified their zeal for the new religion with the fact that Jakob Qerido went with his followers for the pilgrimage to Mecca about 1689-1690 on which he died, by the way.[29]

But it soon turned out that convert-Dönmes married only within their community. They rejected not only the connubium with Jews and Muslims likewise, but kept away also in their social life the contact to others as far as possible. But the sects had together a narrow cohesion.

II.2. Spreading of the Sabbataisten

The Jakobiten and inhabitants of Izmir lived in closed quarters whose land was made available to them, according to the tradition, by the Turkish government as a reward for their defection. Also the Karakasch lived in a great measure together, even if not in such vast majority. The confidential synagogues of the different groups were in houses which stood in the centre of the Dönme-quarters and weren't recognizable from outside.

While the Dönme did the prayers prescribed by Islam in the nearby mosques what particularly the first both sects very much paid attention to, the real service and worship were realized in these synagogues, or better said in the meeting points, which showed none of the paraphernalia of the synagogues, like the holy ark or almemor. If the Dönme spoke about their leaders with Jewish friends, they called them

[28] Cf.,p.102

[29] Eisenberg, İ, *Enzyklopädie des Islam*, "Dönme", Leiden, 1936, p. 1121

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with their Turkish names. However, in their writings they exclusively used their Hebrew names.[30]

The number of the first followers at the lifetime of the Messiah amounted to about 200 families, mostly from the Balkans, some of them also from Smyrna and Brussa. The information about the number of the Dönme sways during the last generations strongly. The oldest report on them, of the Danish orientalist Karsten Niebuhr from 1784, numbers them at about 600 families. Between 1850 and 1924 the estimates of different observers sway between 5000 and 10000 souls. (Some assume that the total number was in Turkey around 1914 about 15000). They formed about half of the population of Salonika which were registered by the national payment as Turks, however, its inhabitants existed mainly of Jews and Greeks.[31]

III. Faith of the Dönme and the perspective of Jews and Muslims compared with the new sect

III.1. Religious basis and rituals of the Dönme

After the sabbatianic sect the Messiah has not really "died", he is only "carried away". The apprenticeship of the reincarnation, as it is absorbed with the Kabbalisten in general, allowed anyway the acceptance of a wandering of the Messiah by many shapes, from Adam up to his last... In the 19th century the Dönme believed in 18 such reincarnations of the soul of Adam and the Messiah. "Eighteen orders" (incommendances) which still exist supposedly in Spanish were accepted by all Dönme as a basis of their behaviour. Besides, it is noteworthy that the number 18 plays in the Jewish tradition as well as with the Sufis, particularly in the order of the Mawlawis, the dancing derwishes, an important role. Eighteen orders correspond to the "18- prayer", the family prayer of the daily Jewish liturgy. Eighteen has also the numerical value of the Hebrew word chaj, vividly. This is

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30 This were not only the wordly names, but also names for the paradise. Members of the Dönme said in intimate conversations their Jewish visitors the full Jewish name or scrawled it, with an important look, on their Turkish calling card, ibid., p. 112-116

31 İbid., p.107

the reason why eighteen coins or a multiple are given for charity with pleasure. In the order of the derwish eighteen is the holiest number generally.[32]

The most important theologian of the first sabbatianic generation was the so-called prophet Nathan (1644-1680) of Gaza who spread his convictions up to his end of life in 1680 on the Balkans Peninsula. He died, three years before the big apostasy, in Skopje (Üsküp). The recollections of him as well as his writings stood with the Dönme at the highest respect.

The religious basis of the Dönmes is as follows:

1. I believe in the God of Israel who is the true God.
2. I think in the fact that Sabbatai Zwi is the true Messiah.
3. the fact that the Tora is the true Tora
4. the fact that the Tora were not changed and that it is still valid
5. the fact that Sabbatai will bring once the children of Israel together who are scattered in the world
6. the fact that the dead people will wake again
7. the fact that the God of Israel, one will send the temple Salomons of the sky, rebuilt back on earth
8. the fact that the God of Israel will show his face in this world.

The orders which was required by Sabbatai Zwi, after he was converted, were taken and usedin the same way by the sect of the Dönme who tried to obey these words which begins as follows:

God is one and the Messiah (Sabbatai) is the true Messiah, there is not another saviour but he, do not swear because of lie, if the name of God or Messiah is mentioned have respect, to spread out the secrets of the Messiah take part in the meetings, do not testify with lie and do not tell a lie, force noone to convert to Islam, be merciful, read every day secretly the psalms, keep externally the traditions of the Turks but inwards practise the Jewish prayers, do not marry with Muslims, curcumcise the children. They are accepted because of their habits neither by the Jews nor by the Muslims. They have their own parties and holidays.[33]

