

**CONTEMPORARY BOSNIAN SUFISM:
BRIDGING THE EAST AND WEST**

Julianne Marie Hazen



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To God belongs the East and the West. Wheresoever you turn is the face of God.
—Qur'an 2:115

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ABSTRACT

The Sufis of Bosnia bridge the divide between Islam and the West by teaching the Qur'anic concepts of peace, including tawhid (unity with all) and respect towards others. These spiritual Muslims have been in the Balkan Peninsula since the 14th century, influencing the nature of Balkan Islam to be moderate. This paper looks into the notions of Sufism, its historical and contemporary existence in Bosnia, and the beliefs that they promote concerning the other Abrahamic religions. On-site research in 2006 and 2007 in Zenica, Živčići, Kaćuni, Tuzla, Blagaj, Počitelj, Mostar, and Sarajevo in Bosnia and Hercegovina details numerous active Sufi Orders and documents the presence of visuals promoting interfaith tolerance and harmony with Christians and Jews. The Bosnian Sufis are a moderating force in Islam that may play an important role in drawing the world together and lessening the chances of a major clash between Islam and the West.

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LIST OF DEFINITIONS

Adab.....	Rules of proper Islamic conduct and behavior
Adl.....	Justice
Afu.....	Forgiveness
Athan.....	Muslim call to prayer
Baraka.....	Blessings
Dervish.....	Muslim monk
Dhikr.....	Remembrance of God; silent dhikr is dhikr al-hafi
Dua.....	Obligatory prayer; done with hands raised and palms facing upward
Dunya.....	Refers to earthly, human existence
Duwayra.....	Small Sufi lodge; cloister
Efendi.....	Title of respect given to imams
Fatwa.....	Religious edict or ruling
Fitna.....	Disharmony
Fitrah.....	The concept that all people are born pure and good
Futuh.....	Voluntary offerings
Hadith.....	A collection of norm-setting statements and actions of the Prophet Muhammad
Hajj.....	Pilgrimage to Mecca; Hajji is a title given to someone who went on hajj
Ihsan.....	Good deeds, righteousness
Ilahiya.....	Praise songs to God
Ilm.....	Knowledge, learning
Imam.....	Religious leaders of the community
Islam.....	Submission to God
Jihad.....	Struggle for faith against disbelief, greater jihad is struggling against lower-base ego, lesser jihad is fighting to defend Islam against aggressors
Keshkul.....	Wooden bowl carried on the belt of Bektashi dervishes in which they accepted donations of food and dined once a day
Khalifah.....	Spiritual leader
Khalwat.	Spiritual retreat, seclusion
Khanaka.....	Sufi retreat
Ma'rif.....	The ultimate state of ultimate truth
Murid.....	Disciple of a Sufi master, novice on the path
Mutasawif.....	Scholars of Sufism
Nafs.....	Egoistic, lower-self, base-desires
Pir.....	Spiritual leader, higher level, usually head of Sufi order
Rahim.....	Mercy
Safa.....	Purity

Salat.....	Prayer
Sama‘.....	Collective Sufi worship style accompanied by singing and dancing
Samahana.....	Room where sama‘ is held, resembles the prayer room in a mosque
Sawm.....	Fasting; Pillar of Faith
Shahada.....	Declaration of faith in one God and Prophet Muhammad as messenger of God
Shaytan.....	Satan, the Devil
Sheikh.....	Spiritual guide, someone far in the stages on the Sufi Path
Sunna.....	Documented practices and customs of the Prophet Muhammad
Tafsir.....	Commentaries on the Qur'an
Tajj.....	Sheikh's head covering
Tariqa.....	Sufi order; method of spiritual education practiced by a Sufi master
Tasawwuf.....	Sufism
Tawhid.....	The concept that all creation is united with God, the Creator; “Unity of Being,” “Wahdat al-wajud”
Tekiya.....	Building where Sufi gatherings and activities take place, Sufi lodge
Ulema.....	Religious scholars
Ummah.....	World-wide Muslim community
Wakil.....	Representative of the sheikh
Zakat.....	Almsgiving
Zawiyya.....	Sufi lodge; cloister

Chapter I

Introduction

Is the Clash of Civilizations Inevitable?

On that fateful day of September 11, 2001, when the televisions broadcast terrifying scenes of chaos from New York City, it was easy to believe that a clash of civilizations was upon us. Too many suicide bombers and “Jihadists” have reinforced this belief by killing in the name of Islam, sidelining the peaceful nature of this religion. This tense and strained atmosphere gave new life to Huntington’s (1994) theory of an inevitable clash between civilizations because of their innate differences, which resulted in a further break-down of trust and communication between the Western and Islamic Worlds.

This rift was demonstrated as I stood in line at the Slovenian airport in August of 2007 and started a friendly conversation with a petit elderly British lady. I was returning to the United States after spending a summer in Bosnia studying the spiritually-minded Muslims called Sufis. When she learned the topic of my research had to do with Islam, she stated with concern, “Islam? That’s not a very good religion.” Proceeding, she expressed how afraid she was of the terrorist bombings in London and stated that Christianity had ever participated in such terrible activities. While declaring that the Crusades had nothing to do with Christianity and should not be connected with the Pope,

she was unable to acknowledge that, similarly, Islam should not be categorized by the actions of an extreme minority or a specific time in history either.

The conversation ended at this point, but it left me with a renewed understanding that the heterogeneous world categorized by Sufism that I had come to know in Bosnia could be far more tolerant of others than what I might experience in Great Britain or America. I was leaving behind a society where Islam, Christianity, and Judaism were all considered legitimate religions, and the Sufis especially taught love, tolerance, and reinforced the connections between the Abrahamic religions. In contrast, I was entering into a society where many of the people have prejudices and misconceived ideas about Islam and know little about the universal messages of love and interconnectedness on which the Sufis base their beliefs and actions, taught within the Qur'an and Hadith (recorded sayings of Prophet Muhammad). This reinforced my desire to write about my experience of the moderate Muslims of Bosnia and what they taught me about the nature of Islam.

Islam in Bosnia

Muslims make up around 40% of the Bosnian population, and the prominent form of Islam in Bosnia is Sufism. Certainly not all Bosnian Muslims attend Sufi activities or belong to a Sufi Order, but I found the practice of Islam to be very spiritual in nature and focused on the inner path to God as well as the outer rituals of religion. Since Sufism spread to parts of the Balkan Peninsula prior to the Ottoman Empire and thrived under Muslim rule, the high degree that Sufism has assimilated into the local practice of Islam should not be surprising. The cultural practices common among Muslims of the Middle East or South Asia, such as fully covering the women in public or the tribal code of conduct, are unfamiliar in the Balkan, Southern European setting. Of course, not all

Muslims whom I encountered in Bosnia were tolerant toward non-Muslims. Thus, I focused my study on the Sufis instead of broadly covering all Muslims in the region because I was interested in documenting a specific moderating force within Islam.

The war that took place in the 1990's severely strained relations between the Balkan people and resulted in a general feeling of distrust within the majority of Muslims towards the others, especially toward the Orthodox Serbs. The Jews are excluded from this sentiment because, for the most part, they left the Balkans when the conflict was brewing and did not participate in the fighting. Also, a history of good relations exists between the Jews who settled in the Balkans from Andalucía and the Balkan people. However, distrust toward them is also increasing due to the ongoing conflict in the Holy Lands.

While many scholars argue that longstanding ethnic hatreds were the root causes of the Balkan conflict,¹ this theory does not fully explain why the diverse and intermixed population broke into war.² It is highly unlikely for eighteen sizeable ethnic groups of the former Yugoslavia who spoke fourteen distinguishable dialects and who were intermarried across religions and ethnicities to be easily divided by religion and nationalism.³ An alternative theory from Murer (2002), suggest that the conflict resulted from an identity crisis that followed the socially-traumatic collapse of Communism and

¹ See David Horowitz 1998; Walker Conner 1994; and Anthony Smith 1998.

² See the study that challenges the ethnic hatreds theory done by Duško Sekulić, Garth Massey and Randy Hodson, "Ethnic Intolerance and Ethnic Conflict in the dissolution of Yugoslavia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 5 (September 1, 2006): 797-827, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870600814247> (accessed March 29, 2008).

³ Scott Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred* (New York: Rowman and Littleman, 2000), 64; Also see Hardin 1995.

subsequently failure of the economy. In addition, the religious split in the Christian Church between the Roman Catholics and Orthodox may have prompted the vicious attack on Muslims as scapegoats.⁴ There is also proof that Serbian and Croatian political leaders manipulated religious differences and historically-significant events to incite religious tensions that demonized the Muslims and portrayed them as Turks.⁵ The Muslims, in contrast, were described as the most secularized of the religious groups and the one that identified most strongly with the disintegrating Yugoslav identity.⁶ The strengthening of Muslim identity that occurred during and after the war, according to Aydin Babuna, was “partly a reaction to the attacks in Bosnia against mosques, Islamic identity and culture.”⁷

Since this latest Balkan War, along with a strengthening of the Balkan Muslim identity, there has been an influx of more “fundamental” Islam from Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan that teaches strict adherence to one narrow interpretation of Islam and enforces the division between the Muslims and non-Muslim. Mujahadeen who selflessly came to Bosnia to join the fighting forces brought radical and less tolerant Islamic beliefs. According to many Bosnian Muslims, this form of Islam is foreign to the Islam

⁴ Jeffrey Murer, “The Clash Within: Intrapsychically Created Enemies and Their Roles in Ethnonationalist Conflict,” in *Violence and Politics*, ed. Kenton Worcester, Sally Avery Bermanzohn, and Mark Unger (New York: Routledge, 2002), 209, 212.

⁵ Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed* (University of California Press, 1996), 31; Appleby 68, 70.

⁶ Jasmina Z. Ernst et al. “Sarajevo Paradox: Survival Throughout History and Life After the Balkan War,” <http://www.sipa.columbia.edu/ece/research/intermarium/vol6no3/ernst.pdf> (accessed March 29, 2008), 5; Ivan Ivezović, “Nationalism and the Political Use and Abuse of Religion: The Politicization of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam in Yugoslavia Successor States,” *Social Compass* 49, no. 4 (December 2002): 9.

⁷ Aydin Babuna, “National Identity, Islam and Politics in Post-Communist Bosnia-Hercegovina.” *Eastern European Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (January 2006): 415.

that they practice; however, since the war, some appreciate the reinforcement of distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, and a minority of Bosnians has adopted Wahhabi-style dress and attitudes. The less tolerant Muslims have attempted to influence the Balkan Islamic institutions to adopt their interpretation of Islam, but have been greatly unsuccessful because the Balkan Muslims do not appreciate the foreign and strange ideas or the superior attitude expressed by the Wahhabis about their form of Islam. The Sufi teachings are much more accepted and natural to the Balkan Muslims because of the long history of Sufism in the peninsula and because the Balkan form of Islam is not extreme, rigid, or imposed on others.

In this post-war setting, where hatred would be an expected consequence, the Sufis are exemplary for continuing to promote peace and tolerance towards people of the Abrahamic religions. During my onsite research, I witnessed Sufi sheikhs encouraging connecting on a human level with others regardless of their religious affiliation. Those who attended the Sufi activities, some of whom had Serbian and Croatian heritage, related relief in hearing such messages of peace. One aspect of my study focused on the physical presence of symbols and messages portraying tolerance that existed at the tekiyas and mosques where Sufism was practiced. These visuals, sometimes dating back to the mid-15th century, showed ongoing and consistent reinforcement of harmony and interconnectedness between the Abrahamic religions. My research recognizes that there is diversity within Islam and focuses on Sufism as a source of hope and stability to counter the more radical forms of Islam and transition a post-conflict society towards stability and moderation because of its universal outlook and spiritual teachings. The

permanence and extent of the Sufi presence in Bosnia makes it an ideal location for this study.

Clashes between the West and Islam

The theory of a “Clash of Civilizations,” which was first discussed by Bernard Lewis in his essay “Roots of Muslim Rage” (1990) and later made famous by Samuel Huntington (1993), describes inevitable conflicts between certain cultural entities that are defined as civilizations when they come in contact. According to Huntington, there are seven or eight civilizations in existence including: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin-American, and possibly African.⁸ The key definers of civilizations are religion and ethnicity, although these are used with fluidity, and other differences are used as well such as language, ancestry, history, and values.⁹ Religion is important to defining a civilization because ethics and morality are often determined by it, and ethnicity plays a role by aiding to physically distinguish between “us” and “them.” Huntington’s theory elaborates that the innate differences between these nations and groups will spark the conflicts in this next phase of international fighting because of increased interaction and the challenges this brings to traditional life and self-identity. Unfortunately, this intriguing theory was shortened by the media into 60-second sound bites that position Islam against the West, and recycled images of angry Arab-looking Muslims on the nightly news solidify the dramatic effect.

⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 25.

⁹ Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” 21.

Conflict between Western Christianity and Islam is certainly not new, and Huntington points out that in the 1500s there was a clear dividing line through Western Europe that separated Western Christianity from Orthodox Christianity and Islam. Starting in the north, it ran between Finland and Russia, through Belarus, Ukraine, and Bosnia, ending at the Adriatic Sea. Those residing to the West and North of this line had the shared experiences of European history, while those East and South experienced the Ottoman or Tsarist history.¹⁰ Various Islamic surges and Christian Crusades attempted to shift the power, thus earning the Islamic borders the nickname of being “bloody.”¹¹

It should be noted that Balkan history is intriguing because of the sheer number of empires that fought for control of its soil, each leaving traces that resulted in a richly diverse Balkan culture and tolerant environment. Esteemed poet of the Balkans Dr. Durakovic included this concept in his poem titled “Karin Monastery”:

Rome, Byzant, Ottomans, Vienna, Budapest
 The crowns and the swords on the bottom of murky waters
 Is the same one way road, empty, desolate
 Where the glory of the world
 on its brief path, is walking.¹²

Prior to Communism, five foreign empires had ruled over this much-desired gateway between the East and West. Trade routes and migration introduced many languages, traditions, religions, and other diversities to this active peninsula. Thus, the Balkan Peninsula is vastly different from the other Muslim and Orthodox lands categorized by

¹⁰ Huntington, “The Clash of Civilization?” 30.

¹¹ See Bernard Lewis’ 1990 Essay, “The Roots of Muslim Rage.”

¹² Asaf Durakovic, “Karin Monastery.” *Subterranean Waters*, (in press), 2004. Reprinted with permission from author.

Huntington as being East and South of the “bloody” dividing line through Western Europe.

There are several theories that approach the subject of current Muslim/Christian conflict. Bernard Lewis proposes that Muslims are presently experiencing a time of rage as a result of the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. In his 2002 book titled *What Went Wrong?* Lewis attempts to pinpoint the exact reasons for the downfall of the Islamic Empire. He suggests that the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, whose arts, sciences, military and trading abilities greatly surpassed the Europeans during the Dark Ages, were taken by surprise when they were surpassed by new inventions on and off the battlefield made by non-Muslims.¹³

According to Lewis, as the Europeans emerged from the Dark Ages, they were able to build on the knowledge that had been mastered and protected by the Muslims; however, the Muslims faced major ethical and religious dilemmas when faced with the necessity of learning from the Christians. This challenged the Islamic Civilization deeply because, as Lewis states, the traditional Muslim method to fix something was to return to the Qur'an with the understanding that God would punish those who strayed from His message. In this case though, it was the Christians who were thriving. To learn from them seemed contrary because it was the Muslim Prophet who brought the final revelation, which perfected the Christian message. As Lewis aptly declares, “one does not go forward by going backward.”¹⁴ Thus, he argues that the Muslims naturally shied away from Christian-influenced inventions and looked for those which lacked religious

¹³ Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6.

¹⁴ Lewis, 45-46.

connections, a tactic that hindering their ability to compete in the rapidly developing world. Although there were many attempts to modernize, frustrations grew with each disappointment. Lewis believes that the bewildered and disillusioned Muslims harbored ill-sentiment that is now coming to a head.

An alternative theory explaining present-day conflict is provided by Anthony Giddens, prior director of the London School of Economics and Political Science. His theory is that globalization is harming the world's people, and that today's clashes are mainly reactionary. In Giddens' book, *Runaway World* (2003), he looks directly at the growing number of poor and disadvantaged people, a statistic that contradicts the worldwide trend of growing prosperity over the past decade. He discusses the dark side of globalization, such as the reactionary anti-globalization movements and emergent transnational drug, money-laundering, and terrorist networks.¹⁵ In disadvantaged countries, globalization is viewed as a tool of the United States and other Western countries to spread culture and exert domination. Globalization brings fast changes to society and challenges traditions, concepts of identity, and long-held values and morals. In an attempt to protect themselves, their families, and their communities, people lash out at the West.

Giddens easily situates the apparent conflict between the West and Islam into this framework, but it should be noted that while Muslim dissension often receives media coverage, they are not the only ones harboring anti-American and anti-Western ideas. This sentiment is typical for those living in poor countries, and out of the 1.3 billion Muslims in the world, the majority fit into this category. In addition, nearly 80 percent of

¹⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World* (New York: Routledge, 2003), xiv.

the world's immigrants are Muslim. Such disparities do not bode well for humanity because many theorists argue that it is exactly the failed and deteriorating states that are the most dangerous for international stability.¹⁶

The international clashes prior to the 21st century were primarily wars between established nation-states; however, acts of terrorism by non-state actors have become more frequent. Using Cindy Combs' definition, terrorism is "a synthesis of war and theater, a dramatization of the most proscribed kind of violence – that which is perpetrated on innocent victims – played before an audience in the hope of creating a mood of fear, for political purposes."¹⁷ According to Zbigniew Brezezinski there is a tendency to oversimplify conflict and reduce the problem to surface-level occurrences because of the increased use of terrorism instead of traditional warfare.¹⁸ This oversimplification often leads to Band-Aid fixes instead of a proper understanding of the broader issues behind the terror propagated by non-state, international players. Thus, conflict continues. These terrorist activities, maybe more-so than other methods of war, hint at complex and deep concerns because of the dramatization of the event, random innocent victims, and the desired result of terror and anxiety. Crushing the propagators of terror with overwhelming state force will likely be perceived as reciprocal state terrorism and will serve to increase the group's desperation, fuel their anger, and provide

¹⁶ Giddens, xiv; Paul Collier et al. "Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy," A World Bank Policy Research Report (Washington, DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press, May 2003).

¹⁷ Cindy C. Combs, Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2005), 8.

¹⁸ Akbar Ahmed and Brian Forst, eds, After Terror: Promoting Dialogue Among Civilizations (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 17-18.

martyrs who inspire others to give their lives for the cause. Providing motivation is certainly not going to deter future attacks. Oversimplifying the issues provides no useful strategies for long-term results, but understanding the complex issues takes time and patience.¹⁹

Dialogue Instead of Clash

While large international conflicts between civilizations appear to be inevitable, this is not necessarily the case. There are many scholars and world leaders who believe that dialogue and understanding are viable options for fostering real peace between people and civilizations of the East and West while not denying the reality of differences between people and the possibility for clashes. These individuals come from various walks of life and are united by their beliefs in the goodness of humankind and the potential for peace. Examples include President Seyed Mohammed Khatami, former President of the Islamic Republic of Iran; Queen Noor, former Queen of Jordan; Sir Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain; Karen Armstrong, an author and former Catholic nun, and many others who are not mentioned here. Each speaks to the need for dialogue and breaking through the barriers to see the “other” as human and building connections that lessen the likelihood of a major conflict.

Queen Noor of Jordan believes that the clash is not between civilizations, but between human intolerance and understanding. In other words there are two broad types of people. One type is accepting of differences and willing to understand people unlike themselves, and the other is firmly intolerant and says “my way is the only way.” The

¹⁹ Ahmed and Forst, 19.

clash exists because of this intolerance.²⁰ Queen Noor argues that dialogue allows the tolerant ones to embrace their shared values, an action which challenges the views of those who are intolerant to the core of their belief. However, she writes that dialogue can only reduce the West/Islam conflict with help from two other components: education and action.²¹ Knowledge that is focused on peace, whether it is religious-based or otherwise, needs to be disseminated through the populace. This idea will grow only if it is presented as a valid option opposing hatred and violence.

Another who believes in dialogue is Sir Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain. He wrote *The Dignity of Difference* (2002) in which he encourages leaders to acknowledge and support a “theology of difference” about why variants exist and how they enhance humanity.²² He proposes that differences between people, religions, and nations are part of God’s plan and that there is dignity in the existence of these differences. For instance, according to the Qur’an, God created the world full of different nations and people to test the nations and have them compete in good works. This view creates space for variability and removes ethnocentric judgment. It also allows dialogue to move past the superficial bonds that are too-often built when the discussion narrowly focuses on commonalities.

