

# Confessionalization and Religious Nonconformity in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire: The Cases of Kizilbash/Alevi and the Sabbatean Communities

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Ottoman politics of difference—that is, the ways in which the empire managed its diversity—has become a popular topic of scholarly discussion in recent decades. Several books and articles since the 1980s have highlighted the pragmatic inclusivity of the Ottomans towards their religiously minority subjects and their willingness to grant their various non-Muslim communities autonomy and freedom to practice their religions within the framework of the “*millet system*”—a system that organized (in an ad hoc manner after the fifteenth century and more formally after the nineteenth century) the status of Jews and Christians in the empire on the basis of Islamic law.<sup>1</sup> The Ottoman “tolerance” of religious minorities has been favorably contrasted with the exclusionary ideologies and practices of early modern European polities, such as those of the contemporaneous Habsburg Empire. Today, the Ottoman Empire frequently attracts mention in comparative discussions as a classic example of a “plural”

<sup>1</sup> For the development of the *millet system*, see B. Braude, “Foundation Myths of the Millet System,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. B. Lewis and B. Braude (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), 69–88.

KIZILBAŞ (111066)

ALEVİ (011382)

SABATAY SEVİ (180021)

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