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[32] İbid., p.97-100

[33] Küçük, Abdurrahman, "*Dönme*", in: DIA, Bd. IX., S. 520; Íarb, MuÎammed,

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There originated a utipian vision of a new Judaism, an anarchic trend how it possibly should correspond to the Messianism. It concerned also weird and droll rituals which contained the circumstances of the Jewish tradition as for example the festival rituals. Just as they searched the connection with the Judaism, they had to attach at the same time certain contacts with the Islamic mysticism. Above all they maintained the contact with some dervish's orders. Already Sabbatai Zwi was in habit to live in the first years after his convertation in his visits in Istanbul in a dervish's order and to form amicable relations with the mystic lyricist Mehmed Niyazi.[34]

III.2. The view of Jews and Muslims towards to the Dönme

From the outset the Dönme were accused by their Jewish opponents that they would pursue ritual sexual offence and women's communism in their confidential meetings.

The theory of the messianic sexual anarchy and promiscuity which hurt the moral consciousness of the devout Jews was founded from the "old books" how the cabbalists interpreted. The incest bans of the Tora were explained by Baruchja and his successors as invalid, with appeal on the area of application stamped now of the Tora de-'aziluth in which all bans of this kind have been circumscribed and changed rather to orders. The fasting in the ninth Ab, the anniversary of the destruction of the temple, was explained by a messianic Ukas for the official birthday of the Messiah and was exclaimed with it as a celebration in which the so-called "extinguish the lights" took place.[35] If it was about the protection of vital interests of the Dönme, they acted together in common plans and consultations.[36]

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al- ŸosmÁniyyÙn fi't-tÁrÐh va'l-ÎaÃÁra,, S. 109; Küçük, Abdurrahman, *Dönmeler (Sabatayistler) Tarihi*, p. 260

34 Scholem, Gershom, *Die Krypto-Judische Sekte der Dönme (Sabatianer) in der Türkei*, p. 96, 102

35 Scholem, Gershom, *Die Krypto-Judische Sekte der Dönme (Sabatianer) in der Türkei*, p. 117

36 Scholem, Gershom, *Die Krypto-Judische Sekte der Dönme (Sabatianer) in der Türkei*, p. 104-105

IV. Sub-sects and their language

IV.1. Jakobiten (Hamdi Beyler)

The followers Yakub Çelebi (Jakob / Josef Querido) (1662-1695): The widow proclaimed her brother Jakob Qerido as the mystic vessel in which the soul Sabbatai Zwis would have taken seat.[37] The brother-in-law of the Sabatai Zwi, Jakob and his followers were in a great measure officials in Salonika. They were also named according to the mayor of Salonika, Hamdi Bey. They appeared like Muslim Turks and accepted their traditions who worked as officials but wore their special clothes. They taught their children the secrets of the sect only if they married. The women had the same laws of succession and the curtailment of the children was carried out in Islamic kind. They kept to the Jewish ritual, except the light from the fire on Saturdays. They maintained the Madrasa study. Some of them were also scholars in the Islamic sciences. For the education of their children they have founded the Selimiye Mektebi.[38]

IV.2. The Karakasch (Kuniosos): Baruchjas sect (Osman Baba)

The Baruchjas sect has separated in 1689 from the Jakobiten because they wanted to follow Sabbatai Zwi's wisdom where the Jakobiten held on to the Islamic rituals. They thought that Sabbatai was born and embodied again in the body of Osman Jakub Kunio (Osman Baba), who was born nine months after his death. That's why the sect is called Osman Baba.

They were also named with the name of the most respectable family Karakasch. Because they used different rituals, they were called by the Kapandschis "Onyollu" (owner of ten ways). Their women were not allowed to marry beyond the municipality and divorce was forbidden. They did not tell to their children the secret of the sect, before they became thirteen years old. Their financial situation was usually good. The sect could survive long, because they paid attention

[37] ibid., p. 101

[38] Küçük, Abdurrahman, "*Dönme*", in: DIA, Bd. IX., p. 518

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to their economic and financial situation. They came from the rows of the rich businessmen, traders, doctors, lawyers, bureaucrat and teachers.[39]

After Scholem they came in the beginning from a low social circle, like craftsman, shoemaker and Strumpfwirker, Tagelöhner, load carrier and the like, until the economic change came. This situation was between 1870 and 1920. Later the social stratification also moved with the progressive emancipation and resolution of course. Particularly the first two sects under which the signs of dissolution are strong progressed have delivered many forces to the Jung-Turkish intelligence. The position of the Karakasch improved and they are, in the meantime, in a great measure businessmen, especially also in textile trade of Istanbul.[40]

IV.3. The Kapandschis (Papulars)