President Khatami of Iran is also widely known for his position supporting interfaith dialogue. On September 7, 2006, he spoke at the grand Washington Cathedral in downtown D.C., during an event sponsored by the Center for Global Justice and

²⁰ Ahmed and Forst, 120.

²¹ Ahmed and Forst, 123.

²² Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference* (London: Continuum Press, 2002), 21.

Reconciliation at the Cathedral College of the Washington National Cathedral. President Khatami's main point was that the East and West are not mutually exclusive nor are they incompatible, and they need to merge. By joining Western reason (logos) and Eastern spirituality (mythos), humans can experience fulfillment in life as well as find answers to modern challenges and save the world from aggressive and materialistic leaders. The West has focused exclusively on reason and disregarded the more spiritual and life-giving aspects for too long. By engaging in dialogue with the East, seeking new understandings of the world, and returning to the common essence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the human soul can be healed, and the great void of meaninglessness may be filled. Likewise, the East would benefit by including more rationality into its affairs and by pursuing development in the modern world. President Khatami closed with suggestions and by stressing how vital this dialogue is for the vision of peace, morality, and progress to be realized.

Karen Armstrong, in *The Battle for God* (2000), discusses modernity and the response to fundamentalism within the Abrahamic religions. She sees fundamentalism and intolerance of others as a 20th century response to modernization, secularism, and the overemphasis on reason in today's society. For example, when Muslim Spain was conquered in 1492 by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, the pluralistic city-state of Granada soon became devoid of Muslims and then, by the Edict of Expulsion (1499), of Jews. Six-hundred years of tolerance in the territory of al-Andalus ceased abruptly, and the last of the Islamic strongholds in Christendom was initiated into modernity through ethnic cleansing and mass conversions. According to Armstrong, some of those who

experienced the process of modernization as destructive, cruel, and coercive would later turn to fundamentalism and the belief of a cosmic war between good and evil.²³

In addition to individuals, even security studies scholars are discussing the need for greater understanding of Islam and allying with moderate Muslims. One example is the Rand Corporation, which published a research brief in 2004 titled, “U.S. Strategy in the Muslim World after 9/11.” This article encourages connecting with moderate Muslim groups and developing a network of moderates equipped to neutralize and counter radical Islamic teachings. Acknowledging that Islam is equipped with concepts and inspiration that encourages peace and moderation is crucial to dialoguing and working together to create a more peaceful world.

Peace from the Islamic Perspective

Peace is an integral part of Islam, starting with the root of the word, salaam (peace). According to this religious tradition, true peace can never be finitely achieved because it is a continuous process that requires constant striving (jihad) to reach and maintain it. Islamic peace encompasses more than simply the absence of fighting, which is categorized in Peace Studies as “negative peace.”²⁴ It also reaches for inner and outer tranquility with God and with all of God’s creation; a notion referred to as “positive peace.”²⁵ The concepts of forgiveness, justice, unity with God, mercy, the original

²³ Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 3-4, 6.

²⁴ Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1996), 9.

²⁵ Abdul Karim Bangura, *Islamic Peace Paradigms* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 2005), 36.

goodness of all human beings, and the search for knowledge are all involved in the Islamic notion of peace.

Forgiveness (afu) and mercy (rahim) are strong Islamic values that sustain peace in a society. In the Qur'an there is a clear preference for forgiveness over revenge. It reports, "But whosoever forgives and thereby brings about a reestablishment of harmony, his reward is with God, and God loves not the wrongdoers" (42:40). Mercy and forgiveness were exemplified by Prophet Muhammad when he entered Mecca after its conquest and forgave all who had persecuted him.²⁶ In this example, revenge was not enacted on the people of Mecca, and peace was established. Since Prophet Muhammad is viewed as the ideal human, Muslims strive to follow his example and are taught to use forgiveness and mercy by the Hadith (recorded sayings of Prophet Muhammad) and Sunna (norm-setting actions of the Prophet Muhammad).

Justice (adl) is very important within Islamic ideas of peace, and they are often mentioned together in the Qur'an,²⁷ such as in the following verse, which states that peace simply does not exist if there is injustice: "God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion (16:90). Only when human rights are respected and fairness prevails is peace able to exist, and, even then, justice must be maintained for positive peace. It is the duty

²⁶ S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, "Muslim Perspectives on War and Peace" (presented paper, First annual Conference of the Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence, James Madison University, Harrisburg, Virginia, April 11, 2005): 8.

²⁷ Muhammad Abu-Nimer, "Islamic Principles and Values of Peacebuilding," *Religion and Spirituality*, no. 7 (Winter 1999-2000): 7.

of all Muslims to “work for justice and reject oppression.”²⁸ Differences in religion, race, and nationality do not alter this call for justice because these divisions among humanity are meaningless in Islam. As a well-known Hadith states, “All people are equal, as equal as the teeth of a comb. There is no claim of merit of an Arab over a Persian (non-Arab), or of a white over a black person, or of a male over female. Only God-fearing people merit a preference with God.”²⁹ This norm-setting statement by Prophet Muhammad removes all excuses that may be used to promote injustice toward another.

Striving for justice sometimes necessitates fighting. In the Qur’anic verse 8:39 and 61, it is written, “Fight them until there is no more unrest or oppression and religion is for God...but if they lean toward peace, you lean toward peace and trust in God.” In verse 2:216, it states, “Fighting is prescribed for you and it is hateful to you.” This shows recognition that conflict is unpleasant, but certain causes are worthy of the effort. However, fighting should only be conducted within a framework of honorable rules established by Shariah Law. For instance, killing women, children, or the elderly is not allowed. Muslims who choose complete nonviolence argue that since modern warfare does not discriminate between innocent and combatant targets, it is not allowed by Islam. Radical Muslims argue that the rules do not apply in today’s world because this is a cosmic conflict between good and evil. Moderate Muslims, in contrast, are known to fight when their existence or religion are threatened, but do not exaggerate in aggression towards the other because this is strictly warned against in the Qur’an.

²⁸ Abu-Nimer, “Islamic Principles and Values of Peacebuilding,” 50.

²⁹ Mohammad Ali, A Manual of Hadith (Lahore: Ahmadiyya Anjuman, 1941), quoted in Abu-Nimer, Muhammad, “Framework for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam,” in Contemporary Islam: Dynamic, not Static, eds. Abdul Aziz Said, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, and Meena Sharify-Funk, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 148.

Tawhid is belief in the spiritual “unity of being” (wahdat al-wujud), which means that all things are connected through God, the Creator. The Qur'an states: “Wheresoever you turn is the face of God” (2:115). Muslims believe that God breathed his divine breath into Adam and that all of creation contains markings of divinity. The divine attributes, which are commonly referred to as the “99 Names of God,” are present in the people, creatures, and all things in our environment. The actualization of tawhid is the ability to recognize the manifestations of these divine attributes during every second of every day. Along with the acknowledgement of divinity existing in all of God's creation is also the belief that humans are caretakers of the earth and should tend to each other, the creatures, and the environment.

Closely tied to tawhid is the concept of fitrah, meaning that all people are born pure and good. All life is considered sacred because it comes from God, and mankind was made “in the best of moulds” (95:4). The Qur'an teaches that “If anyone slew a person... it is as though that person slew the whole people, and if anyone saves a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people” (5:32). In other words, life is a sacred gift given from God. It is not to be wasted or destroyed.

Muslims are called to do good deeds and act in sincerity (ihsan), a concept that is given great significance in the Qur'an: “Those who believe (in the Prophet of Islam) and those who are Jews and Christians and the Sabians, who believe in God and the Last Day of Judgment and whose deeds are good, shall have their reward with their Lord. On them there shall be no fear nor shall they grieve” (2:62). It is often mentioned along with belief in God, suggesting that every believer should act righteously. Examples of good

deeds include giving alms (zakat) to the poor, orphans, widows, and helpless, working for justice, and caring for ones parents, family, and neighbors.³⁰

Although there are many more concepts involved in Islamic peace, a final one to mention here is ilm (knowledge). This is the second most-used word in the Qur'an, and humanity is commanded to constantly pursue knowledge, with the most beautiful knowledge being the knowledge about God. Interestingly, scholarship is placed in higher regard than dying while fighting for Islam. The Prophet Muhammad is recorded as saying, "The ink of the scholar is more meaningful than the blood of the martyr." Another Hadith reports that the Prophet instructed that one must search for knowledge even if it means traveling to China, one of the farthest known civilizations at that time. This illustrates the importance of teaching yourself and others. Real peace and harmony will remain elusive unless the mind is alive and knowledge is being pursued.

These concepts of peace are very much a part of Islam, although they are not mentioned during in the 60-second sound bites that report on the Middle East or the War on Terror. Peaceful movements and the actions of moderates are simply not as interesting as bloodshed and strife. It is extremely important, especially now, to remember these concepts of peace in Islam and draw attention to them. It is through these concepts that the Sufis of Bosnia and other similar groups around the world believe in tolerance toward those who are different and reach across the East/West division to reinforce the innate connection uniting all of humanity.

³⁰ Muhammad Abu-Nimer, "Framework for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam," in *Contemporary Islam: Dynamic, not Static*, ed. Abdul Aziz Said, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, and Meena Sharify-Funk, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 145.

Evidence for Peace

While evidence of a major clash between Islam and the West appears overwhelming at times, the evidence against an inevitable clash must not be ignored or discredited because of the danger that Huntington's theory may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Understanding that the civilizations of the West and Islam are not headed for an inevitable clash needs to be made more noticeable to combat the loud and dangerously-tantalizing messages of war. The violence that currently exists is not necessarily based on innate differences, nor is the only remedy conflict. Instead, the examples of inter-religious harmony need to be brought into the open. It is important for the elderly British lady whom I met at the Slovenian airport and others around the globe to not be controlled by fear but understand that there are people and religious groups bridging the divisive barrier and building a peaceful society. Like the Berlin Wall, there are holes forming in this barrier, and it is possible to tear it down.

This paper focuses on one such group that is straddling the apparent great divide between Islam and the West. The Sufis of Bosnia are a group of Muslims that consistently look to the Qur'an and Hadith for guidance and apply the concepts mentioned above to promote peace and harmony with others around them. These spiritual Muslims bridge the gap between the East and West with teachings that were passed down since the time of Prophet Muhammad. Although relatively little is known about the Sufis in the Balkans, they entered the peninsula sometime in the late 14th century and have been present since then.

According to Huntington's technique for distinguishing civilizations, the Bosnian Sufis are Muslim by religion and mainly Western European by physical ethnicity, like

most of the Balkan people, making it difficult to wholly categorize them into one of his seven or eight civilizations. The larger group of Balkan Muslims self-identifies as “European Muslims” and expresses desire to be accepted as legitimate by the West and given rights to practice their peaceful religious tradition. The Bosnian Sufis, in particular, are loving and tolerant people who represent a merging of Islam and Western civilization.

To ascertain how these Muslims live in Southern Europe without constantly conflicting with the Western civilization and Christian and Jewish religions that surround them, this paper looks into the notions of Sufism, its historical and contemporary existence in Bosnia, and the beliefs promoted by the Bosnian Sufis concerning the other Abrahamic religions. An on-site study was completed during March of 2006 and June through August of 2007. By researching the Bosnian Sufis, it is my desire to understand the role that Sufis may play in drawing the world together and lessening the chances of a major clash between the West and Islam. Their contemporary example in Bosnia of merging these civilizations is important because it offers tangible proof that Islam is not only an Eastern religion, but a universal message. It also serves as an actualization that war is not an inevitable event. These Muslim mystics can open our eyes to a more comprehensive understanding of religion and its role in promoting peace between the civilizations.

Chapter II

Sufism

Peace through Love

Dr. Akbar Ahmed, Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at American University in Washington, D.C., and former commissioner of Pakistan to Great Britain, recently traveled through South Asia exploring the effects of globalization on the Muslim world. In the resulting book, *Journey into Islam* (2007), Dr. Ahmed presents the three forms of Islam that he witnessed including the traditionalists who were striving to “preserve the purity” of Islam, the mystics who were open and respectful of other faiths, and the modernists who were attempting to merge Islam with the West.¹ Ahmed’s model allows the Sufis to be understood in today’s context with two other common forms of Islam. It also aids in distinguishing who the Sufis are and discusses their impact on the world.

Dr. Ahmed expands on his model of contemporary Islam by metaphorically linking the three forms with three towns in India.² The traditionalists, whether they are the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia or Hamas in the Middle East, are similar to Deoband, India. The metaphorical city for the mystics is Ajmer. He describes the Muslims who belong to this group as being all who gather inspiration from the mystical tradition of Sufism within Islam. The modernists, whose existence is recognized as a direct

¹ Akbar Ahmed, *Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalization* (Virginia: The Brookings Institution, 2007), 32.

² Ahmed, *Journey into Islam*, 33-34, 36-37.

consequence of Western imperialism, are similar to the town of Aligarh. A few world examples of modernists include Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Shah of Iran and Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan in India.¹ These three forms of Islam can be found universally throughout the world, but connecting them metaphorically to actual locations allows for fuller conceptualization of their existence.

The form described by Ahmed that is most pertinent for this study of Sufism is the one connected to Ajmer. This city is located in a Hindu part of India and contains the mausoleum of Sufi Sheikh Muniuddin Chisti, who is world-renowned for the miraculous healings that occur at the site, in particular the answered prayers for desired pregnancies. When Ahmed and his student researchers conducted their on-site research, they found that not only Muslims visited this city and paid respect by visiting its shrine, but also Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians. This is due to the great respect given to Sheikh Chisti and the example he set. When he first brought Islam to this area, his motto was “peace with all.”² This humble and spiritual approach attracted people to Islam without ostracizing the other religions.

This tradition of respecting all is still practiced today at his mausoleum. Hailey Woldt, one of Ahmed’s student-researchers, was chosen to honor the Sufi sheikh by leading the group into the sheikh’s shrine and showering rose petals upon the grave, regardless that she was Christian. This example of universal acceptance and love moved her to write the following passage:

¹ Ahmed, *Journey into Islam*, 33, 36.

² Ahmed, *Journey into Islam*, 56.

I felt connected through my energy to all of humanity, through the rose petals which I threw on the saint's grave to the stars in the sky and the sand on the beaches. The shrine, my body, the colors all dissolved into the universe and into a blissful feeling of nothing; my identity did not matter here. I felt close to my God, the only God, as the other worshippers felt close to Him.³

Ahmed's Ajmer model is not limited to India but is found throughout the world. The amazing ability of Sufism to overcome differences has earned it a place within American University's International Peace and Conflict Resolution Program as a specific paradigm of peace. It is recognized as a way to transform the heart on an individual level, which then ripples out to affect the community and ultimately the world. In Abdul Karim Bangura's book (2005), it is referred to as "Peace through Love."⁴

This transformation is explained as an inner transformation of bringing the soul back in harmony with the Divine. Seyyed Hossein Nasr suggests that to do so, one must, to the best of one's ability, act in such a way that God would approve, which is laid out by the Shariah Law, strive according to what is taught in the religious books and by the examples of the prophets, and then, let go of the result with the understanding that God is in charge.⁵ Acting in such a way that would be acceptable to God is called *ihsan*, or doing what is beautiful. When people are in unity with the Divine, love governs everything, as God is the One Who loves without conditions (Al-Wadud), the One Who

³ Ahmed, *Journey into Islam*, 55.

⁴ Anne Marie Marsa and Yasmeen Peer, "Peace through Love," in *Islamic Peace Paradigms*, ed. Abdul Karim Bangura, 95-121. (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 2005), 95.

⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco: 2002), 8.

has absolute compassion for His creation (Ar-Rahman), and the One Who actively intervenes with compassion for His creation (Ar-Raheem).⁶

Existence and Elusiveness of Sufism

An introductory discussion on Sufism is difficult because there is no straightforward definition. Scholarly writers typically describe it as the mystical dimension of Islam, while nonacademic writers tend to describe it as the “universal spirit of mysticism” that is central in all religions.⁷ Esoteric metaphors hint at the meaning of Sufism but typically obscure it. For example Ali ibn Ahmad Bushanji offered the following: “Today, Sufism is a name without a reality, but it was a reality without a name.” Carl Ernst links Sufism with an ethical and spiritual goal partially because prescriptive sayings abound in Sufism. One such saying from Qushayri’s collection is: “The sign of a sincere Sufi is that he feels poor when he has wealth, is humble when he has power, and is hidden when he has fame.”⁸ Sufism effectively evades being confined to a restrictive definition.

I was once told by a Bosnian sheikh that it is only through living on the path of the tariqa (Sufi path) that one comes to understand Sufism. Words fall short when used to describe the essence of Sufism because it extends beyond the capacity of our vocabularies, and confining it does it injustice. Annemarie Schimmel notes that mysticism comes from the Greek *myein*, “to close the eyes.” She states that “only the

⁶ Sheik Asaf, *The Key to the 99 Secret Gates* (Fingraf Tryckeri, Sweden: Sodertalje, 2001), 1, 2, 47.

⁷ Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997), xvii.

⁸ Carl Ernst, 18-19.

wisdom of the heart, gnosis, may give insight into some of its aspects.”⁹ Sufism seems to consist of knowledge that is understood by the soul, but not fully conceptualized by the brain, which is focused on the present existence and easily forgets the presence of God.

Another difficulty with defining Sufism originates from the terminology. Sufism is an English translation of the original Arabic word Tasawwuf, so chosen by the Orientalists to identify a type of philosophy and social movement that they witnessed in Muslim lands. Erroneously, they divorced it from the religion of Islam and tried to associate it with Hindu yoga, Greek philosophy, or Buddhism. This was because the Ottoman Empire was hated and feared by the Europeans, and Islam had earned a reputation of being harsh and overly concerned with legal and outer practices. Sufism, on the other hand, was used to describe a movement in which Rumi’s love poetry flourished and which was more focused on inner experience than strict outer rituals. The Orientalists, such as Sir William Jones (d. 1794)¹⁰ and Sir John Malcolm (d. 1833), respected the Sufis as freethinkers and, therefore, considered them to be either a deviation from Islam or a result from outside influences.¹¹

In this paper, the term Sufism is used, although not without hesitation. While it has become accepted in literature, it is understood to denote an outside point of view. Tasawwuf is a more natural term to use, as is Tariqa for the spiritual path, or way of life,

⁹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 4.

¹⁰ See the translation of “Sir William ‘Oriental’ Jones, from *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1799) in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*.
http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/18century/topic_4/jones.htm [accessed September 17, 2007].

¹¹ Carl Ernst, 8-9, 19.

chosen by one desiring to become a Sufi. However, for reasons of simplicity and to blend with the present literature, I use the term Sufism.

Origins of Sufism

There are two common theories on how Sufism began. The first ventures that Sufism was part of Islam at its inception. As Sheikh Fadhlalla Haeri states:

Sufism and Islam cannot be separated in the same way that higher consciousness or awakening cannot be separated from Islam. Islam is not an historic phenomenon that began 1,400 years ago. It is the timeless art of awakening by means of submission. Sufism is the heart [emphasis in original] of Islam. It is as ancient as the rise of human consciousness.¹²

During the time of Prophet Muhammad, there were forty-nine pious and ascetic “ashab as-saffa” (Companions of the bench) to whom he taught deeper knowledge of submission to God in his Medina mosque. In addition, “safa” means purity and may or may not be connected to the later term of Sufi.¹³ The deeply-spiritual knowledge was kept from the majority of Muslims so as not to cause disharmony within the new faith. The Companions, who were also referred to as “Friends of God,” guarded this knowledge and passed it down through the generations through a legitimate succession of spiritual teachers (sheikhs). In 622, a small number of people began to be referred to as Sufis, a term that was associated with searching for inner awakening and Divine enlightenment.¹⁴

The Umayyad Empire was known for its overemphasis on wealth and power, to which certain individuals rebelled by completely rejecting the world and living

¹² Sheikh Fadhlalla Haeri, *The Thoughtful Guide to Sufism* (Alresford, U.K.: O Books, 2004), 7-9.

¹³ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 5.

¹⁴ Haeri, *The Thoughtful Guide to Sufism*, 11.

ascetically on God's provisions. Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 801) is one such person. She lived purely by the blessings of God, denouncing the human need for sleep, food, and comforts. She lived purely for loving the Creator and Sustainer. One of her famous prayers was, "O God, if I worship Thee for fear of Hell, burn me in Hell, and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise; but if I worship Thee for Thy own sake, grudge me not Thy everlasting beauty.¹⁵ Another ascetic of the times was Hasan of Basra (d.728). He was known for his expressions of grief, rigorous devotions, and strict austerity. Farid al-Din Attar, also a greatly respected Sufi, describes Hasan of Basra as being "revered as one of the greatest saints of early Islam."¹⁶

In the early 12th century, Sufism became institutionalized.¹⁷ Orders, also called tariqas, were formed with various styles of denying the world and seeking Divine knowledge of the unknown. Sufism became known to the public as a way to return to submission (islam) and receive training in devotions to God. Further discussion of the various orders that developed is included later in this thesis.

