

## BEKTASHISM IN EGYPT AT THE TIME OF THE ALBANIAN DYNASTY (1805-1952)

Egypt, even after the Ottoman conquest, remained one of the most unstable provinces of the empire and for three centuries it became a battle ground between janissaries and mamluks. Although, the latter were defeated by Sultan Selim I, they continued to hold strong positions in the Patriarchy of Cairo. Considering the Bektashism as a janissary sect, they constantly fought against it. This hostility and the reasons mentioned above made possible that out of three tekkes that existed in Egypt in 1570, it survived only one until the years '50 of our century.

The arrival in power of Mehmet Ali Pasha did not change the balance in terms of religious reality prevailing in Egypt. This happened since his main concern was not religion, but to provide the continuity of his power. Finding a different religious reality from that of the Balkans, the new ruler of Egypt tried to penetrate inside of this reality and not to change it. There is no information if he tried to back his powers as a Bektashi facility, such as Ali Pasha Tepelena tried to do, but some aspects of the influence of his Bektashism in his government can be observed.

When the Albanian National Awakening 1840-1912 started, the first Albanian colony of Egypt became one of the most active colonies in terms of the National Renaissance. The Tekke of *Kaygusuz Sultan* in Cairo became a meeting place for all the Albanians in Egypt. Their number was about 50,000 since the time that Mehmet Ali Pasha came to power. A large portion of them were followers of the Bektashi sect because of their coming from the ranks of the army, but the influence of the sect was also visible in the Albanian Christian community of Cairo. So, when Andon Zako Çajupi, the greatest poet in the colony of Cairo published the first collection of poems in Albanian, its title was "Baba Tomori", referring to the holy place of the Bektashi in Albania.

Although, Bektashist history in Egypt did not begin with the Albanian presence there, it can not be overlooked the fact that it could survive and develop normally its activity, until the Albanian dynasty continued to rule in this territory. It remained, in fact, a spiritual issue of the Albanian Diaspora and it did not become massive among the local population. According to all the circumstances, although Bektashism in Egypt dates back as early as the XIII-th century, it is difficult to claim for a successful history like that of its spreading in Albania. Bektashism in Egypt, especially after the year 1826, can be considered a derivative of Albanian Bektashism. It had a local effect in bringing close the Muslim and Christian communities of Albanian immigrants and at the same time, through its influence on the royal family of Egypt, it contributed to the creation of a tolerance culture of religious beliefs in Egypt. This culture of tolerance still distinguishes Egypt among other countries in the Middle East.