Those who did not accept the reincarnation theory of the Sabbatai Zwis in Osman's body separated and founded the Kapandschis sect. Because they kept to the religious bases and to rituals of the Sabbatai furthermore, they were named by the Karakasch sect as "papu" which means in Spanish-Hebrew "the old people". This sect wanted to live on the old tradition of the Sabbatai in its original form and didn't want to add new interpretations. Important subjects or problems of the municipality was discussed by a committee. To marry with foreign women was forbidden. They maintained trade and paid attention to the Europeanisation. They preferred the education more than others. Hence, the study was promoted in Europe and was stimulated. Those who studied in Europe founded for the education of their own children the "Şemsi Efendi" and "Terakki" mektepleri (schools) and the "Feyziye Lisesi" (high school) as well as the "Şişli Terakki Lisesi" (high school) in Istanbul.[41]

Kapandschis or Izmirlis belonged to the high or middle businessmen-class and trained also many important Turkish doctors

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39 ibid., p.519

40 Scholem, Gershom, *Die Krypto-Judische Sekte der Dönme (Sabatianer) in der Türkei*, p. 107

41 Küçük, Abdurrahman, "*Dönme*", in: DIA, Bd. IX., p. 519

and lawyers during the last generations. Earlier all 'barbers of Salonika' belonged to this group. Three sub-sects differed from each other by different kinds of the haircuts and the different beard shaves.[42]

IV.4. The Language of the Dönmes

The Dönmes which lived above all in Salonika spoke in public the Turkish language which became later (only from about 1870) in growing measure also the native tongue. Inwards, however, they used the Spagnolic language in which also their later literature was written. The knowledge of the importance of the Hebrew was spread long with many by them. It could be found in Salonika over and over again Jewish teachers. However, in the course of the time this knowledge drastically decreased. In the 19th and 20th century they used the Hebrew writing further, even if in a strangely misshapen italic kind. This means that the prayers were spoken though still Hebrew, but were not understood any more; the historical way of writing of the Hebrew as the Semitic language wasn't in a state every Sabbataist could understand it. The prayer books were copied in unusually small formats which could be hidden easily.[43]

V. The Dönme till today

The Dönmes in Salonika settled in the Turkish-Greek population exchange to Istanbul or Izmir.[44] The news about the Dönmes was delivered among the Turks of generation to the generation by stories, because nobody ventured to demonstrate this theme in writing. Only when about 1880 in Europe the confidential documents of the Dönme were found, people started to write about the sect of the Dönme. By a chance a confidential document which was found in Salonika came to light which contained the confidential rites and prayers of the Dönme. This document from Salonika was published by the journalist Sadi

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42 Scholem, Gershom, *Die Krypto-Judische Sekte der Dönme (Sabatianer) in der Türkei*, p. 107

43 Scholem, Gershom, *Die Krypto-Judische Sekte der Dönme (Sabatianer) in der Türkei*, p. 108

44 ibid., p.94

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Levy. This document was in an amulet (Muska). The document carried the seal of the Sabbatai Zwis and the Davids-star. It also contained some verses from the Tora, the Talmud and the name Jahves. An anonymously written book which was published in Istanbul in 1919 bared the true mentality of the Dönme.

Against this thesis a contradiction was inserted by the pensioner major Sadik. He tries to prove in "Dönmelerin Hakikati" (the truth about the Dönme) that they are Muslim Turks.

had made an application to the Turkish parliament where he demonstrates that the Dönmes are split in three sub-groups and they don't belong to Islam, but are Jews.

On this application there reactions were shown by the press, and this subject was discussed. There were negative and positive settings. It was maintained that with the origin of the Turkish republic the Dönmes set in the history and could not exist any more. In the same year an application was also made to the Greek parliament that the Dönmes are no Turks and Muslims. However, this application was rejected with the argument that the Dönmes are „a thousand times more worse than the Turks".

The Dönmes which were also not accepted by the Jews were accepted as half a Turk and half a Jew and were called as "confidential community". Nowadays there are still discussions about this sect. However, people do not know exactly how many Dönmes are there. In Turkey these are approximate 30-40.000 people. They live in Edirne, Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara and Bursa. Because the Dönmes are from Salonika, they are also called "Selanik Dönmesi". That's why the Dönmes which have Salonika as their birthplace, changed their origin birhtplace after they were distributed in Turkey to different They have done their best to preserve their secrets. Still today they use in the present of the the Turkish their Turkish names and in their community the Jewish ones. In the foreign ministries, economics ministries, in the area of Education, press and universities, as well as in trade and industry the Dönmes have had important success. Today it is maintained that in Turkey the newspaper owners are Dönmes and also between the journalists they take place.[45] Still till the present day the continual existence of religious Sabbatianer is testified.[46]

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[45] Küçük, Abdurrahman, "*Dönme*", in: DIA, Bd. IX., p. 519-520

[46] Scholem, Gershom, *Die Krypto-Judische Sekte der Dönme (Sabatianer) in*

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