The second most common theory of origin is based on etic scholarship. Historians point to the time when individuals began being identified as Sufis and report that this is when Sufism actually began. In Arabic, "suf" means wool, and since some of the early Sufis chose to wear wool, especially in Basra, scholars tend to point to this as the origin

¹⁵ Farid al-Din Attar, Muslim Saints and Mystics, trans. A. J. Arberry (Boston: Routledge: 1976), 51. Also see Camille Adams Helminski, ed. Women of Sufism: A Hidden Treasure (Boston: Shambhala, 2003), 28.

¹⁶ Attar, 19.

¹⁷ William C. Chittick, Sufism: A Short Introduction (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000), 19.

of the term “Sufi.”¹⁸ This conclusion, however, is not universally supported by Sufi sheikhs. For example, Sheikh Asaf quickly dismisses the idea that there was ever a dress code for the Sufis and points out that there were much cheaper and more appropriate materials than wool for an austere person to wear. More than likely, rather than having their name linked to a type of cloth, there is a deeper, spiritual origin for the term Sufi. However, at this point the actual origin remains hidden.

Common Aspects of Sufism

The driving force of existence for those on the Sufi path is deep and timeless love. This love “is the secret of life and the cause of the universe.”¹⁹ Hadith Qudsi, a collection of sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, states that God created because He was a hidden treasure and desired to be known. Bangura explains the importance of love and our creation in this way:

Allah’s (SWT) raison d’être for creating human beings is in fact to actualize Love. No other creature has the capacity to love back in the same way that humans do. The achievement of this ideal, according to the great Sufi poet, Rumi, can never be achieved by the human will alone. It is something that is given by Allah (SWT) in his own time.²⁰

This love begins the journey of a Sufi. The Qur’an states, “Verily, those who attain faith and do righteous deeds will the Most Gracious endow with love.”²¹ By practicing correct behavior, ritual devotions, and extra devotions, the seeker takes a step

¹⁸ J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 1.

¹⁹ Massud Farzan, *The Tale of the Reed Pipe* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc. 1974), xv.

²⁰ Abdul Karim Bangura, *Islamic Peace Paradigms* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 2005), 100.

²¹ Qur’an 19:96.

away from the illusions of this world and closer to the true Reality.²² When a person takes one step toward the Divine, God takes many steps towards that person, as is repetitively stated in the Qur'an and Hadith. In this transformational journey, the logical head works until the heart is purified enough to open and take the lead.

The Sufis are known for striving to experience God's love and fully incorporate the Divine in their lives. They attempt to purify themselves from the temptations of greed, depression, and harmful intentions, which are recognized as Satan's devices. These lower-base emotions easily distract attention from attaining real meaning in life, which is to know God and remain in constant remembrance of the Divine. Sheikh Fadhlallah describes this process as a "timeless art of awakening through submission to the Divine."²³ Submission (islam) means that one aligns oneself with God's instructions and desires for mankind. God has provided mankind with known and unknown prophets who spread His message and stepped, according to Hadith, everywhere on the earth.

Sufis are instructed by the Qur'an and Hadith to be in constant remembrance of God and inspired to embrace tawhid (unity of all) as a direct and personal experience of the Divine. Constant awareness by relating to the divine in everything awakens hidden knowledge about God inside the heart. Hadith Qudsi 25 states:

"My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks."

²² Haeri, *The Thoughtful Guide to Sufism*, 13. See also Hadith Bukari.

²³ Sheikh Fadhlallah Haeri, *The Elements of Sufism* (Great Britain: Element Books, Inc., 1990), introduction.

When a person is consistently conscious of God's presence and is transformed by this knowledge, then everything that defines the person through selfish understanding evaporates, and all that continues to exist is the awareness of God.

One famous example of this is Mansur Hallaj and his jubilation of "Ana al-Haqq" (I am the Truth/God). This statement is a wondrous achievement that won him the title among the Sufis of "martyr of mystical love."²⁴ He uttered this after removing the false gods in his life and when he was overcome with the realization of his unity with the Divine. However, among the more orthodox ulema and other Muslims, Al-Hallaj was regarded as a blasphemer and heretic.²⁵ For complicated political and theological reasons, Al-Hallaj was executed in either 913.²⁶ Regardless, he is still remembered by the Sufis for his extraordinary achievement of tawhid.

Because of tawhid, the Sufis see everyone in the world imbued with divine attributes. This knowledge facilitates peaceful interactions between people because those who are aware of the divine attributes are also aware of them in themselves and others. Tellingly, the Head Sheikh of the Bektashi Sufi Order said the following during an interview with author Norman Gershman; the topic was about the Balkan Sufis who risked their lives to save Jews from the Nazi persecution:

We Bektashi see God everywhere, in everyone. God is in every pore and every cell. Therefore, all are God's children. There cannot be infidels. There cannot be discrimination. If one sees a good face, one is seeing the face of God. 'God is beauty. Beauty is God. There is no God but God.'²⁷

²⁴ Michael Sells. Early Islamic Mysticism (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 22-23.

²⁵ Attar, 264-271.

²⁶ Attar, 264.

²⁷ Quoted in Akbar Ahmed, Journey into Islam, 34.

With this knowledge of the unity of God and creation, all people deserve love, compassion, justice, and peace.

Sufism encourages philosophy and exploration of man's relationship to the Divine, and there are numerous celebrated minds. Al Ghazali (d. 1058-1111) was a brilliant jurist and theologian whose writings introduced Sufism as an important aspect of orthodox Islam. While teaching at the esteemed Nizamiyyah College at Baghdad, he realized that philosophy and theology were limited in their approach to the God and experienced a spiritual crisis. He turned to Sufism because it provided avenues through which to gain further knowledge and experience the Divine. After this point in his life, he continued to write and pursue Divine Truth through means provided by Sufism. He has 400 books to his name, including *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, in which he details how the doctrines and practices in Islam serve in reaching an intense spiritually devotional life. Ibn al-Arabi (d. 1240) of Spain was another esteemed Sufi who brought the mystical dimensions of Islam into philosophical discourse. He earned the name of Sheikh al-Akbar, the Greatest Sheikh, and is well-known for writing *The Meccan Revelations*, which contains 560 chapters on the esoteric sciences of Islam, and his most impressive work demonstrating his profound understanding of spiritual knowledge, *The Bezels of Wisdom*. These and many others contributed to empirical Islamic discourse through knowledge received from the Divine.

Mysticism and the Qur'an

The Sufis receive more than just instructions and inspiration from the Qur'an; they see the Qur'an as evidence for a mystical relationship with God. The first mystic within

Islam was Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, who received divine revelation over a period of 23 years. This and his other religious experiences mentioned in the Qur'an and extrapolated on in the Hadiths serve as the prototype of spiritual knowledge in Islam. An encounter with the Most High transcends the temporal and spatial limits in the realm of another plane of existence.

According to Muslim tradition, Prophet Muhammad's first prophetic experience was the revelation in Mt. Hira' when he encountered the Angel Gabriel and the opening chapter of the Qur'an was dictated to him. His other powerful experience is known in tradition as the Night Journey. During this experience, he spiritually flew with the Angel Gabriel on a winged creature called Buraq from the Ka'ba to the "Farthest Mosque", believed by some to be the former Temple of the Jews in Jerusalem, while other scholars believe it to be the farthest station of worship, to which the Prophet ascended into close proximity to God. The great prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, were introduced to Prophet Muhammad during the Night Journey, and he was asked to lead them in prayer. During this legendary event, the formal foundations of Islam were outlined, including the prayers, charity, abstaining from intoxicating substances such as alcohol, and other essential commandments.²⁸

The Prophet Muhammad, after the night journey to Jerusalem (Isra), is said to have experienced the Mi'raj, or Ascent. He and Gabriel ascended through the heavenly spheres, reaching the close proximity of God, allegorically symbolized as two bow lengths. Thousands of thousands of smiling angels met him, as well as one whose

²⁸ Sheikh Asaf Durakovic, Public Ashura Sermon at Sufi Tekiya in Waterport, NY, 12 February 2006.

expression was not joyful. This angel, named Malik, was the Keeper of Hell and, upon request, showed Muhammad a glimpse of the blazing hellfire. The Prophet also witnessed Adam observing the souls of his offspring being punished for usury, adultery, stealing from the orphans, and having unlawful relationships. At the second level of heaven, Prophet Muhammad saw Jesus and John the Baptist. Joseph, son of Jacob, was in the third heaven. Enoch was in the fourth heaven, and in the fifth was Aaron. In the sixth, he met Moses, and in the seventh, Abraham.²⁹ At this point, Gabriel stayed behind and the Prophet Muhammad ascended into the spiritual place, Sidretul Muntaha, where he had an even closer encounter with God, being permitted to cross the curtain separating the created world.³⁰

These mystical experiences serve as the example for all mystical experiences in Islam. They show the ability to come into close proximity to God, experience the levels of heaven, and glimpse into hell. The dictation of the Qur'an is proof that it is possible to receive Divine knowledge straight from God. The limits that this world places on existence are shattered by these unexplainable and astounding experiences.

Common Sufi Practices

“Have you ever been in love?” A Bosnian imam posed this question through a translator during the summer of 2007. My translator burst into joyous laughter and exclaimed “Yes!” even before telling me on the meaning. “Well,” continued the imam, “That is what dhikr is. It’s when that person is always on your mind, and you’re always

²⁹ John A. Williams, ed. *The Word of Islam* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 43-46.

³⁰ Sheikh Asaf, personal communication, Waterport, New York, March 8, 2006.

thinking beautiful thoughts about him or her. In dhikr, you are constantly thinking about God and his wondrous attributes.”

Dhikr refers to remembering God through ritual litany of God’s 99 attributes. It is encouraged in the Qur’anic verse, “O you who believe, remember God constantly.”³¹ The most common attributes are Ar-Rahman, the One who has absolute compassion for His creation, and Ar-Rahim, the One who actively intervenes with compassion for His creation. Others include Al-Ghafur, the all forgiving, and Ar-Rafi, the One who lifts you to wherever you did not think possible.³² A very common dhikr is the repetition of the Muslim declaration of faith. Dhikr is the most common method used by Sufis to come into closeness with God and bring on mystical states. It is often performed with a group standing or sitting shoulder to shoulder in a circle, but it is also performed alone. It is sometimes spoken out loud and sometimes done in a whisper, which is called silent dhikr.

A second common method is called khawlats (pronounced khalvets). These are retreats in which the Sufis isolate themselves from others and focus on meditation, fasting, and other spiritual exercises. It is based on Prophet Jesus’ 40 days and nights of meditation and confronting of Satan in the desert and Prophet Muhammad’s similar yearly excursion of 40 days and nights on Mount Hira. Sometimes these simply consist of a weekend spent in contemplation and prayer. Khalwats are more common among certain orders of Sufism than others.

³¹ Qur'an 33:41

³² Sheikh Asaf, 2001, 1-2, 23.

A third common practice among Sufis is sama‘, or listening to music, poetry, rustling of the leaves, or silence (listening to the steps of light).³³ Sama‘ is seen as “nourishment of the soul” and has the ability to bring on intense emotional and spiritual states faster than dhikr alone. The Sufis are inspired by the music to move and dance. Whether or not sama‘ is truly a vessel to God or a distraction from God has been hotly debated within the Muslim community, heightening between the 10th and 16th centuries as well as more recently by the Wahhabis. Earlier, it was decided by the majority of Muslims that sama‘ was a legitimate practice, and it is now practiced by many orders, especially the Mawlawi, Chishti, and Sa’di, but it is still discouraged by others. There are three categories of sama‘ including music of the spirit, music of the heart, and music of one’s lower soul, the latter of which is not allowed by the majority of Sufis.³⁴

Slight Variations in the Path

The early Sufis brought their own styles and ideas that diversified Islam. These spiritual guides (sheikhs) and those who gathered near to learn from them were the foundations for many of the Sufi Orders existing today. Some scholars maintain that there are 12 principal orders, but this cannot be proven by strict scrutiny because of smaller tariqas that branch from the traditional orders. Some of the main orders include: Qadiri, Sa’di, Badawi, Rifa’i, Halwati, Bektashi, Naqshbandi, Mevlevi, Chishti, Suhrawardi, Shadhili, and Tijani. The ones that are pertinent to the study of Balkan Sufism are the Naqshbandi, Qadiri, Rifa’i, Halwati, Bektashi, Mevlevi, and Chishti. It is

³³ Sheikh Asaf, personal communication, 19 March 2006.

³⁴ Knysh, 314-325.

understood that any of these orders can lead an individual to be closer to God, although the more orthodox orders, such as Naqshbandi, Qadiri, and Mevlevi, have typically received more acceptance than the less orthodox, such as Bektashi and Rifa'i.

On one level, these orders have very little to do with the political division of Sunni and Shi'a in Islam, although over time, some orders have become inclined toward one or the other branch. Sufis in general do not get involved with politics because leaders come and go while God remains. Several orders make no difference between Sunni and Shi'a Islam because of the unity of all Muslims, based on the Shahada (declaration of faith). However, other orders specifically align themselves with Sunni or Shi'a traditions. The Naqshbandi, Qadiri, and Halveti are known for upholding the Sunni establishment and traditions, which remains dominant in the Balkan Peninsula. The Bektashi, Badawi, and Rifa'i on the other hand, are known for inclining towards Shi'a traditions.

The Qadiri Order, formed by Abdul Qadir Jilani (d. 1166), pays particular attention to the outward practices of Islam as determined by the Sunna (documented practices and customs of the Prophet). Qadiris are very well disciplined, known for “inner” jihad, and are often cited as examples of saintly living. The dervishes are also known for protecting Islam and freedoms of Muslims in the distant outposts of Islam such as in Algeria, Kosovo, and Chechnya.³⁵

The Rifa'i Order was established by Sayid Ahmed Rifa'i (d. 1182) of Iraq, nephew of 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani. Ahmed Rifa'i did not leave much of a written legacy but is well known for performing miracles. This order focuses on denial of the world through self-

³⁵ Schwartz, *The Two Faces of Islam*, 56-57.

mortification. These affirmations of faith, which require control of the body functions, such as blood flow, and independence from physical comfort, are frequently demonstrated in rituals through indifference to the wounds inflicted by the sword, dagger, hot, cold, and immunity to the poisons of snakes or scorpions. These qualities, considered miraculous by the general community of Muslims, are demonstrated in contemporary Muslim communities where Rifa'i dervishes are commonly called upon to remove scorpions, poisonous snakes, and spiders from houses, frequently proving a complete lack of fear and that venoms do not have adverse effects on them. It is said by mystics that Al-Rifa'i's tomb is still venerated as a miraculous shrine guarded by the lions in the Iraqi desert.³⁶

The Yasawi Order was named after the 12th century Pir Ahmad Yasawi, of Turkestan, who was a key figure in spreading Islam in Central Asia. Even though this order broke apart following his death, the system developed by Pir Ahmad went on to be adopted by several subsequent orders and had lasting influence on the tariqa. He demanded obedience, conviction, loyalty of disciple to teacher, and secrecy of Sufi teachings. From the Yasawi came the Naqshbandi, Bektashi, and Halwati Orders.³⁷

The Naqshbandi Order, which is now very common in Bosnia, was formed by Muhammad Bahauddin Naqshband (b. 1317). It is well known for meditation, silent dhikr, study of the Sunna and Shariah, and self-less defense of Islam. The Naqshbandis were highly respected in the Ottoman Empire and still exist in contemporary Turkey,

³⁶ Sheikh Asaf Durakovic, Public Ashura Sermon at Sufi Tekiya in Waterport, NY, 12 February 2006.

³⁷ Schwartz, The Two Faces of Islam, 57-58.

where they maintain the traditional form of Islamic life, even under the threats of the secular government founded by Ataturk.

A very important tariqa among the Turks has been the Bektashi Order. Hajji Baba Baktash, the founder, was born in Khorasan in the 13th century, according to members of this order.³⁸ For centuries, this order was associated with the elite Janissaries of the Ottoman military. The Bektashis tend to focus on the esoteric aspects of Islam, not paying close attention to many of the outward practices, such as prayer times.³⁹ According to some records, at times the Bektashis' consumed intoxicating drinks. The dervishes accepted donations of food and dined once a day from a wooden bowl carried on their belt, called keshkul.⁴⁰ Also, in many cases, this order practiced celibacy, but both women and men are welcome at the meetings.⁴¹

The Mevlevi Order, or Mawlawi in Turkish, was founded by Mawlana (our master) Jalal al-Din Rumi in the 13th century and is known for its very ritualistic and symbolic whirling dervishes. In their form of dhikr, the dervishes whirl to music. The outfits swirl around the dancers, flowing like the planets around the sun.⁴² The desired experience of the dance is ecstasy and unity with the Divine.

The Chishti Order was named after Hazrat Khwaja Muniuddin Chishti (d. 1236) of Ajmer, India, whom was discussed previously. This order is well-known for their healing

³⁸ Norris, 89.

³⁹ Denny, 242.

⁴⁰ Sheikh Asaf Durakovic, Public Ashura Sermon at Sufi Tekiya in Waterport, NY, 12 February 2006.

⁴¹ Norris, 95.

⁴² Denny, 248.

miracles, and was well respected by the Mogul dynasties, including Akbar the Great and Shah Jahan. Even though throughout history they often received lavish gifts from the kings and emperors for miraculous cures and for predicting heirs of the dynasties, the Chishtis reject possession of property and pursuit of material wealth and consider these to be in conflict with having true faith in God. They are supported in life purely through *futuh* (voluntary offerings), relying on God alone for His blessings. The Chishtis are a very peaceful tariqa that does not believe one should participate in retaliation or revenge, which are seen as laws of the animal world. Instead, the mystic should simply love God and not be distracted by the goal of achieving a place in Heaven.⁴³

The Halwati Tariqa was founded by Sheikh Omar Halwati (d. around 1397) and was inspired by the earlier Yasawi Order of the 12th century.⁴⁴ Numerous branches (kol-tariqas) evolved from this secluded dervish order. It had a reputation of strictness, but was also known for encouraging individualism.⁴⁵ The Halwatis were popular in all providences of the Ottoman Empire reaching to the West, including the Balkans. At the Ohrid Lake in Macedonia, they remained in an uninterrupted line through Pir Hayati Sultan, who is buried there alongside twelve succeeding sheikhs.⁴⁶

⁴³ Chishti Sufi Ideology. <http://web.archive.org/web/19981206124217/www.chishti.com/order/ideology.htm> accessed March 13, 2006.

⁴⁴ Sheikh Asaf, personal communication, Toronto, Canada, 23 March 2006.

⁴⁵ Trimingham, 74.

⁴⁶ Sheikh Asaf, personal communication, Toronto, Canada, 23 March 2006.

Sufism and Islam

While Sufis are generally understood by the larger Muslim community as being good and pious Muslims, over the ages various groups have expressed opinions that Sufis are not practicing real Islam. This tension is seen particularly between Wahhabism and Sufism, as they view Sufism to be a deviation and threat to Islam, second only to Western secularism.⁴⁷ This sentiment probably comes from the encouragement among Sufis to utilize one's mind to think and apply the message of the Qur'an to every-day life plus the idea of being able to experience God personally. This freedom understandably challenges some Muslims. Others, though, find it ideal for their personal journey to God.

The tendency for Sufis is not to distinguish themselves from the larger community of Muslims because they consider themselves to be no different from other Muslims and do not wish for extra attention. In addition, singling themselves out as unique implies self-importance, which is an unfavorable trait for a seeker on the Sufi path striving for humility and detachment from pride. The vast majority practice traditional orthodox Islam. In return, Sufis are typically easily accepted by the larger Muslim community because of their sincerity toward Islam and modesty in life.

The Wahhabis, though, do not accept any different form of Islam than their own. Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab, an 18th century follower of the conservative Hanbali School of Islamic jurisprudence from Najd, began this restrictive form of Islam.⁴⁸ At the

⁴⁷ Patrick Lang, "Wahhabism and Jihad." *America Magazine* 188 no. 8 (2003), America Press. MasterFILE Select. (1 March 2006), 2. Ernst, 200, 212; Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 2.

⁴⁸ Vincenzo Oliveti, *Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences* (United Kingdom: Amadeus Books, 2002), 17.

time, ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s views were found to be in discord with those of the recognized Islamic scholars, and he was disowned by his father, an eminent Islamic authority of the Hanbali School of jurisprudence, for his repressive and narrow interpretations.⁴⁹

During ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s latter travels, the English recruited him to create confusion among the Muslims of the Arabian Peninsula, which served British colonial interests.⁵⁰ They convinced Ibn Sa’ud, a desert chieftain of Nejd, to declare Wahhabi Islam as the original, authentic Islam, thus securing a relationship between the Sa’udi family of Arabia and the Wahhabis. However, its influence did not grow until after 1979 with the unspoken alliance between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United States, under Reagan’s administration, to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan.⁵¹ Ironically, it was through this alliance that Osama bin Laden became armed and trained. With the declaration of Wahhabism (or Salafism, as it is often called outside of Saudi Arabia) as the only True Islam, not only the Sufis, but all Muslims who practice Islam differently became potential targets for slander and religious conversion to this interpretation of Islam.

The Sufi and Wahhabi disagreement stems from alterations made by the Wahhabis on important Islamic doctrines, the tenants of faith, and traditional practices. Oliveti (2002) details twenty-two ways in which Wahhabism differs from traditional orthodox Islam.⁵² The Wahhabis reject the authority of the Islamic Canon, the sources of Shariah Law, the sciences of language and interpretation used to understand the Qur’an,

⁴⁹ Schwartz, *The Two Faces of Islam*, 76-78.

⁵⁰ Schwartz, *The Two Faces of Islam*, 66-67.

⁵¹ Oliveti, 19.

⁵² Oliveti, 21-42.

commentaries on the Qur'an (tafsir), reason, the laws of logic, and all transmitted knowledge, except for the Qur'an. They also disregard the idea of consensus, the required qualifications to make new religious rulings (fatwas), women's and minority's rights, and freedom of choice in religion. Also in obvious disagreement with the Sufis, the Wahhabis reject the importance of the Prophet Muhammad and his family, the study of theology, philosophy, and mysticism, the invocation of the Divine Attributes, sacred art, and music. They also only allow a literal interpretation of the Qur'an and thus are anthropomorphic in their conceptualization of God.⁵³ Since Sufis uphold traditional Islam, believe in striving to personally experience God, and propagate the idea of tawhid, the Wahhabis condemn them as heretics, while it is the Wahhabis, in fact, who have introduced many changes.

To justify and spread their altered form of Islam, Wahhabis revised the Hadith and spread their propaganda throughout the world through free publications.⁵⁴ Although Wahhabism has been banned in certain Islamic societies over the years, Sheikh Hisham Muhammad Kabbani, leader of the Islamic Supreme Council of America, reported earlier in the millennium to the American State Department that at least 80 percent of the U.S. mosques were financially supported by Wahhabi groups and had prayers led by Wahhabi-supported Muslims.⁵⁵ While misconceptions are spread about Islam, the Sufis continue

⁵³ Oliveti, 30-31.

⁵⁴ Oliveti, 28.

⁵⁵ Patrick Lang, "Wahhabism and Jihad," *America Magazine* 188, no. 8 (2003), America Press. MasterFILE Select, 3.

to teach from original Islamic sources about God's magnificent attributes, spiritual transcendence, and respect for others.

Interestingly, some Sufi orders have recently disassociated themselves from Islam to better embrace all religious and spiritual traditions. This can particularly be seen in the Chishti Order formerly under Hazrat Inayat Khan's leadership (d.1972). He divorced Sufism from Islam in his teachings and writings specifically for bringing the universal message of God to the West. He describes Sufism as mystical teachings that overarch many religious traditions and calls his order the Sufi Order International.⁵⁶ This separation from Islam, though, is greatly discouraged by the larger Muslim community.

Conclusion

While Sufism may at first be very difficult to define, it is my hope that this discussion has provided a deeper understanding of Sufism than a simple definition would supply. Sufis are driven by love to strive toward God, gathering around a spiritual teacher for guidance. They strive to be in constant remembrance of God and His wondrous attributes and gain their inspiration from the Qur'an and life of the Prophet Muhammad. The many variations within mystical Islam have resulted in similar but unique Sufi orders. In many ways, the Sufis are no different from other dedicated Muslims seeking to serve God and live in harmony with creation.

⁵⁶ Carl Ernst, "Tasawwuf" in Richard C. Martin, ed. in chief, Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World 2. (New York: Thomson Gale, 2004), 689.

Chapter III

Historical Presence of Sufism in Bosnia

Overview of Literature

The Islam in Bosnia is clearly linked to Sufism due to the role of Sufi dervishes in introducing Islam to the Balkan people and later because of how the majority of Sufi orders upheld the Orthodox Sunni Ottoman establishment. This discussion attempts to map the movements of the Sufi Orders of Bosnia throughout history according to the limited literature available. One difficulty that arose during my library research was due to the fact that Bosnia and Hercegovina was part of Serbia following 1918, declared as a republic of Yugoslavia in 1946, and became independent in March of 1992. Therefore the various authors of Balkan Sufism refer to the contemporary “Bosnian” land differently, depending on when they were writing. A bit of juggling was needed to fit the histories together. Another point to make is that there are other resources to be found in various languages in which I lack fluency and thus, unfortunately cannot include.

Džemal Čehajić, author of *Derviski Redovi u Jugoslovenskim Zemljama* (The Dervish Orders in Yugoslavian Lands), documents organized Sufism by city throughout Yugoslavia. This book describes the names and general locations of Sufi tekkiyas from pre-Ottoman time until the 1970s.¹ Čehajić’s writings are also included in Contributions

¹ Džemal Čehajić, *Derviski Redovi u Jugoslovenskim Zemljama* (Sarajevo: Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu, 1986).

to Oriental Philology, edited by Ahmed S. Aličić.¹ In the essay titled, “Social, Political, Religious, Literary and Other Aspects of the Dervish Orders in Yugoslav Lands,” Čehajić explains the interactions between the Sufis and the Ottoman and includes general locations of tekkiyas in Yugoslavia, traits of the various Sufi Orders, interactions and tensions between the orders, as well as their interaction with local cultures and politics. He provides a splendid overview of the Sufis during the time of Yugoslavia.

Hussein Abiva, chief director of the IQRA Islamic Education Center in Chicago, is another author who writes about the history of Sufism of the Balkans. A primary strength of his online article titled A Brief Glimpse at Sufism in the Balkans is the broad vision of trends he provides with the information he collected concerning Sufi presence. The main disadvantage is that Abiva’s information is largely limited to the time of Ottoman rule, and it becomes less informative when describing Bosnian Sufism in the Post-Ottoman era.²

A third resource is Hamid Algar’s article (1971), humbly titled “Some Notes on the Naqshbandi Tariqat in Bosnia.” His writing approaches the study of Bosnian Sufis by suggesting that they uphold traditional Islam by following the Qur’ān and Sunna (tradition) of the Prophet and were not falling away from Islam due to the modernization and Westernization process. Therefore, he suggests that the Sufis are a stronghold of

¹ Džemal Čehajić, “Social, Political, Religious, Literary and Other Aspects of the Dervish Orders in Yugoslav Lands” in Contributions to Oriental Philology, ed. Ahmed S. Aličić. no. 50 (Sarajevo: Oriental Institute of Sarajevo, 2002), 297-317.

² Huseyin Abiva, A Glimpse at Sufism in the Balkans. <http://www.alevibektasi.org/xabiva.htm> [accessed September 16, 2007].

traditional Islam.³ Specifically, Algar documents the Naqshibandi Order in Bosnia during the late 1960s by detailing the activities at three tekiyas.

Tone Bringa, in her book *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way*, allows for an interesting peek into the workings of a mixed Muslim and Catholic village in central Bosnia in 1987-88. Her anthropological study of Bosnian Muslims is not focused on the Sufis, but they are mentioned periodically throughout the book because of their influence with the locals. In chapter six, she specifically discusses the presence of Sufi tekiyas and dervishes. A common theme that Bringa articulates is the tension between the Communist government-sanctioned imams and the independent Sufis, the latter of which was preferred by most in the village of her study because these imams not only had Qur'anic knowledge, but also esoteric knowledge to "see what others cannot see."⁴ Even though Bringa did not focus on the Sufi orders, she was able to interact directly with a few of them and interview locals who participated in Sufi rituals, thus documenting a snapshot of opinions held at the time of her research.

There is also a collection of literature that differs drastically from those already mentioned. The distinction lies in that while they discuss Islam in the Balkans, the authors in this group fail to mention the Sufis.⁵ Instead, these authors tend to focus on the radical Islam brought by the mujahadeen from Arab states and the threat of terrorist cells in the Balkans. They do not include the mystical Muslims or their influence in

³ Hamid Algar, "Some Notes on the Taqshbandi Tariqat in Bosnia" in *Die Welt des Islams*, New Ser. 13, issue 3/4, [1971], 168-203. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?&sici=0043-2539%281971%292%3A13%3A3%2F4%3C168%3ASNOTNT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-X> [accessed September 16, 2007], 269.

⁴ Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 219.

⁵ See Pinson, 1996; Shay, 2006; and Malbouisson, 2007.

Balkan Islam, therefore they often lead the reader to believe there are no natural protections from Balkan Islam becoming completely radicalized. This is greatly misleading since native Islam in Bosnia is moderate, and it has only been since the last Balkan War, with the mujahadeen and other foreign Muslims becoming involved in the Balkans, that radical Islam has gained even a slight foothold.

An example is found in *The Two Faces of Islam*, by Steven Schwartz. He discusses the early 19th century when the Wahhabis were attacking the Arabian Peninsula and attempting to convert all Muslims to Wahhabi Islam, claiming that they were not practicing the True form of Islam and were thus non-believers. In particular, the Wahhabis despised music, interfaith friendships and marriage, the deep reverence given to the deceased, including to the Prophet Muhammad, and a focus on personal intentions rather than outer ritual of Islam. There was extreme bloodshed when village after village was attacked by the Wahhabis, and those who did not convert were slaughtered, even the children. They also cut down trees that were beloved by the Sufis. The Muslims fought back against this wave of abuses, and the Wahhabis were officially defeated in 1818 by Muhammad Ali Pasha, governor of Egypt.⁶ Muhammad Ali Pasha, an Albanian-born Muslim who had strong ties to the Bektashi Sufi Order and his beloved Balkan homeland, marched with his Ottoman troops to Dariyah, Saudi Arabia, the Wahhabi capital, and conquered it.⁷ Save but some Wahhabis protected by the British, the terrific movement was wiped out.

⁶ Schwartz, *Two Faces of Islam*, 80-81.

⁷ Schwartz, *Two Faces of Islam*, 88-89.

Therefore, when literature claims to discuss Islam in the Balkans, but does not mention the Sufis, the discussion should not be considered complete. The Sufis have played an important role in Balkan Islam and all Islamic history. The Balkans was only one part of the Muslim Empire, but it was actively participating with its trade routes and idea-spreading throughout the Empire. The Sufis continue to play an important role in the Balkans as well as elsewhere in the world.

The following discussion presents a history of the Sufi orders in Bosnia. It is organized by century in an attempt to map the movements of the Sufi orders over time. Understandably, some decades have more details than others, but the general idea is gathered. My research, which is included in the next chapter, builds from this compilation of history to update and expand knowledge of contemporary Sufism.

History

The Ottomans ruled over the land now called Bosnia for nearly six centuries, during which the majority of Sufis enjoyed a legitimate place in society. In fact, Islam was spread mainly by the efforts of Sufi sheikhs who permeated into the intellectual arenas as well as the rural villages since the time of the Crusades.⁸ They offered free lodging and meals for travelers, scholars, and the disabled. The Sufis were greatly revered during Muslim rule, and many acted in roles in the religious hierarchy of the Ottoman state. They were often trained at Islamic theological institutions in Istanbul, Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, and Medina, and were prolific writers versed in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and the vernacular languages. According to Abiva, the Sufis “were

⁸ Sheikh Asaf, personal communication, Toronto, Canada, March 22, 2008.

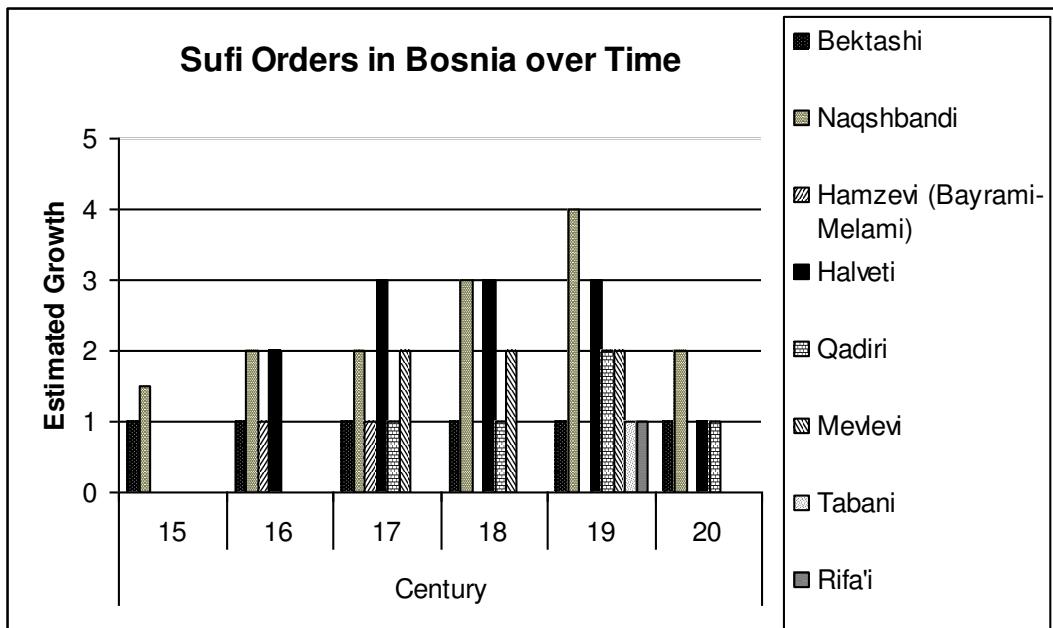


Figure 1. Chart of the estimated growth of Sufi orders in Bosnia by century.

ranked among the most scholarly and intellectual in the Muslim World at that time.”⁹ In the rural areas, the Sufis facilitated an easy transition from Christianity to Islam by allowing the Balkan people to hold onto elements of their old traditions. However, the result often differed from strict Sunni teachings, and therefore the rural Sufi movements were not always fully appreciated by the Ottoman authorities.

There were many different Orders spread throughout the Balkans. The largest and most wide-spread of the Sufi orders in the Bosnia were the Naqshbandi and Halveti in size and spread. Figure 1 charts the Sufi Orders from the 15th century to the 20th century based on the literature and best estimations. The Y-axis represents the prevalence of the order; one means that the order was present but small, and five means that the order was

⁹ Abiva.

prevalent. The Sufi orders peaked during the Ottoman Empire and rapidly declined following its fall, but were more likely to continue functioning at a reduced level or go underground than disappear from Bosnia completely.

Earliest Sufis in the Balkans

While it is commonly believed that the Ottomans were the first Muslims in the Balkans, the first were in fact traveling Sufis or dervishes sent from Turkey and other Muslim countries who spread their ideas following the time of the Crusades and sometimes established places for religious study in the Balkan Peninsula.¹⁰ The Sufis who brought spiritual Islam to Bosnia were highly educated individuals trained at important Islamic theological institutions. One of the first traveling Sufis in the Balkans was Sari Saltuk of the Bektashi Order, who came to the peninsula during the mid-14th century, prior to Ottoman conquest. Although his actions in Bosnia are not as well known compared to in other areas in the Balkans, his grave, along with the grave of Achik Pasha, is said to be located at the tekiya at Buna River near Blagaj, Hercegovina, but several other places throughout the Balkans claim the same honor.¹¹

15th Century

¹⁰ Risto Pekka Penannen, “Sufism and Music in Sarajevo.” In *The Middle East- Unity and Diversity: Papers from the Second Nordic Conference on Middle Eastern Studies*, Copenhagen 22-25, 1992, ed. H. Palva and K. Vikor, (Copenhagen: NIAS, 1993), 146. Sheikh Asaf, Balkan sheikh in America, personal communication, Washington, DC, January 2008.

¹¹ Abiva.

Two other early Sufis in Bosnia were Ayni-Dede and Shamsi-Dede, of the Bektashi Order. They fought with Ottoman Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih in the decisive Battle for Bosnia in 1463.¹² After this battle in which the Ottoman's won, thus extending the Empire closer to the West, these two Sufi sheikhs finally settled in Oglovak, near Fojnica, and established a dervish khorasani (learning center). During this and the following century, the Bektashis held only limited appeal in Bosnia, compared to other parts of the Balkans. However, they established a tekiya on the Buna River in Blagaj, Hercegovina, in 1466.

Other early Ottoman Sufis in Bosnia were typically members of the Naqshbandi Order. The Naqshbandis were openly connected to the Sunni ulema and tried to secure “orthodox” Islam in Bosnia-Hercegovina.¹³ The first Naqshbandi in the Balkans was Molla Abdullah Ilahi (d. 1490-1491), and the first tekiya in Bosnia was established during his lifetime. It was built in Sarajevo following its conquest in 1463 and was referred to both as the Tekiya of Iskender Pasha and that of Sheikh Musafir.¹⁴ It was built with support from local Ottoman nobles who belonged to the Naqshbandi Order. Later, more tekiyas were built for the spiritual needs of the local populations. Zawiyyas (hospices) were also established that served as places for religious study as well as symbols of Ottoman authority. The Naqshbandi tekiya in Živčić was also built during this century.

¹² Čehajić. Social, Political, Religious, Literary and Other Aspects of the Dervish Orders in the Yugoslav Lands, 298.

¹³ Abiva.

¹⁴ Algar, 169-171.

16th Century

Several branches, or kol-tariqas, of the Halveti Order were present in Bosnia starting in the early 16th century. Like the Naqshbandis, the Halvetis propagated and defended Sunni Islam, and many of the top ranking Balkan ulema were Halveti sheikhs. The Halvetis were known for actively working to limit the spread of non-orthodox groups, such as the Hamzevi movement in Bosnia.¹⁵ They had hundreds of tekiyas spread throughout the Balkans. They established two hanakahs (Sufi retreats) in Sarajevo: that of Gazi Husrev-bey and Sheikh Ibrahim Bistriqiya. Plus, there was a Halveti tekiya in Tuzla.¹⁶ There were several kol-tariqas, or branches, of the Halveti Order that entered Bosnia as well, including the Jemali kol-tariqa, which spread into Bosnia from Sufi bases in Sofia, Bulgaria, and Uzica, Serbia in the early 16th century. Also, the Sinani and Sünbülü kol-tariqas had tekiyas throughout the Balkans, including in Sarajevo.

The Hamzevi Order, which belongs to the Bayrami-Melami Tariqa, was established by Bosnian sheikh, Hamza Balya (d. 1573). His teachings were extremely heterodox and influenced by non-mainstream Islamic Hurufi and Ismaili doctrines, which alarmed the Naqshbandis and the general Sunni establishment with their deviations from traditional Islam. His followers were mainly from the Drina River Valley in Eastern Bosnia. Sheikh Hamza Balya's teachings and open criticisms of the Ottoman

¹⁵ Abiva.

¹⁶ Čehajić, Derviski Redovi u Jugoslovenskim Zemljama. 83, 89, 96.

government led to fatwas to be issued against him, an arrest, and trial in Istanbul.

Following his execution, the other Hamzevi leaders were executed or exiled, and his followers went underground to escape the suppression.¹⁷

17th Century

The Hamzevi Order emerged holding more moderate views in the early 17th century, a few decades after Sheikh Hamza Baliya's execution in 1573.¹⁸ According to Ćegahjić, this tariqa came to follow Ibn al-'Arabi's doctrine of "existential monism," with Sheikh Abdullah Bosniak (d. 1644) acting as annotator of Ibn al-'Arabi's *Fushus al-hikam*. Other Bosnian Sufis were also Ibn al-'Arabi's disciples or were influenced by his philosophies.¹⁹

The Qadiri Order moved into the Balkans from its base in Istanbul early in the 17th century due to the encouragement of Sheikh Ismail Rumi (d. 1631). By half-way into the century, the Qadiris were established throughout the Balkans, including in Sarajevo at the Hajji Sinan Tekiya. In Sarajevo, Sheikh Hasan Kaimi Baba (d. 1691) directed at least two tekiyas for some time.

Also in the early 17th century, the Mevlevi entered the Balkans. Within fifty years, they had established tekiyas throughout the area, including in Sarajevo, where the

¹⁷ Ćegahjić. Social, Political, Religious, Literary and Other Aspects of the Dervish Orders in the Yugoslav Lands, 312.

¹⁸ Abiva.

¹⁹ Ćegahjić. Social, Political, Religious, Literary and Other Aspects of the Dervish Orders in the Yugoslav Lands, 312.

order found appeal especially among the educated elite.²⁰ They were known as being particularly tolerant and accepting towards other religions in the area.

During this century, the Naqshbandi Order fell in predominance to the Halveti Order. Several minor branches of the Halveti order became dominant, including the Jerrahis, Karabatis, and Hayatis, and they eventually overtook the other minor branches of the Halveti. However, they were much less common in Bosnia than in Albania, Kosova, or Macedonia. The Halveti Order remained strong until the late 18th century.

The Bektashi Order was present throughout the Balkans, but more-so in Thrace, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Albania than in Bosnia. They were known for having an orientation towards Shi'ite traditions²¹ and for allowing Islam to be mixed with the “folk religion” practiced in the rural areas, which was already a mixture of Christianity, superstition, and ancient beliefs. In Bosnia-Hercegovina, the Bektashis were not well accepted because of the strength of the orthodox Sunni establishment and its dislike of the non-pure Islam allowed by Bektashis in the rural areas. Therefore, they were mainly restricted to the Janissary garrisons which served the Ottoman military.²² However, there is proof of a relationship between the politics and the Bektashi Order because Rexhep Pasha, of the family of the “Pashas of Tetova”, foretold the military victory of Sersem Ali Pasha and thus was accepted by the political leadership.²³

²⁰ Abiva.

²¹ Abiva. Čehajić. Social, Political, Religious, Literary and Other Aspects of the Dervish Orders in the Yugoslav Lands, 313.

²² Abiva.

²³ Čehajić. Social, Political, Religious, Literary and Other Aspects of the Dervish Orders in the Yugoslav Lands, 300.

The Battle of Vienna occurred in 1683, which halted Ottoman expansion and made many Muslims wonder why the West, with its non-Muslim populations, could stand successfully against Islam. According to Schwartz, there were two main responses throughout the Muslims world to this defeat. One was Wahhabism, and the other was the Naqshbandi Tariqa.²⁴ These movements both grew in membership because of the attempt to return to the pure faith of Islam, but their methods differed greatly. In the Balkans, since the Sufis were greatly supported by the Ottomans, and it was the Ottomans which had failed, both the Sufis and the Ottomans felt a certain amount of pressure to reform.

It was during this time that the Ottoman authorities were influenced by the anti-Sufi Kadizade movement and were inspired to destroy the main Bektashi tekiya at Kizil Deli in Thrace. This caused the Bektashis to expand further into the Balkans where they were quickly and easily assimilated into rural villages and areas because of their tolerance and acceptance of local customs. But, as the Ottomans fell, so did the Bektashi Janissaries.

During the late 17th century, there were a number of organized uprisings by the Sufis against the Ottoman Empire. These were typically a response to injustice toward the Bosnian people. For instance, in 1691, Qadiri Sheikh Hasan Khaimi Baba of Silahdar Mustafa-Pasha (Hajji Sinan's) Tekiya led an uprising because of unreasonable demands

²⁴ Schwartz, Two Faces of Islam, 88.

from merchants and the government on the people. He demanded that Shariah Law be observed, a condition that was similar in other uprisings.²⁵

18th Century

In Central Bosnia, during the 18th century, the Naqshbandi Order flourished. The tekiya in Živčići was rejuvenated by the Majaddidi branch of the Naqshbandis in 1781 through the efforts of Sheikh Hussein Baba Zukić. This sheikh was a native of central Bosnia who had studied in Istanbul under Sheikh Hafiz Muhammed Hisari (d. 1785) and returned to his homeland to bring new energy to the order.

It was also during this century that the Rifa'i Order, of Arabic origin, is documented as entering the Balkan Peninsula. It came in two waves, the first of which occurred in the late 1700's and did not reach the Bosnian area, but was in Macedonia and Bulgaria, the second of which did enter Bosnia during the following century.²⁶

19th Century

During the 19th century, the Naqshbandis in Bosnia were revitalized further by Abdurahman Sirri Dede (d. 1847), a murid of the Mujaddidi branch, founded by Ahmad Sirhindi. Following Sheikh Sirri Dede, Central Bosnia became a Naqshbandi stronghold. According to Abiva, their descendants still run the tekiyas. This order also spread into Mostar, establishing a tekiya there.²⁷ The Khalidi branch of the Naqshbandi Order,

²⁵ Čehajić, Social, Political, Religious, Literary and Other Aspects of the Dervish Orders in the Yugoslav Lands, 312.

²⁶ Abiva.

²⁷ Čehajić, Derviski Redovi u Jugoslovenskim Zemljama, 65.

which was established by Khalid al-Baghdadi, came to Sarajevo in the mid 19th century and established a tekiya known as Yediler (Seven Brothers), near the Careva Mosque, which houses the graves of seven sheikhs of the tekiya.²⁸ The branch also entered Central Bosnia during the late 19th century and built tekiyas that are still functioning.

Sheikh Hussein of the Naqshbandi Order only accepted one murid, Abdurrahman Sirri Baba (d. 1846-1847), who later founded a tekiya in Oglavak, near Živčić, and it was through him that the Naqshbandi Order especially grew in number and influence.²⁹ Each new governor of Bosnia made it one of their first duties to visit the Oglavak Tekiya and pay their respects to the sheikh. The tekiya even received exemption from taxation by Sultan Mahmud II in Istanbul. Sheikh Sirri Baba also became famous because of his moving poems and illahis (songs to God).³⁰

In the mid-19th century, the Tabani branch of the Halvetis spread into Bosnia, but its presence was short-lived. The Rifa'i Order fared better. The second wave of the Rifa'i Order, which took place in the late 1800s, entered Bosnia with support from the efforts of Sheikh Musa Muslihuddin of Kosova (d. 1917). This sheikh was in close contact with the Bosnian Muslims and established a small Rifa'i group in Sarajevo, although this order mainly found appeal in the rural areas, where people were awed by

²⁸ Algar, 171. He reports that the name of this tekiya appears to have come from seven other tombs found in an adjoining cemetery including: a dervish who came to Bosnia with Sultan Mehmet Fatih, two men wrongfully executed for theft, and four captains executed for their negligence in opposing Count Eugene's invasion in 1697 of Bosnia. The present tombs include that of Hajji Salih Efendi, mufti of Sarajevo.

²⁹ Algar, 173-175. He shares the story of how Mejli Baba was searching for his perfect sheikh (teacher), and when he met Sheikh Sirri, the iron bracelet around his ankle disintegrated. This was the sign for which he had waited to inform him of his sheikh.

³⁰ Algar, 178.

the dervishes' ability to withstand poisonous stings, extreme pain, and temperature changes.³¹

Ottoman rule ended in Bosnia-Hercegovina in 1878, and even though there was a mass migration of Muslims out of the area, the Sufi Orders continued to practice. A few new sheikhs even established centers following the fall of the Ottomans. For example, Mufti Sheikh Husnija Numanagic (d. 1931) introduced the Naqshbandi-Khalidi Order, and murids of Sheikh Sejfudin Iblizovic (d. 1889) of the Halveti-Sabani Order came to the Northeastern parts of Bosnia. Also, at the end of the 19th century, the Qadiri Order in Bosnia was rejuvenated by the actions of Albanian ulema Sheikh Mehmed Sezai and Sheikh Hajji Kadri (d. 1936) after returning from studying Shariah in Istanbul. Sheikh Hajji Kadri formed a well-organized network that stretched from Travnik in Bosnia to Peshkopi, Eastern Albania. Throughout the Austro-Hungarian rule, the Bosnian Sufis maintained contact with other Sufis in the Muslim world, allowing them to continue functioning and growing.

20th Century

Several orders declined rapidly between 1918 and 1941 because of mass migration out of the Balkans. For instance, the Mevlevi Order ran into difficulty after the Ottomans left the Balkans due to its limited appeal to the higher social class and the detailed traditional ceremonies. Many Mevlevis headed to Turkey, and there were few left to pass on the tradition in Bosnia. The Qadiris and Naqshbandis continued functioning, but were limited to the Muslim population in Central Bosnia. A third Naqshbandi tekiya was

³¹ Abiva.

established in Visoko by Sheikh Hajji Hafiz Husni-efendi Numanagić (d. 1931) prior to World War I. During the war, it served as a safe refuge instead of a meeting place for Sufis. By the end of World War II, the Halveti tekiyas in Bosnia stopped functioning, followed by the Bektashi main centers.³²

Communism brought new challenges and caused further decline in the Sufi Orders. In 1952, the ulema of the “government sanctioned Islamic Community” banned all Sufi activities because they viewed the tariqas as remnants of archaic superstition and innovation. All tekiyas were officially closed in Bosnia-Hercegovina, but some remained functioning disguised as schools or personal residences. A small group of Naqshbandis in Central Bosnia went underground and continued to hold dhikrs in private residences.³³ This was probably a very common practice, although not well documented. At the time of Algar’s research in the late 1960s, there were no functioning Naqshbandi tekiyas in Sarajevo, although dhikr was organized every other week by a representative of a Turkish sheikh.³⁴ The Naqshbandi tekiya in Visoko in Central Bosnia, like the one in Oglavak, had no sheikh, but was presided over by a representative. His name was Abdulhakk efendi Hadžimejlić, great-grandson of Mejli Baba.³⁵

After 20 years, efforts by various sheikhs and the establishment of the Community of Islamic Dervish Orders (ZIDRA) led to a general disregard of the restrictions, and the

³² Abiva.

³³ Bringa, 221.

³⁴ Algar, 172.

³⁵ Algar, 181,182.

orders began functioning openly again.³⁶ However, ignorance of the Sufis among ordinary Muslims and a general lack of popularity decreased the ability of the orders to immediately rebound. They were considered to be strange and outdated by people who had grown unfamiliar with the Sufi activities and religious devotion in general.

In the 1980s, the Naqshbandi activities came under scrutiny of the Islamska Zajednica (I.Z.), the state-approved association responsible for matters concerning the Muslims in Bosnia-Hercegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia until the 1990s. They sent representatives to “every major dervish ritual” and began supervising their activities.³⁷ In this way, the I.Z. attempted to be in control of the free-minded and independent Sufis.

In the late 1980s, the I.Z. began hosting a large Mevlud (remembrance of Prophet Muhammad’s birthday) at the Sufi tekiya at Buna River. Prominent imams and sheikhs attended. Buses were organized to transport villagers from Central Bosnia to the event. The state-organized event took place during the day, with the actual Sufi dhikr occurring during the previous night attended by Sufis from Macedonia and Kosovo and murids, including those from the second sheikh of a Central Bosnian Naqshbandi tekiya, Muhammad Mejli Baba. While the State’s support allowed Sufism to enter the public sphere, the rituals were controlled by the state, and thus, failed to provide genuine spiritual development mainly for the reason that real personal inspiration flows from God, not from state-controlled institutions with regulations and limitations.³⁸

³⁶ Abiva.

³⁷ Bringa, 199.

³⁸ Bringa, 221-223.

By 1987-88, the Sufi Orders of Central Bosnia were functioning and integral to village life, but Bringa reports that they were at times ridiculed by the I.Z. The Communists in Bosnia allowed religion as long as it did not interfere with the State. However, they wanted to be knowledgeable of the workings of the religions and did not appreciate the secrecy of the Sufi Orders. Because the Islamic Association was state-controlled, imams and other Islamic actors were under pressure not to act or say anything “too political” or suffer a public reprimand that threatened their position. However, the Sufis were still out of reach of the state, and thus not appreciated and treated with suspicion. The free-thinking and free-acting Sufis were criticized by the I.Z. and used as teaching tools for the populous, for example, because of how they chose to meditate and fast instead of work, something highly valued during Communism because it benefited the whole community. There were continuous struggles over Islamic ideology and activities in which the I.Z. attempted to either control the Sufis or censure them.³⁹

Bringa’s study shows that the Sufis played an important role in the lives of the villagers as faith healers. She mentions four specific men who were involved in Sufism, but officially employed by the IZ, and thus not “officially” involved in the Sufi Orders, being forced to hide their involvement. Regardless, she refers to them as Sufi teachers. These healers kept low profiles because their methods were not limited to state-sanctioned techniques but included a range of the following: amulet writing, prayers, Qur’anic recitation, other sacred books passed down from their forefathers, astrology, and palm reading. Muslims from all over Bosnia came to visit these four men. Sufi teachers

³⁹ Bringa, 200.

were particularly popular because they were seen as being closer to God than the other Islamic teachers because of holding spiritual power, and were especially sought after for advisement on devotional practices that would bring the most blessing according to the need.⁴⁰

With the fall of Communism in the Balkans in 1990, the area was overcome with movements for self-determination and brutal conflict. This war officially lasted from 1991 to 1995, and at least some of the Sufi orders engaged in actively protecting their Muslim brothers and sisters from the advancing Chetnick Serbian and Croat forces.⁴¹ With the United Nations arms embargo on Yugoslavia, the Bosnian Muslims had restricted access to weapons for self-defense, in contrast to both the Bosnian Serbs and Croats who were well-supplied through the Jugoslav National Army and outside sources.⁴² Faced with persecution and receiving limited outside support, the Balkan Muslims formed non-official fighting brigades in addition to the regular forces and held the fronts, especially in Central Bosnia and the strategically-important Brcko corridor. This form of fighting is allowed in Islam because it opposes oppression and injustice.⁴³ For reasons of safety and secrecy, little is publicly known about the role of particular Sufi orders, but the Bosnian Muslims were extremely thankful for the Mujahadeen fighters who risked their lives for them.

⁴⁰ Bringa, 217-219.

⁴¹ Abiva.

⁴² “Bosnia: Crunched by numbers,” The Wall Street Journal, June 21, 1996, Eastern edition.

⁴³ See Qur’anic verses 2:216, 2:190-193, 4:75, 8:39, 8:61.

21st Century

According to Abiva, the situation for Sufism in Bosnia-Hercegovina is encouraging because of the general acceptance by both the religious establishment and the common village people toward Sufism. It has not had to withstand criticisms of being heretical, except more recently due to the influx of Wahhabis from the Arab countries. Regardless, it has a long history with the Bosnian people and remains greatly unscathed.

The literature on modern Sufism in Bosnia is very limited; however Abiva mentions a few details. He makes note that the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order of Sheikh Nazim of Cyprus has begun to have an appeal in Bosnia because of his popular writings. Also following the war, the Halveti-Jerrahis, who historically have only existed in the Southern Balkans, started a program to help Bosnian students attend higher education in the United States. In addition, Abiva mentions that a Qadiri-Bedevi branch under the leadership of Sheikh Zakir Bektic now functions in Sarajevo. Most other literature does not extend to the present.

Conclusion

The literature provides a valuable description of Sufism from its entry into Bosnia until contemporary times, with the most detailed eras being the Ottoman Empire and Communism. The Naqshbandi Order is, by far, the most commonly mentioned for its activities in Central Bosnia, followed by the Halveti Order. The grand number and complexity of the orders and branches of Orders that entered Bosnia should be recognized. It should also be noted how connections were retained by the Bosnian orders with sheikhs and orders outside the immediate area. This is important because it shows

that Bosnia was a part of an involved network of Sufis throughout the Muslim areas and elsewhere in the world.

The contemporary situation of Sufism, which is only touched on briefly by Abiva, is found in greater detail in the following chapter. Many of the sheikhs mentioned by the above authors play a role in the current Sufi scene and are linked to the present sheikhs and imams at the tekiyas. I saw a great need to gather information about the contemporary existence of the Sufi Orders and the strength of this pluralistic movement. The following chapter describes which orders survived the fall of the Ottoman Empire and some of the challenges brought by the Austria-Hungarian Rule and Communism to remain active today.

Chapter IV

Research

Introduction and Methodology

My research of contemporary Sufism was conducted during two trips to Bosnia, the first occurring in March of 2006 and the second during the summer of 2007, for a total of nearly nine weeks of fieldwork. My purpose for going was two-fold. I wanted to meet as many active Sufi communities as possible and ascertain their attitudes toward the other Abrahamic religions. The presence of Sufism was documented in two situations: either the existence of a working tekiya (Sufi lodge) or a group of Sufis meeting on a regular basis for worship activities particular to Sufism, such as dhikr. To determine the belief system regarding other Abrahamic religions, I planned to interview imams and sheikhs and make use of translators to inform me on the topics of the public Sufi talks.

Fluency in the local Bosnian language would have assured less reliance on translators and better ability to gather information for my study. Unfortunately, I was unable to learn this before my research started. A good number of people in Bosnia know English, but those who acted as translators had varied control over the languages and interest in my research. I did not feel wholly comfortable using the data gathered while relying on local translators because of the possibility that they may have tried to please me during the translation process or that I may not have understood them

correctly. Constantly changing translators did not allow me to build the required, trusting relationship. The sheikhs and wakils were very helpful to me and open to being interviewed, but an additional complication to the language barrier was the elusive responses provided by certain sheikhs. It was at times difficult to discern their actual answers, and therefore, tricky to conduct research using the interview method. In the end, I turned to the observable details that I could gather without too much translation for my research. However, in the following section, I include interesting stories and details related to me through translators. To gather information on the Bosnian Sufi's attitude toward the other Abrahamic religions, I relied on actual physical visuals and depictions which portrayed an opinion about other faith traditions, such as paintings and calligraphies at the tekiyas. These I found to be an appealing alternative because not only did they show present values, but served as evidence for longstanding attitudes.

In 2006, due to limited time, my goal in Bosnia was to visit as many tekiyas and mosques as possible within two weeks. In total, I visited 12 places of worship. The Sufi centers in Sarajevo that I visited included: the Seven Brothers' Tekiya, Hajji Sinan's Qadiri Tekiya, Gazi Husref-bey Mosque and Medressa, Emperor Mehmed Fatih Mosque, and Ali Pasha's Mosque. The majority of information came from Sead Halilagić, a wakil (representative of the sheikh) at Hajji Sinan's Tekiya in Sarajevo, Ilvana Bhulić, a political science and journalist major at the local university who actively researches and protects the Sufi heritage of Bosnia, Ferid Bajraktarević and his daughter Belma, my hosts, and other imams and local people. I also traveled to Tuzla, Živčići, and Blagaj, near Mostar, and documented Sufism in these areas. In Tuzla, my guide was Mevludin Hasanović, a neurosurgeon and local imam who visited America in 1993 for surgery and



Figure 2. Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina with cities highlighted to show where research was conducted.

spoke about the Bosnian war on American television. There was also an annual large dhikr gathering in Kaćuni, near Živčići, which I attended and witnessed Sufi and non-Sufi Muslims gathered together for an official Sufi dhikr.

During the following trip in the summer of 2007, I lived in Sarajevo for seven weeks and visited the nearby cities of Mostar, Blagaj, Stolac, Zenica, and Živčići (see fig. 2 for map of Bosnia). It was a much different trip because I was not rushed in my research. Also, by limiting my physical areas of study to Sarajevo and the places I could reach through public transportation, it allowed for a deeper investigation into the Sufi Orders in and around Sarajevo. I was able to retrace my steps from the last year and took more detailed notes. I also observed changes to the tekiya/mosque and Sufi practices. The pivotal people I met were Ferid-efendi Dautović, Head Imam of Sarajevo, Sheikh Halil of the Brizina Tekiya, who has been successful at popularizing Sufism and drawing

young people to worship, Hajji Hafiz Hajji Mulić, translator of Rumi's Mesnevi into Bosnian, and other sheikhs and imams. I also heard Grand Mufti, Mustafa Cerić, head representative of Bosnian Islam, speak at two occasions, and I attended a musical concert in celebration of 600 years of Islam in the Balkans.

This exploration of Bosnia's Sufi presence was conducted with both an insider and outsider's view. I am an outsider because I have no heritage connecting me to Bosnia, and I have spent relatively little time there. However, I am an insider because of personal involvement with Sufism in Waterport, New York, which has specific connections to the Sufis in Bosnia. The orders I belong to are the Halwati, Hayati, Rifa'i, and Alami. Because of this membership in the living tradition of Sufism, I traveled with recommendations, was accepted into the inner circles, and was invited to experience more than what a foreigner may otherwise be allowed.

In addition, I attempted to blend in with the Bosnian people, especially during my 2007 travels. In 2006, I carried a head scarf with me and covered when I entered a mosque or tekiya. The following year, though, I wore hijab continuously for my seven weeks in Bosnia and tried to dress according to local customs for a girl my age. I also was known by my name with a Bosnian Muslim pronunciation. I transformed into "Dulhana," and was often mistaken for a Bosnian or Turkish girl. People were amazed to learn that I was a Muslim from America and sometimes pressed for details on where I was from "before America." I had a beautiful time relating to and talking with Muslims and non-Muslims in Bosnia.

This chapter provides an overview of my findings on the contemporary presence of Sufism in Bosnia. It was through researching its current existence that some of its

history was also uncovered. For ease, this tour is organized by city, and an analysis of the observable attitudes towards Christians and Jews follows in a subsequent chapter.

A note about disclosing names and personal information: When I received permission to share personal information about those interviewed or when they were speaking publicly, the pertinent information will be included with proper documentation of the speaker. However, in a situation when permission was not granted due to various reasons, the individuals' identities are protected. Descriptors were used that inform the reader on a general level as to who this person was, but do not expose the individual. All of the included photographs were taken by me, except one, which was taken by a girl at Sheikh Halil's Brzina Tekiya.

Locations and Practices of Contemporary Bosnian Sufis

Sarajevo

Throughout my time in Bosnia, I was continually discovering new tekiyas or Sufi groups of which I was previously unaware, and nowhere was this truer than in Sarajevo. Simply walking through its streets caused me to meet and interact with Sufis. I simply explored Bosnia and doors opened with opportunities that benefited my research.

Isabegova Tekiya

The first tekiya in Sarajevo was named the Isabegova Tekiya and was built prior to 1463 by Isa Begović, the governor of Bosnia.¹ It belonged to the Mevlevi Order and existed until the mid-20th century, when it was destroyed possibly by the Communist

¹ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London: Pan Books, 1996), 104.

government. Presently existing by the river where the tekiya originally stood, is a paved road and gas tank, which makes the site virtually impossible to reconstruct.

When it became apparent that this tekiya was going to be destroyed, the presiding sheikh divided his murids (disciples) and sent them to other tekiyas.² There is a Naqshbandi-Mevlevi Tekiya in Putu, Sarajevo, which still has descendants of these murids. Dhikr is held at this tekiya on Friday evenings. Although I was unable to visit, this tekiya was described as a place full of blessings (baraka).

Hajji Sinan's Tekiya

A very beautiful tekiyas in Sarajevo is Hajji Sinan's Tekiya. It was built between 1638 and 1640 through funding provided by Hajji Sinan Maldar and his son, Silahdar Musafa Pasha. Sheikh Fayzulah, the last sheikh of this tekiya, died on April 22, 1990, and left the leadership duties to two representatives (wakils) Sead-efendi Halilagić and Hikmet-efendi. They continue the traditions of the Qadiri in this tekiya.

This tekiya is currently active and serves as a place where people can set aside wordly cares and refocus on God. Thursday night dhikr draws between 70 and 100 participants. On Saturdays, the wird (part of the Qur'an specific to the Qadiri Tariqa) is recited. The Qadiris, who are known for their strict observances of the Islamic practices, sang beautiful praises, called ilahis, and used tremendous breath and feeling in their dhikr. Following the dhikr gatherings, the men and women gather separately to share a meal in the traditional Muslim way of eating from the same bowl while sitting on the floor.

² Student, Faculty of Islamic Sciences, University of Sarajevo, interview by author, Sarajevo, July 2007.



Figure 3. The courtyard inside Hajji Sinan's Tekiya, Sarajevo.

Tekiyas were created to satisfy all needs of life and include many areas for specific purposes. Inside the peaceful walls of Hajji Sinan's Tekiya is a samahana (mosque or “place for sama-style worship”), maydan rooms (meeting areas for men and women), library with a computerized directory of over 5,000 books, living quarters for men, kitchen, small cemetery in the courtyard, and larger cemetery just outside. Originally, people lived and worked within its walls. Now, though, everyone has a busy separate life from the tekiya, and they come to the tekiya “only for service to Allah.”³ The tekiya serves its community of believers by providing spiritual rejuvenation, guidance, and by offering a retreat from the busy streets of Sarajevo. It is open for prayers and extra services. “All different people come,” said Sead-efendi, including the well-off, poor, young, old, men, and women, as we are “all equal in front of Allah.”

³ Sead-efendi Halilagić, Wakil of Hajji Sinan's Tekiya, interview by author, Sarajevo, March 2006.

According to Sead-efendi, the story of the tekiya is as follows. After Sarajevo was conquered, Silahdar Mustafa Pasha, who was a general in the army, expressed his desire of building a Qadiri Tekiya to the Sultan, who was particular to the Qadiris. Silahdar received permission, and his father, Hajji Sinan directed the building. In 1640 when the tekiya was finished, Hajji Sinan died and was buried between the tekiya and mosque. His son, however, never saw the finished tekiya and was killed in Romania in 1642.

A rich history of religious tolerance and inclusiveness is honored and preserved at Hajji Sinan's Tekiya. For instance, original calligraphies from the 1640's decorate the walls of the entryway (see fig. 4). They were reconstructed following the 1848 fires that swept Sarajevo by Mustafa Mahmud, a famous calligrapher from Egypt. Tajjs (Sufi sheikhs' head coverings) older than 100 years and from many Sufi orders are stored and protected in this tekiya. The collection includes Sheikh Mustafa's from the Rifa'i Order, one from a Qadiri sheikh from before WWI, and a Shadili Shayhk's. It was said that once they even heard the athan (call to prayer) being called by Hajji Ganjak, located in Sheikh Jamali's Tekiya in Kosovo.

A rendition of Prophet Solomon's Seal finds its home on the walls of this tekiya (see fig. 5).⁴ This seal's design, original and unique because of its circular shape, was painted during the time of Sheikh Selim, in the 1640's. Stretching nearly 8 feet in diameter, the circle dominates the wall. The shahada, declaring the unity of God, is on the outer-most part of 12 spokes that point to the center. Its coloring, black and brick-

⁴ See One Thousand and One Arabian Nights for the story of Solomon's seal.



Figure 4. Original calligraphies from the 1640's in the entryway of Hajji Sinan's Tekiya, Sarajevo.



Figure 5. Wakil Sead-efendi Halilagić with Soloman's Seal at Hajji Sinan's Tekiya, Sarajevo.

orange, is particular to the Qadiri Tariqa. The black symbolizes spiritual maturity and brick, true wisdom.

According to Sead-efendi, there is much symbolism that glorifies God in this tremendous seal of the Prophet Solomon. The shahada (Muslim declaration of faith) bears witness to the oneness of God and that there is nothing in existence but God, and the circle shows that life is in motion. It was not until my visit in 2007 that I recognized the circle representing a wheel that constantly turns and thus constantly repeats the shahada. This repetition is dhikr. Sead-efendi said that the Prophet Solomon is viewed as the “greatest power of mankind” because he grasped the shahada. The Wakil also instructed us to “search for the Solomon of your time,” meaning look for someone who is capable of this knowledge of the unity of God, regardless of the century, thus proving that there is no distinction between the prophets. Sead specifically said that the Jewish and Christian prophets are the Muslim prophets too. The 12 spokes of the wheel symbolize that all 12 Sufi tariqas lead to God, and that there is no one exclusive path. The empty center of the seal reminds us that “0” in itself has no value, but when it is with “1,” or the Arabic alif, one of the references to God, there is much value.

This tekiya, like the majority of the buildings in Sarajevo, has seen its share of disasters and attempted destructions. As reported by Sead-efendi, in 1697 or 1698 the tekiya was burned, and it was restored in 1706. In 1848, fires spread through Sarajevo, and nearly all of the area was burned. When Tito came to power, the struggles to keep the tekiya open intensified. In 1952 it was closed by law, and the women’s living quarters were seized and turned into regular housing. The tekiya reopened in 1968, but the women’s harem was not returned by the State. The following year, everything was

closed again by force. Then, on March 3, 1979, the tekiya was reopened once more. Throughout these struggles, Sead-efendi said that the tariqa was kept alive by people who were searching for the inner journey of faith.

Careva Mosque

The Careva (pronounced Tcareva) Mosque, which is also known simply as Emperor's Mosque, was built by Governor Isa Begović in honor of Emperor Fatih Mehmet II, who conquered Constantinople and Bosnia. Built in the 15th century, it is the second oldest mosque in Sarajevo, according to Ilvana Bhilić, a local Sufi historian and journalist student. It originally had a school and library, but the school no longer exists, and the library was relocated. The bridge crossing the Miljacka River originally led directly to the main door, but the Communists did not like the direct invitation to religion and had it altered so that it now leads to just left of the mosque's entrance.

This mosque does not claim to serve as a tekiya or host Sufi activities, however, the Sufis are present and aid to preserve it. In 2006, Abdul Gani was a muezzin (person who calls Muslims for prayer) for this mosque. He was 84 year-old and the only Rifa'i Sufi known to me in Sarajevo at that time. His Rifa'i base was in Prijedor with Sheikh Jamali (d. 2004), but Abdul Gani lived in Sarajevo. Abdul Gani died on July 11, 2007, during my more recent stay in Sarajevo. I cherish meeting such an amazing person.

In 2006 we went out for coffee, and Abdul Gani told about when the Italian singer Pavarotti visited Sarajevo.⁵ Apparently, Pavarotti heard the call to prayer resounding across the valley in a clear voice that stood out above the others. Pavarotti decided that

⁵ Abdul Gani, Muezzin at Emperor's Mosque, personal interview, Sarajevo, March 2007.

he must meet this muezzin, who was Abdul Gani. When they met, Pavarotti was astounded that he was in his mid-seventies, thinking that the man with this voice must be younger. Pavarotti tried to persuade Abdul Gani to use his voice in the singing profession, but Abdul Gani replied that his voice was a blessing from God for calling people to prayer. He had no intention to use it for anything else.

Another muezzin of this mosque was Hajji Hafiz Hajji Mulić, described to me as the “most spiritual person in Sarajevo.”⁶ He translated Mevlana Rumi’s Mesnevi into Bosnian, earning him the respectful title of Mesnevi-han. I met him during my 2007 travels through an amazing opportunity. Although I had been told his health was unstable, we sat, drank tea, and looked through Islamic magazines. He pointed out classmates who had been killed or jailed during the time of Communism. At nearly 97 years old, this Naqshbandi sheikh did not need glasses. His eyes, clear and light blue, were as fresh as a child’s. He was still pure and untarnished even after the years of religious persecution and separation from his beloved Sarajevo during Communism. It was not until returning from Bosnia that I learned of his heroic calling of the azan every zuhr (early afternoon) prayer from the Careva Mosque minaret during the war in the 1990’s.⁷

Gazi Husref-bey Mosque

The Gazi Husref-bey Mosque is in the impressive main mosque found at the heart of Sarajevo’s old town. Gazi Husref-bey was a hero of the Spanish wars and governor of

⁶ Personal interview, Sarajevo, Bosnia, July 2007.

⁷ Linda Shakoor, conversation by author at Sufi Conference, Gedser, Denmark, October 8, 2007.

the Bosnian province from 1521 to 1541.⁸ He belonged to the Halveti Sufi Order and endowed all his property to Sarajevo as charity after his death. In addition to the mosque, there was a soup kitchen, meeting house, religious school, library, and tekiya. The tekiya served the Halveti and then Naqshbandi Tariqas until pressure from the state turned it into a restaurant. Now named “Aeroplan,” this building still displays the markings of a tekiya and brings to mind the spiritual seekers that frequented it, but their memory is insulted by the serving of alcoholic drinks, which are forbidden in Islam. No Sufi activities are advertised at this old tekiya or the mosque, but it was rumored that Sufis still have influence.

There are two mausoleums beside the Gazi Husref-bey Mosque. This is where Gazi Husref-bey and his Christian friend rest. The larger one belongs to the governor while the smaller one was built for his friend, who was his freed slave. People visit this monument to pray to God for the souls of those resting there and for personal causes. This activity is typically practiced by Sufis and other spiritual-minded Muslims. In keeping with tradition, these mausoleums have low doors so that everyone who enters, even if it is an emperor, must bow in respect.

Seven Brother's Mosque

Like the Gazi Husref-Bey Mosque, the Seven Brother's Mosque still exists even though its tekiya does not. The tekiya was built in 1539 and destroyed in 1991. It served the Naqshbandi and Mevlevi Tariqas, but a supermarket now stands in its location. The

⁸ Tourism Association of Sarajevo Canton. Pamphlet.

mosque was built much later than the tekiya, in 1879, and holds dhikr every Thursday evening.

The story of the seven brothers, for which the mosque was named, is not exactly clear; however the imam present in 2006 explained one version. He said that there were dervishes (Sufis) who, during a siege of the city, were told to keep watch over certain valuable items. Unfortunately, they fell asleep, and the items were stolen. After the siege ended, the dervishes were tried and found guilty of committing the robbery. However, following their execution, the true robbers were found. People began having dreams and visions that a tekiya with tombs of the seven “brothers” should be built to give respect to the innocent men. Therefore, the mausoleum, tekiya, and mosque were erected. People come to give zakat (Muslim charity) and pray for personal causes and for the souls of the dervishes at the site.

Sheikh Halil Brzina Tekiya

Another beautiful tekiya in Sarajevo is Sheikh Halil Brzina Tekiya on Sarač Ismailova Street (see fig. 6 and 7). During my summer 2007 visit, the courtyard was in full bloom with roses and other flowers. Built around 1495 and destroyed in the 1960s, this Naqshbandi tekiya was recently completely restored and now remains open 24 hours a day. Dhikr is held twice a week on Friday and Sunday evenings to more people to come regardless of busy schedules.⁹ There are four outposts from this tekiya around the world including in Mostar and Tuzla, Bosnia;

⁹ Sheikh Halil, Sheikh of Brzina Tekiya, Sarajevo, interview by author, Sarajevo, Bosnia, March 2006.



Figure 6. Author in courtyard of Sheikh Halil Brzina Tekiya, Sarajevo.



Figure 7. Inside the samahana room at Sheikh Halil Brzina Tekiya, Sarajevo.

Zagreb, Croatia; and Arizona, United States. Sheikh Halil's murids can be found throughout Sarajevo serving as imams in local mosques or studying at FIN, the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, at the University of Sarajevo. Sheikh Halil explained that his ideas are to outreach to all people, but especially young people. He takes the most noble part of Islam for life, Tasawwuf (Sufism), and brings it to the youth to let them know that they are important and to help them to improve themselves. One unique aspect of belonging to this tekiya is that Sheikh Halil issues membership cards with a verse from Rumi's poetry printed on them, which serves as a reminder of God's ultimate compassion and mercy for humankind. It was clear from the plentiful number of young people attending the dhikrs that his methods were working.

The dhikr evenings at Sheikh Halil's Tekiya began with a sermon by the sheikh and then transitioned into dhikr with the first calls of "Estagfurallah" (forgive me, God). The dhikr lasts for more than two hours, but time is unimportant because of the power felt within the dhikr. With the moonlight shined through the center circular window in the shape of a crescent and star, the room pulsed with the rhythm of dhikr. The evening ends after a time of socializing with tea, some sort of food, and sometimes music with singing, tambourines, and small hand drums.

Sheikh Zakir

Very near to where I resided in 2007, is the late Sheikh Zakir's Tekiya, may his soul be in peace. He passed away last year and left behind a very close-knit and serious Sufi group. He belonged to the Qadiri, Bedawi, and Rifa'i Tariqas and taught from at least the first two. From my apartment, I could often hear dhikr pulsing through the

sweet air at dawn, coming from this tekiya. One day, as I was walking up the hill toward my apartment, I made friendly conversation with a fellow walker. In broken Bosnian, I said, “Malo pomalo,” meaning, “little by little” we were making progress up the hill. As we came closer, our attention turned to the tekiya, and he made it clear that he was a Sufi dervish. He invited me to visit, and, as a result, I was able to meet the female members of Sheikh Zakir’s family and those of his murids.

I also attended dhikr in 2007 at Sheikh Zakir’s son’s tekiya, located near Vratnik Mejdan, the oldest part of Sarajevo. It is a Naqshbandi Tekiya and holds dhikr on Wednesday evenings. I returned to the tekiya at a later point during my stay in Sarajevo and drank Turkish tea with the imam and a few other murids. Although I was the only female, I was welcomed and treated with utmost respect. At one point, the imam said to the others gathered in Bosnian, “she is our sister,” which I understood and warmly appreciated.

Baščaršiya Mosque

This mosque, (pronounced Bashcharshia), was built in 1528 by Havadže Durak. This mosque is currently maintained by Sufi dervishes, but does not hold dhikr or other Sufi activities. There are no tombs nearby because the sheikhs were active and did not die natural deaths. This mosque is located in the heart of the old city, which is also called Baščaršiya.

White Mosque

The White Mosque, so named because of its color, was built between 1536 and 1545 by Katib hajji Haydar-efendi, the secretary of Gazi Husref-bey. Hafiz Suleiman

Bugari serves as the imam at this mosque. For him, Islam is alive, and his excitement draws others to it. People come from all over the world to meet Imam Bugari and ask his advice. He also reaches a wider audience through his television program, during which he talks about important current issues and teaches from the Qur'an and Hadith.

I went with a translator to three fajr (before sunrise) prayers before we connected with Imam Bugari. Rising and dressing to go to the mosque at 4:30 AM without knowing whether or not our efforts would be rewarded by Imam Bugari's presence was difficult, but when we did meet the imam, he spoke with us for three hours, and it was well worth any test of endurance. He told his personal story of studying with his teacher. After speaking with Imam Bugari, it seemed trivial for me to focus on documenting who belongs to which tariqa and whether or not dhikr services are held at mosques or tekiyas because these are minor details. It is only important to recognize those who are seeking God and leading people to God.

Others

I intrinsically know that there are other active Sufi groups and mosques that host Sufi activities in Sarajevo. It will take more research and time before meeting them. Two others that I am aware of include: the Qadiri-Bakiyi Mosque that hosts women-only dhikrs every second Thursday and one that hosts Rifa'i dhikrs on Wednesday evenings.

Mostar

Mostar is known for the famous bridge named "Stari Most" that spans the river between the mainly Croatian Catholic half of the city and the Muslim half (see fig. 8).

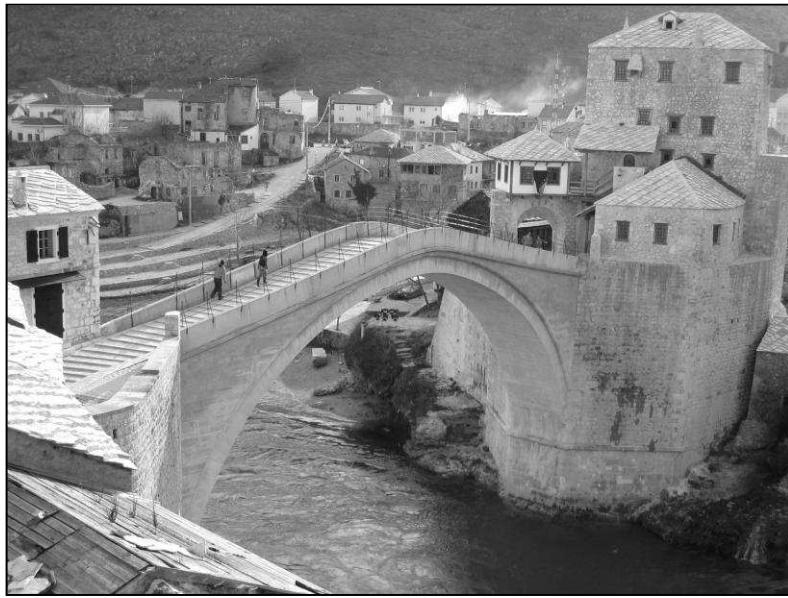


Figure 8. Stari Most in Mostar, Hercegovina.

During the latest war it was completely demolished in an effort to divide the city, stop interreligious exchanges, and conquer its strategic location. The bridge has since been restored by having the original stones removed from the river to recreate it. The bridge was originally built by Hayruddin, a student of the great mathematician and architect Sinan Nimar, who constructed the Sultan Suleiman Mosque in Istanbul.

While I was advised to travel to this city in my quest for Sufis, I had little success finding them. I certainly found evidence that there was a thriving Sufi influence in the past, but while there are many mosques, there were no obvious tekkiyas or active Sufi groups. One group that used to meet in Mostar now meets in nearby Blagaj, at the Buna Tekiya. Regardless that I stayed with a host family in an area called “Tekiya,” I found no active Sufis during my stay.

However, I did visit the tomb of Sheikh Yuyo (d. 1831), which was located a short walk from my host family's apartment. He has many miracles to his name, one of which tells how he took a bone of a deceased man and a blood sample of a boy to see if they would be attracted to each other, thus determining family lineage. Another tells of how tricksters came to him pretending that one of their friends had died and asked him to perform the appropriate prayers. After confirming with the men three times that the young man was, in fact, dead already, the sheikh did as was asked. When the tricksters return to their friend, they found that he had actually died.

Blagaj

Buna Tekiya

The tekiya on the Buna River is a retreat and memorial to the lovers of natural beauty and simplicity (see fig. 9). It is located in the town of Blagaj (pronounced Blag-aye), near Mostar. The Buna River, the fifth largest source of freshwater in Europe, flows from the “green cave” in the mountain past the white-washed building, which is now the only remaining part of the complex that once existed. In 2006, this tekiya served mainly as a tourist attraction and only hosted an annual Mevlud (Prophet Muhammad's birthday) gathering for Islamic religious authorities; however upon my return trip the following year, I found weekly Naqshbandi dhikrs being held on Thursday nights. The current Imam Hisham, his wife Merima, and their baby daughter were sent by Sheikh Halil in Sarajevo to serve at this tekiya.



Figure 9. The tekiya on Buna River in Blagaj, Hercegovina.

Founded somewhere between 1466 and 1520, the “Buna Tekiya” served as a missionary and military training place for the Bektashis, who have been compared to the Knights Templar. Since then, it has also served the Halveti (during the 17th century), Qadiri (from mid-1800’s to 1925), and currently the Naqshbandi. Through the ages, it was commonly used as a place for scientific and spiritual meetings. There is some discussion that the tekiya may have originally been a Bogomil monastery, the official Protestant religion present in Bosnia even before the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰

There are two tombs at the tekiya that belong to Sari Saltuk and Ačik Paša (pronounced Achik Pasha). According to the tourist information, though, Sari Saltuk may actually be buried in Baba Dago near Romania or at the Bektashi Center in Kruja,

¹⁰ Tekija na vrelu Bune. Tourist Information. (accessed March 26, 2006).

Albania, as many places claim him. The tourist information also stated that Ačik Paša was a scholar who represented “unorthodox” Muslims by not wearing a head covering. One of his descendants was the last sheikh of the Buna Tekiya, who died in 1925. The inscription at the entrance of the samahana (place for worship) reads as follows: “O You (O God), who opens every door, open the best door to us.”

The local tour guide informed that during the Communist Era, the State wanted to remove the religious nature of the tekiya at Buna, like a majority of the other religiously significant buildings in Yugoslavia.¹¹ The Communists desired to build a restaurant in its place. At that time there was a woman living at the tekiya, and she refused to let the Communists touch it. She wrote a letter to Tito in defense of her position, and, much to her and others’ relief, he put a halt to the restaurant plans. The tekiya was saved from destruction.

Nothing, however, could save the tekiya from being damaged due to natural causes. Because of its location near the mountain cliff, the tekiya was damaged several times by falling rocks.¹² It was renovated first in the mid-17th century, and also in 1716, 1871, 1923, 1949, 1957, and 1972. At one point, three of its buildings were destroyed by rocks. Now, the buildings are protected by the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments.

¹¹ Luan, tour guide at Buna Tekiya, interview by author, Blagaj, Hercegovina, March 26, 2006.

¹² Tekija na vrelu Bune. Tourist Information. (accessed March 26, 2006).



Figure 10. The view over Počitelj, Hercegovina, from the old Ottoman guard tower.

Počitelj

Počitelj (pronounced Pochitely) is an old Ottoman walled town (see fig. 10).

During the latest war, it was inhabited by Croats, who subsequently moved out. My Muslim friends from Mostar suggested that the city was “too Muslim” for the Catholics to stay. It is true that even the air in this beautiful, stone town feels different from elsewhere, as though this place will never forget the hundreds of years and experiences that it has witnessed. Currently, there is no tekiya in Počitelj, however the Sufi community has plans to build one. In particular, they want it to be in the shape of a circle, known as a halka, which resembles the shape of a group while performing dhikr.

Zenica

The first Naqshbandi Tekiya to be built in Zenica (pronounced Zenitsa) was recently established in 2004. The current sheikh is Sheikh Šefik efendiya Alić Fehmija,

who currently holds weekly dhikr. Since this tekiya was built much later than the others, I inquired why this was the case. The sheikh said that before the tekiya was built, dhikr was held in people's homes and in various mosques.¹³ Islam stayed alive because spiritual Islam lived in people's hearts. The most important knowledge in the world is this knowledge about God. A building was not as important as keeping the faith alive in hearts.

Near Zenica, in Central Bosnia, are three towns that are important for understanding Sufism in Bosnia. They are Živčići, Kaćuni, and Oglavak. Between my two excursions, I was able to briefly visit two of them. Unfortunately, time-limits restrained my research was in both cases, which only allowed me to record one tekiya experience at each town. These are found below. More time and exploration is needed to fully witness the Sufi activities.

Kaćuni

On the first day of spring, an annual gathering for dhikr is hosted in the village of Kaćuni (pronounced Kachunee), near Živčići. In 2006, I had the opportunity to attend and experience Sufis and other Muslims coming together for a Sufi gathering. The tekiya was about five years old and belonged to Sheikh Mesud Hadžimejlić and his son Ćazim, a calligrapher trained in Istanbul. They are connected to the Naqshbandi and Chishti Tariqas. In 2006, the tekiya was not regularly being used for worship, but served as a place for holistic healing, as is common in the Chishti Tariqa. The Naqshbandi tekiya in Živčići is run by the same family.

¹³ Sheikh Šefik-efendi Alić Fehmija, Naqshbandi Sheikh in Zenica, interview by author, Zenica, Bosnia, August 2007.

Many of the religious authorities from surrounding cities were present and gave short speeches at the beginning of the dhikr ceremony. Nearly 1,000 people gathered for the special dhikr. Women and girls, dressed in their most beautiful outfits, squeezed into the designated half of the “L” shaped mosque, as well as on the balcony. My host explained that since there is a shortage of men since the war, the village girls use gatherings like this as an opportunity to catch the eye of potential husbands.¹⁴ There were so many people that when we prayed, we were nearly on top of each other. When dhikr began, the whole building pulsed with our voices and the movements. The occasion began at 8:00 pm and ended at sunrise, with one break near midnight. Like many others, my small group slipped out during the break near midnight. As we waited to retrieve our shoes, we could hear the pounding of those above us jumping, which is performed during some forms of dhikr, and I regretted not being able to stay longer.

Živčići

Živčići (pronounced Jivchichi) is high in the forested mountains for which the Balkans earned its name. Surrounded by fresh air and with a beautiful view into the valley, this tekiya in Central Bosnia has stood since the 15th century, when it was built by Sheikh Isa-bey. It remains a stronghold for Sufism, particularly the Naqshbandi Tariqa, and serves as a bridge between this world’s “reality” and the True Reality. The sheikh present in 2007, Sheikh Masud Hadžimejlić (pronounced Hajji-Maylich), was the grandson of Mejlić baba and the same imam I saw in Kaćuni in 2006.

¹⁴ Belma Bajraktarević, host mother, professor of English, Sarajevo, personal communication, Kaćuni, March 2006.



Figure 11. Tekiya in Živčići, Bosnia.



Figure 12. Tombs of sheikhs at the Živčići Tekiya.

This tekiya is deeply connected to the nearby cemetery and tombs of its previous sheikhs (see figs. 11 and 12). This is particularly true for Sheikh Hussein Zukić, who was born in 1750 in Bosnia and studied in Istanbul, Mecca, Medina, and Damascus. He was made sheikh by his teacher, Sheikh Hafiz Muhammad Hisarija, in Istanbul and returned to Živčići, Bosnia. Amazingly, Sheikh Zukić had ijazet from 12 tariqas, which meant he had permission from the 12 main tariqas to teach from their Sufi traditions. When he arrived in Bosnia, Sheikh Zukić was very poor and worked in the coal industry, but he renovated the tekiya and remained there, even refusing a position at the Sarajevo school of Islamic Sciences. Sheikh Zukić had only one murid named Abdurrahman Sirri Sikirić, the son of a judge, whom he later sent to be sheikh in Oglavak. From Sheikh Hussein Zukić and Sheikh Abdurrahman Sirri Sikirić, this tariqa spread throughout Bosnia.

Tuzla

Ahmed Bašić Tekiya

In 2006, I visited Tuzla briefly and became familiar with the Ahmed Bašić Qadiri Tekiya. Dhikr was held here twice a week in this simply-decorated “L” shaped building. The presiding sheikh was Sheikh Suleiman. Some of the women recognized me from the large dhikr at Kaćuni, and I was welcomed by their smiles. A girl attending high school served as translator, and her enthusiasm to practice English allowed me to interact with the other women. Spending more time in Tuzla would provide a broader portrayal of Sufism in the area.

Conclusion

This concludes my documentation of contemporary Sufism in Bosnia. While incomplete, this research provides a strong foundation for future inquiry. It shows that Sufism is alive and practiced in Sarajevo, Blagaj, Zenica, Počitelj, Živčići, Kaćuni, and Tuzla. More research is especially needed in the cities and villages outside Sarajevo to provide a fuller and more accurate demographic picture of Sufism in Bosnia. Further analysis of my research is found in the following chapter.

Chapter V

Analysis

Sufism in Bosnia is presently alive and growing in membership, although there are a few concerns about its progress. During my nine weeks in Bosnia, I was introduced to seven active Sufi orders and witnessed the teachings of tolerance toward the other Abrahamic religions. While my research was certainly not all-comprehensive, the information I gathered about Bosnian Sufism suggests that they are recovering from the mass migration out of the Balkans following the fall of the Ottoman Empire and reinforces my hypothesis that they can serve as a bridge between the West and Islam because of their continued emphasis on tolerance and unity.

Contemporary Bosnian Sufism

The critical first step of my research was to become familiar with the contemporary existence of the Sufis and see whether or not the Sufi presence was substantial in Bosnia. Throughout my study, I met numerous active Sufi Orders in Bosnia and believe that they will continue to grow in the near future. Listed in the order of frequency, I was introduced to the Naqshbandi, Qadiri, Rifa'i, Chishti, Naqshbandi-Mevlevi, Qadiri-Bedawi, and Qadiri-Bakiye Orders (see figure 13). The hyphenated names mean that the sheikh of the tekiya had permission to teach from both Sufi orders. In general, Sufism was respected as a legitimate part of Islamic practice in Bosnia. The

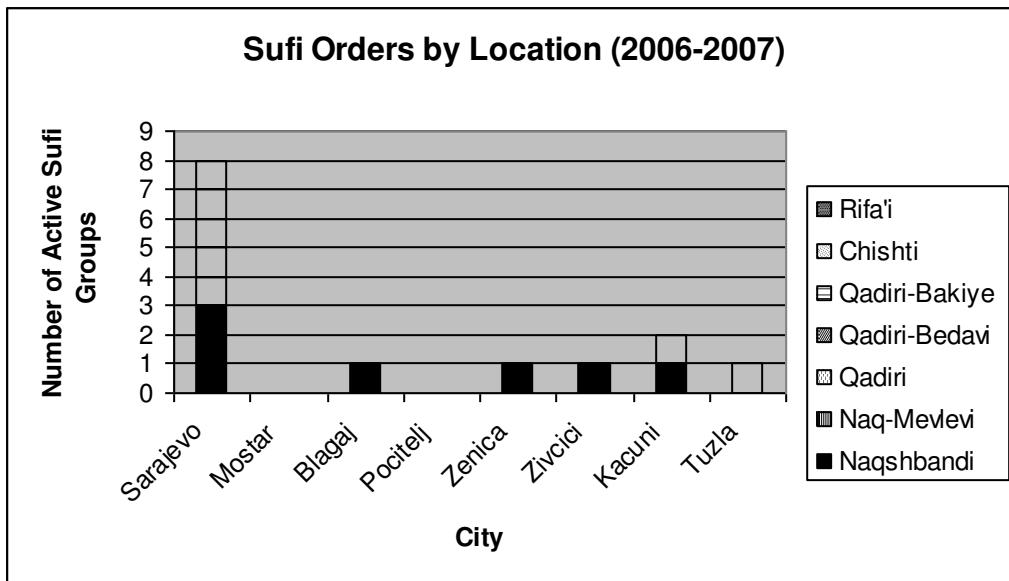


Figure 13. Chart of active Sufi groups by city that I met during the research.

tekiyas typically held gatherings once a week for dhikr, but if the tekiya had been destroyed and not yet rebuilt, dhikr was sometimes held in the mosque. Thursday was the most common day for dhikr, but this was not restricted. There were Sufi activities occurring at various tekiyas around Sarajevo at least five days a week. The numerous orders present in Bosnia helps to spreads interest about the Sufis and provide freedom of choice for those involved.

The most common Sufi order in Bosnia was the Naqshbandi. This order was the most popular among the young people and appeared to play a special role in society. Naqshbandi tekiyas were present in Sarajevo, Zenica, Živčići, and Kačuni. In Blagaj, the dhikr was also led by the Naqshbandi. Sheikh Halil's Brzina Naqshbandi Tekiya in Sarajevo, was unique because it plays a role in popularizing and making Sufism easily accessible for all people to participate. By inviting people to participate or observe the activities, Sufism is kept from being considered strange, out of date, or un-Islamic. This

is especially important with the minor influx of Wahhabis into the Balkans since the latest war in the area.

A goal of Sheikh Halil was to attract the young Muslims, and large numbers were drawn to this tekiya. An example of how Sheikh Halil encourages young Muslims to come is by using a poem by Rumi as a membership card, which reminds them that no matter what wrong they have done God is forgiving and merciful. The dhikr gatherings were held twice a week to allow for more people to attend, as opposed to the once a week, the typical schedule. From my experience, the tekiya was filled with more than 130 people for dhikr, and inevitably, some ended up sitting outside on the porch area. Of course, sitting outside was sometimes preferable, depending on the humidity and temperature. During the week and on Saturdays, Sheikh Halil could often be found at the tekiya, available for Turkish tea and discourse.

Sheikh Halil was not only making Sufism accessible for the Muslims and popularizing it, but he also working to bridge the gap between the orthodox ulema and the Sufi orders. For instance, on the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, there was a significant gathering held at Sheikh Halil's Tekiya, as well as Buna Tekiya and many others throughout Bosnia. At Sheikh Halil's Tekiya, not only did the Naqshbandi, Qadiri and other Sufis gather, but also the Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Hercegovina Mustafa Cerić and Head Imam of Sarajevo Ferid-efendi Dautović, along with several other politically important people (see fig. 14). These two men, specifically, represented orthodox Islam, one at the highest level in the Balkans and the other at the city level.

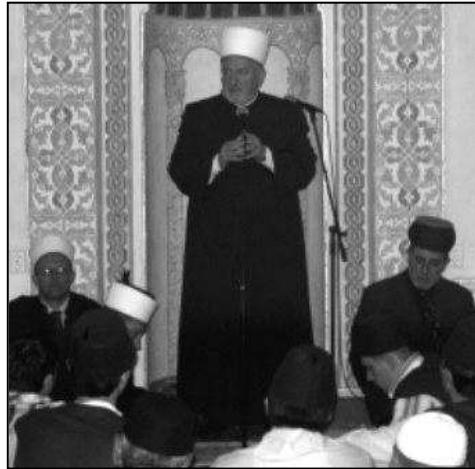


Figure 14. Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić (center), Head Imam of Sarajevo Ferid-efendi Dautović (left), and Sheikh Halil (right), in Brzina Tekiya, Sarajevo, remembering Prophet Muhammad's birthday, July 2007.

When Mustafa Cerić spoke, a Bosnian friend reported that he was talking about Sufism and how beautiful it was for all Muslims to be gathered in the tekiya on this special night. Since Communist times, the Buna Tekiya has been delineated as the appropriate place for Muslims to gather for the Prophet's birthday. The fact that Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić was present at the Naqshbandi tekiya in Sarajevo and not at the Buna tekiya is very interesting because it contradicts an outsider's understanding of where the most appropriate place for a non-Sufi, orthodox leader of Balkan Islam to attend. While I do not know the actual reason for changing the tradition, it is my opinion that this was a statement to all Muslims that Sufism is not an ancient or outdated practice, but alive and worthy of recognition. By attending a different tekiya, he also suggested to all people that, in the Balkans, not only one small tekiya, but all Sufism is an important part of Islam.

In Živčići, the Naqshbandi Order plays a different role than it did in Sarajevo. It retains the spiritual link between past and present day and remains a stronghold for the Naqshbandis. The Sufis here were quietly pursuing their spiritual path and not focused on attendance rates. The tombs of the ancient sheikhs present in the tekiya cemetery are visited by traveling sheikhs and are very much a part of the life of this tekiya. There is deep respect and an aura of reverence and quietness at this place that penetrates and calms. Even the surrounding rolling mountains covered in trees and fresh air serves to awaken serenity and remove the pressures and distractions associated with the earthly world (dunya). While some of the Naqshbandis in Sarajevo were active in religious politics, those in Živčići focused much less on that aspect.

Surprisingly, when I asked one of the imams in Sarajevo about the currents state of Sufism in Bosnia, he replied that there was a major problem. This response was intriguing because all I could observe were thriving tekiyas drawing substantial numbers. He noted that the people were searching for meaning in their lives and flocking to spiritual guides who could perform miracles, regardless of whether or not they were good spiritual teachers. He pointed out that some sheikhs were possessive of their murids (disciples); instead of guiding them closer to God, they gathered them close for selfish reasons. Also, instead of humbly accepting their role as spiritual guide, the sheikhs were competing for murids and felt proud to win their trust and loyalty. The imam referred to this as “jealousy among the dead.” It was a deep concern to him that instead of being a serious spiritual journey, belonging to a Sufi Order was becoming a fashion statement.

The question that begs answering then is “how do you know if your sheikh is a real sheikh?” The imam responded that “if you come to him and say, ‘I met this really

amazing person and I want to study with him,’ and if your sheikh is happy to give you to a new teacher, then it is a true sheikh inspired by God.” With this discourse, the imam helped me to understand the difficulty of putting Sufism into practice and balancing life. This reminded me of the quote that was mentioned earlier: “Today, Sufism is a name without a reality, but it was a reality without a name.”¹ With Sufism becoming more popular, the imam had concern that it was losing its focus on God.

It seemed that in each city I visited, Sufism existed in a distinct way. I found Sarajevo to be filled with tekiyas and Sufi groups, but they were tucked into the corners and almost hidden from the passersby. In Mostar, on the other hand, there was an overt past existence of Sufism, including the presence of Sheikh Yuyo’s tomb next to the road in the area called “Tekiya,” but I did not find any active tekiyas or Sufi groups. There was, however, a group of Naqshbandis who had recently shifted their location from a mosque in Mostar to the Buna Tekiya, not far away. A third example is Zenica, where the first Naqshbandi, and possibly the first-ever, tekiya was opened in 2004. Before this tekiya was built and during the time of Communism, I was told that Islam stayed alive because spiritual Islam lived in the hearts of the people and that dhikr took place in people’s apartments or at the mosques. These three cities had very unique Sufi expression and participation, although all represent Bosnian Sufism.

A concern of mine about contemporary Sufism in Bosnia is the number of functioning tekiyas without living sheikhs. Even though there are typically one or two people who act as representatives of the sheikh after the sheikh has died, they cannot fulfill the same role because they have not reached the spiritual level of sheikh, and

¹ Quote by Ali ibn Ahmad Bushanji. See Chittick, 1.

therefore are not able to legitimately act as a spiritual guide to others. At least three of the tekiyas I visited did not have living sheikhs and yet were hosting weekly dhikrs. While there must be a process of receiving a new sheikh, my initial inquiry into this subject did not receive an explicit response. The fact that these tekiyas have survived without a living sheikh is extraordinary and speaks to the dedication of the representatives and the interest of those who attend.

Typically, Sufi orders vary in the amount of attention given to the outer practices of Islam, even though practicing correct outer behavior is commonly recognized by the literature as the first stepping stone to the practice of Sufism. However, in Bosnia the Sufis I met upheld the outer form of Islam as well as the inner dimensions of Islam. The Naqshbandi and Qadiri Orders, especially, recognized the Shariah Law and kept to the required practices, such as prayers, and correct behavior. One of the murids of Sheikh Halil elaborated that knowing and following the Shariah Law was required before you could join this Sufi order.²

One aspect of Shariah Law deals with gender relations at the mosque. In Bosnia, men and women always had separate areas in which they could pray and perform dhikr without feeling uncomfortable or observed. Typically, women had a balcony from which they participated, such as the ornately designed one at Hajji Sinan's Tekiya. It is my understanding that the separate places of worship were meant to limit the interaction between men and women so that each may focus on God and their prayers more easily. If there was no balcony, the women simply gathered behind the men.

² Hamid Algar notes that the tariqas were strongholds of traditional Islam, remaining based on the Qur'an and Sunna and applying the Shariah Law in the early 1960s. See page 169.

The Sufi activities sometimes attracted only men, sometimes only women, and sometimes both. At the large annual spring dhikr in Kaćuni, there were almost 1,000 men and women, both genders almost equally represented. Men and women also participated in the dhikrs at Ahmed Bašić Tekiya in Tuzla, Buna Tekiya in Blagaj, and Sheikh Halil's Tekiya, Hajji Sinan's Tekiya, and Seven Brother's Mosque in Sarajevo, to name a few. At the tekiya of Sheikh Zakir, there were independent dhikrs held for men and women. The Qadiri-Bakije Mosque held women-only dhikrs as well. In Zenica, while the women were welcome to participate, it was uncommon for them to do so. Sheikh Šefik of the tekiya in Zenica invited me to participate, and my host mother was kind enough to accompany me so I would not be the only female. We were welcomed to the dhikr gathering and participated behind the men.

This involvement of both men and women in Sufi activities demonstrates the cultural openness of Bosnian Sufism. While Wahhabism limits women's activities outside the home, women are able to pursue spiritual development according to the Sufis. This unlocks key participation and empowers women to strive for religious and spiritual knowledge and understanding. Women are also known to reach the spiritual level of a sheikh, although I did not meet any in Bosnia.

There was a growing trend among the young female Bosnian Muslims to wear hijab, as the wives of the Prophet did when in public. Sheikh Halil's tekiya strongly encouraged this as an outer declaration of inner spiritual intention. It was also seen as a way to declare your identity as Muslim and connect with other Muslim women around the world. Twenty percent of Bosnian women wore the hijab, which means less than six percent of the total population. Typically, this consisted of grandmothers and

granddaughters, leaving the generation that grew up in Communism to wonder why on earth their daughters would don such an overtly religious and old-fashioned symbol. I was told several personal stories of Muslim parents who initially refused to accept the decision of their daughters. There was a strong connection between women who wore hijab, which was possibly intensified by the difficulty of going against family expectations. The women who wear hijab are taking advantage of the religious freedom allowed in Bosnia. Bosnian society respects women in hijab, especially in the old Muslim parts of town, but it is not required or forced on the women.

According to the people I talk with during my stay, the full body and face covering of women, called nikab, is not well accepted in Bosnia, even by those wearing hijab. One girl expressed that even though the nikab is normal in Saudi Arabia, it is foreign to Bosnian Islam and should not be worn there. Concealing a girl's face was seen as an attempt to remove her identity. Even though this girl completely covered her hair, she was avid against nikab. I saw very few women in nikab and spoke to none, but this was a much-debated topic during the time of my research.

In conclusion of this aspect of my research, I experienced a thriving community of Sufis in Bosnia. Young Muslims were attracted to the tekiyas for dhikr, and the tekiyas served as places to unite orthodox ulema and with mystical Islam. The Sufis I met ascribed to the inner and outer dimensions of Islam and were actively practicing their faith. The ideas of tolerance and peace taught by the Sufis are received by dedicated audience. The most common order was the Naqshbandi, but in addition, there were six other that I met throughout my travels, which added up to 14 different active Sufi groups. Two concerns that arose included the increased popularity of Sufism as a social activity

and the potential falling away from remembrance of God this could cause and the shortage of living sheikhs. However, excitement about Sufism was prevalent among the young Muslims, and this may lead to rejuvenation in the Sufi Orders in Bosnia the near future. The Sufis are established in Bosnia and practicing Islam in a moderate, European setting.

If I were to improve this study, I would dedicate more time to meeting Sufis in Tuzla, Zenica, Mostar and Oglavak to give a more complete overview of Sufism in these areas. Also more time in Sarajevo, Živčići, and Kaćuni, would be beneficial.

Approach to Other Abrahamic Religions

The second part of my research was to explore the beliefs promoted by the Sufis about other Abrahamic faiths. As I mentioned before, my study was compromised by my inability to speak or understand Bosnian and the difficulty of not having a consistent translator. Therefore, the most reliable information I gathered came from observable displays at the tekiyas and mosques. They were typically pictures, architecture, or calligraphies. These depictions were centuries old and thus expressed longstanding positions of the Bosnian Sufis towards others, in addition to serving as teaching tools for the present generation.

Although initially not expecting to find or even document these, I was struck by the messages of tawhid (unity of all) and respect for those of other religions that were portrayed and preserved at the Sufi tekiyas and mosques. There were multiple overt messages of “peace towards all.” I did not see anything that was “anti-other,” nor did any Sufi express a negative opinion to me about people who practice other religions. This is

consistent with the Qur'an, which states: "Did not God check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure" (22:40). The following are four examples promoting interfaith harmony and peace that I saw at a tekiya or mosque.

Solomon's Seal, located in Hajji Sinan's Tekiya, is a constant reminder of the unity of all of God's creation (see fig. 15 and 5). It was painted in the 1640's and has been meticulously preserved since that time. It is a large circle, maybe eight feet in diameter, with twelve spokes directed towards the center, but where they should meet is an empty circle. Each spoke begins with the declaration of faith, that there is only one God, written in Arabic calligraphy. I was told by one of the wakils, Sead-efendi, that the twelve spokes represent that there is more than one path that leads to God. The center is empty because God is indefinable and incomparably greater than anything that could be drawn.

This artistic rendition of Solomon's Seal is viewed as a symbol of tawhid because of how it links many spiritual paths to God, through their declaration of there being none but One God. Prophet Solomon is highly respected as the "greatest power of

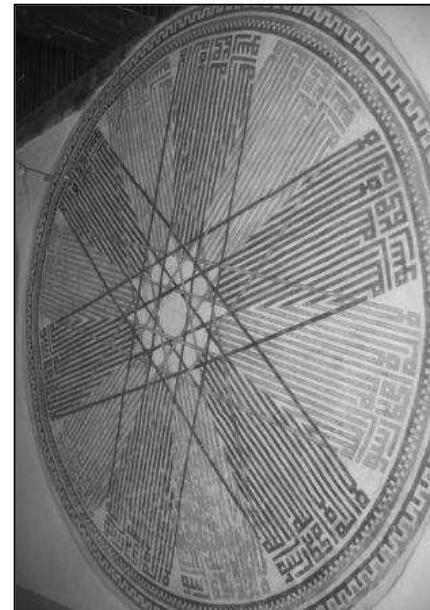


Figure 15. Solomon's Seal at Hajji Sinan's Tekiya, Sarajevo.

mankind” because he completely understood the meaning of the declaration of faith.³ He grasped the concept that nothing exists but God. There are no other gods, nor any different religions, nor even the individual. All of creation is a reflection of the Creator, the merciful and loving. This work of art beckons everyone to contemplate its meanings and to find unity with God for ourselves.

A second example was the presence of the Magen David (Star or Shield of David) (see fig. 16). Although associated with Judaism since the Zionist Movement adopted it as their symbol in 1897, this six pointed star was originally not exclusive to Judaism and, in fact, was used extremely infrequently in early Jewish literature or artwork.⁴ The Star of David was used in the original Bosnian architecture of the mosques and tekkiyas and incorporated into the Arabic calligraphy. Even after recent building renovations, the stars still ornately decorate the windows, chandeliers, and calligraphies. Hajji Sinan’s Tekiya, Careva Mosque, and Sheikh Halil’s Tekiya are a few examples of where I witnessed the Star of David. In contrast, at King Fatih Mosque, which was donated to Bosnia by Saudi Arabia following the latest Balkan War, as well as the mosque donated by Indonesia, I did not see the Star of David in their architecture or calligraphies. This implies that the stars are not used universally in Muslim architecture.

The visual presence of the stars in the Sufi and Sufi-oriented areas of worship serves to reinforce the connection between Islam and Judaism, although this was probably not the original purpose. Creating space where the two religions interact, even

³ Sead-efendi Halilagić, personal communication, Sarajevo, Bosnia, 19 March 2006.

⁴ Tracy Rich, “Star of David,” in “Jewish Virtual Library: A Division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise,” (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2008), <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/star.html> [accessed February 15, 2008].



Figure 16. Notice the Star of David in the windows of the Careva Mosque, Sarajevo.

if strictly visually, is important to making a conflict more tractable, according to Zartman, Director of the Conflict Management Program at John Hopkins University.⁵ When two parties mix, there is less chance of identity polarization and more chance of conflict resolution.⁶ The presence of the stars lessens the distinction between “us” and “them” by acknowledging the similar respect for King David that is found in Judaism and Islam. Likewise, Solomon’s Seal serves as a bridge between the Abrahamic religions in a similar way. The shared narratives open space for interaction and dialogue. When there is interaction, there is potential for overcoming conflicts and preventing future

⁵ I. William Zartman, “Analyzing Intractability,” in *Grasping the Nettle*, edited by Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, 47-64. (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2005), 57

⁶ Zartman, 50.



Figure 17. Mausoleums of Governor Gazi Husref-bey on right and his Christian friend/freed slave on left.

polarization of groups. Using shared symbols and revered prophets creates defense against the process of demonization and denigration of the “other” that happens before and during conflict.

A third declaration of harmony between the religions is found in the courtyard to the Gazi Husref-bey’s Mosque in Sarajevo (see fig. 17). Two mausoleums are located here; one is the tomb for the Governor Gazi Husref-bey himself, and the other houses a Christian friend of his. The governor is remembered with deep respect. He was generous to the city and established a fund for the continual upkeep of this mosque and several other buildings, including a dervish school and tekiya. The stone mausoleum standing proudly beside his serves as a lasting monument to interfaith friendship. The Christian friend honored with such high recognition by Gazi Husref-bey was, in fact, the governor’s freed slave.

A fourth example that attests to the tolerance and respect given to non-Muslims is a copy of an imperial edict preserved at the Buna Tekiya, the original Ahd-Nameh was housed at the Franciscan Catholic Church in Fojnica, Bosnia, until it was recently destroyed by fire. Issued in 1463, by Sultan Mehmet II el Fatih, this edict protected the rights of the Bosnian Franciscans in the newly conquered lands. It states that the monks, their property, and the property of their churches were not to be bothered, disturbed, attacked, insulted, or endangered in any way by anyone obedient and faithful to the Sultan's commands. In addition, it allowed for displaced monks to return to their monasteries and friends of the Franciscans to enter at their will and pleasure. This oath was made to do more than simply tolerate the Franciscan monks; it protected them from ill-intentioned individuals and allowed them to continue peacefully with their devoted religious lives.

The fact that a copy of this oath was preserved and displayed at a Sufi tekiya shows that the Sufis are proud of this history of harmony and peaceful habitation with non-Muslims. This also implies that the Sufis have respect for those who are devoted to God, even if they are not Muslims. If the edict had been issued for the metal smiths or tanners, it would suggest that certain trade smiths were given high honors, but it was not issued for them. It was issued for the Franciscan Monks, of the Christian faith, who practiced poverty and piety for the sake of God. This is a clear example of recognizing genuine devotion to the One God without being restrictive about religious affiliation, as is taught in the Qur'an but not always practiced.

The examples stated above are evidence that the Bosnian Sufis, as part of the larger Muslim family, are particularly established at acting with tolerance, respect, and

love toward those who practice Judaism and Christianity. The Qur'an instructs Muslims that different groups of people and nations were created so that they would compete in good works. It also reminds them that there is no compulsion in faith, and that whoever believes in God and does good works will be remembered by God. The Sufis understand the concepts involved with promoting Islamic Peace, which include but are not limited to justice, compassion, knowledge, tolerance, forgiveness, and tawhid. More importantly, the Bosnian Sufis promote these concepts in relation to the other Abrahamic religions, as witnessed through the architecture, calligraphies, and pictures found at the tekiyas and mosques.

These visual depictions of respect for the Abrahamic religions do at least two things that serve to bridge the East and the West. They create space where the people of the Abrahamic religions recognize the shared symbols, prophets, and qualities. This is imperative to reducing group polarization and the detrimental concepts during conflict of "us" and "them." Also, the century-old visual evidence found at the tekiyas and mosques serves to teach generation after generation about the commonalities between the religions and provides key examples of when respect was given to non-Muslims by important Muslim figures in Bosnian history. The visuals are one way in which the Sufis teach tolerance and overcome differences between religions in order to live peacefully with other human beings.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Sufism in Bosnia

The Sufis continue to be present in Bosnia and teach about tolerance and the unity of creation through a wide-spread network of tekiyas and orders, even after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the threat of atheism during Communism. The Sufi beliefs of moderation and love permeate the native form of Balkan Islam are in stark contrast to the less tolerant forms of Islam brought into the area during the latest Balkan War. I witnessed Sufi messages about increased tolerance towards others and often saw the connection between the Abrahamic religions reinforced through visuals and discussions. I took special note of the physical depictions of tawhid and tolerance at the tekiyas and other places frequented by Sufis. This evidence shows that the Sufis can be a force for rebuilding the bridges between the Abrahamic religions and overcoming the superficial divide between the Islam and West.

I would like to discuss one more experience I had in Bosnia that provides me with deeper confidence in this claim. In July of 2007, a concert celebrating 600 years of Islam in Bosnia was held at the Koševo Stadium. It was called “My Ummah” in the spirit of connecting with the world-wide community of Muslims. The master of ceremony was the Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Hercegovina Mustafa Cerić, who spoke about Balkan Islam being European Islam, worthy of respect, full of inspirational messages of peace, and that

genocide and killing in the name of religion should be strictly forbidden. The spectacular concert consisted of a parade by the orthodox ulema, performances by the Whirling Mevlevi dervishes, the Sarajevo philharmonic, whose conductor donned a Sufi green vest, a chorus of female praise singers wearing hijab, Sami Jusuf from England and other musical performers, readings of poems by men and women not wearing hijab, Emperor Mehmed II El Fatih's declaration to not harm or bother the Franciscan Monks, and Qur'anic readers from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. At least seven different languages were included in this concert including Arabic, Bosnian, Turkish, Albanian, Urdu, Persian, and English. This grand event gave tribute to the diversity within Islam, its pervasive message of peace, and the history of tolerance in the Balkans.

I found it interesting that out of the nearly 25,000 people in attendance, I did not see any women wearing the burka, nor did I see any significant number of men with big, fluffy beards, which are both characteristics of Wahhabi Islam. A minority of women wore hijab, as is more common now. The people who attended were the average Muslim citizens of Bosnia. They listened to music, they watched the Whirling Dervishes, and they listened to the speeches, poems, and Qur'anic readings, which all pertained to religious tolerance and ending divisive conflict. The Islam that was represented at this event was moderate and well-adapted for European and Western civilizations.

Mustafa Cerić gave a Declaration of European Muslims at the London Muslim Center in 2005 with much the same message as portrayed by the My Ummah concert.¹ He said that Muslims must realize that Islam is not currently accepted in Europe and that

¹ Dr. Mustafa Cerić, "Declaration of European Muslims," Arches: The Bi-Monthly Periodical of the Cordoba Foundation 6 (March-April 2007), 9.

it is the Muslim's responsibility to change this attitude and prove that Islam is worthy of respect by acting according to Islam's universal message instead of tribal, ethnic or national culture. He immediately declared that "the act of violence, the act of terror, the act of hatred in the name of Islam is wrong." He called for the Muslims to uphold the principles of human rights, democracy, tolerance, and essential values of life, faith, freedom, property, and dignity, which are all included in the Islamic concept of peace.

Beyond this, in his address Cerić laid out his clear expectations for the European Union, because any relationship between the two needs to be reciprocal. His expectations included allowing Islam to be institutionalized into European society so that Muslims have spiritual freedom and political freedom of representation, plus a relaxation of laws that target Muslims, such as the migration policy. He also spoke about developing Islamic schools that would prepare European Muslims for the challenges of living in a diverse world and being successful. His message was a call for Muslims to actively strive to overcome the stigma of terrorism and fanatical Islam and earn their rightful place in Western society and for the European society to stop limiting the right to freedom and democracy for the Muslims. The only way Muslims can uphold their half of the bargain this is through the practice of moderate and tolerant Islam.

Implications

Many Western leaders have recognized that while radical Muslims have strong and effective networks, the moderate majority of Muslims have not organized or even realized their potential. The Rand Corporation, for instance, in its Research Brief on the "U.S. strategy in the Muslim World post 9/11," recommends connecting with and

bolstering moderate factions of Muslims so that they are capable of countering radical Muslim minorities.² The Sufis of Bosnia are one such group that is already spreading messages of tolerance and harmony and trying to influence the larger world community. There are others doing the same that, if recognized as legitimate and given respect by the West, can become more successful at reducing the hijacking of Islam for political or destructive agendas by spreading awareness of the Islamic concepts of peace and standing up against injustice. In particular, the madressa school curriculums may benefit from a more balanced approach that includes tawhid and other moderating, peace-generating Islamic concepts.

Since Balkan Islam tends to be oriented toward tolerance and moderation, the European Union might do well to acknowledge Mustafa Cerić's message and work with him to promote a real understanding of Islam and its moderate message. This is the chance to have a Muslim partner directly in Europe working against terrorism for interfaith peace. However, if Balkan Islam continues to perceive rejection by the Western powers, it may have no other choice than to eventually polarize against the West. This is because continuous rejection from the West would discourage interfaith efforts, belittling the Sufi understanding of unity and peace, create or solidify the existing ill-feelings toward the West by Muslims, and may result in the majority of Muslims giving up on the moderate, middle path to join the radical faction. This reaction would be extremely detrimental to the balance of world peace, and the opportunity for a European partnership with Islam to fight for the greater good would be much less likely to present

² Rand Corporation: Project Air Force, "U.S. strategy in the Muslim World post 9/11," Research Brief (Rand, 2004), 2.

itself again because, given the history of tumultuous relations between the East and the West, trust from Muslims to non-Muslims is not given easily.

Unless a reciprocal partnership is developed, the Sufi teachings of tolerance and unity with the Christians and Jew will become increasingly disassociated from the actual or perceived relationship until the Sufi teachings become meaningless. Already there is a shift, although slight, in Bosnian Muslim belief due to the influx of Wahhabism. If rejection from Europe continues, more Muslims will turn to close-minded, radical Islam, and the fear of a terrorist cell in the Balkans may become a reality, made even more sickening because of its potential for nurturing harmony. It is crucial to work together to prevent the spread of hatred, exclusivity, and chaos that could erupt.

Improvements and Suggestions for Future Research

If I were to improve this study, as mentioned previously, I would dedicate more time to meeting Sufis in Tuzla, Zenica, Mostar and Oglavak. More time in Sarajevo, Živčići, and Kaćuni, with the Sufis would be beneficial too. A more complete study could be made with more time and interpersonal connections. It would also be interesting to study the dynamics between the Sufis and Wahhabis in Bosnia or the Balkans, in general.

If I were to improve my research on the opinions promoted by the Sufis toward the other Abrahamic religions, I would structure it more solidly around listening to the public Sufi talks. These talks usually occur before the dhikr session and serve to instruct and inspire those in attendance. Listening to these talks would allow the researcher to blend with the group in attendance and code for various statements. The natural setting could

be more conducive to gathering accurate data than during an interview, unless there were specific questions that arose. Interviews could then supplement the observations. I think this methodology would be the best, but it requires either having a solid grasp on the Bosnian language or a voice recorder and several translators to confirm the reliability of translation.

I intend to expand on this research by studying the influences of Balkan Sufism on the West. I would like to conduct a case-study of a Sufi community in Upstate New York that was started by a sheikh from the Balkans. This community is unique because it has been successfully participating in American society for the past four decades and is dedicated to serving the American and international community through humanitarian projects, such as teaching English as a second language to Mexican migrant workers and running a summer orphan program for the children from overseas who were victims of war. This community is in strict contrast to the images of angry Muslims portrayed in Western media, and it is imperative to pay attention and learn about it.

With this future study, I hope to gain further insight on how Sufism appeals to Westerners and how this community has managed to merge American and Islamic values which are critical to peaceful coexistence. This is exemplified by the fact that over two-thirds of the community members are Americans of Jewish and Christian descent who gravitated to this Sufi community because of the desire for more light and a spiritual and personal journey based in a religious tradition. Studying this community and other successful Sufi or moderate Muslim communities in the West is directly pertinent to counteracting the destructive vices pulling our globalized world apart.

Final Thoughts

Just over a decade after Huntington wrote his thesis of the Clash of Civilizations, he no longer finds that it appropriate.³ His thoughts on have shifted to consider the Mexican illegal immigrants as the current greatest threat to American security. This shows how fluid theories are, especially in the realm of international politics. We need to re-evaluate how we view today's world and the diverse populations. Globalization has brought increased communication as well as extreme polarization of wealth and with it, a sense of threat toward others.⁴ If we continue to think and act according to the Clash of Civilizations without reaching out to moderates on both sides and building bridges strong enough to counteract hatred of the Other, there may be a point when it is too late and the Clash becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In this paper, I presented one group in the Balkans that stands up for justice and disagrees with genocides and hatred against God's humankind. The Sufi understanding of unity (tawhid) stretches beyond the Abrahamic religions to all of creation and has established a solid base for tolerance. I hope this research on the Bosnian Sufis increases understanding about the potential for overcoming differences that may tear the world apart and how Islam can facilitate the healing process.

³ See Samuel P. Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge" Foreign Policy (March/April 2004): 30-45. http://esquel.org/arquivos/huntington_article.pdf [accessed March 3, 2008].

⁴ See Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World*, (New York: Routledge, 2003).

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