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Introduction

The nearly six centuries of Ottoman rule over southeastern Europe provided ample opportunity for the spread of Islam. Indeed, among the nations that now comprise the Balkans Peninsula (Albania, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) the visible Muslim component to their populations are readily evident. Two of these nations, Albania and Bosnia-Hercegovina, undoubtedly have Muslim majority populations. The populations of Macedonia and Serbia (which includes Kosova) are comprised of huge Muslim minorities. In Croatia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Greece there are smaller percentages, but in the case of Bulgaria this means more than 1 million!

The largest Muslim ethnic group present in the Balkans is the Albanians, who number over 5 million. They are concentrated in the central and southern areas of the Peninsula and form the overwhelming majority of the population in Albania, the Serbian occupied province of Kosova and western Macedonia. There are small groups of Albanians living in Bosnia, Montenegro and Croatia who are mainly émigrés from the Tito era. In regards to religion, though they are for the most part followers of Islam (or the non-practicing descendants of Muslims), Albanians have never found it a force for ethnic unity. Significant portions of the Albanian people still cling to either Catholic or Orthodox Christianity, and among the Muslim population there was further division between the Sunni majority and the followers of the Shi'ah Bektashi (see below).

The next cultural element in the Muslim population of the Balkan Peninsula are the Slavs. They number some 3.5 million and are the descendants of those of the region who embraced Islam during the centuries of Ottoman rule. Culturally and linguistically they are a diverse group whose racial base and religious faith form for the only common factor. They form a plurality of the inhabitants of Bosnia-Hercegovina (where they are known as Bošnjaks), a majority of the Serbian-occupied region of the Sandzak of Novi Pazar, a significant minority in Macedonia (where they are known as Torbeši) and Bulgaria (where they identify themselves as Pomaks). Small pockets of Slav speaking Muslims (Pomaks) can also be found in northern Greece and in Kosova (Goranis).

The Turkish element of the Muslim population is but a mere shadow of what it once was, say a hundred years ago. In the past, Turks made up significant portions of the

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populations of Macedonia, Thessaly, the Morea and Bulgaria. At present, there are nearly one million Turks who continue to live in Bulgaria. In Macedonia and Greece there are some 200,000 Muslims who still identify themselves as Turks. There are also much smaller communities of ethnic Turks who live in the urban centers Kosova and the Sandzak.

The smallest of the compact Balkan Islamic ethnic groups are the Roma (Gypsy) people. They are widely distributed throughout the region and tend to follow the dominant religion where they reside. Thus in the heavily Islamized regions of Bosnia, Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia they usually profess Islam as their creed. In Macedonia the Roma are a highly visible minority, especially around the capitol city of Skopje. Historically, the Roma have (and continue to do so) suffered from racial discrimination by their non-Roma neighbors, both Muslim and Christian.

In the past there have been other ethnic elements that have since disappeared due to extermination, expulsion or assimilation into one of the more dominant Muslim groups. For instance there were large numbers of Greek-speaking Muslims in Macedonia, Crete and in the various regions of Greece up until the turn of the twentieth century. One also can find the descendants of Circassian and Tatar refugees still living in Kosova and Bulgaria though they have been relatively assimilated into the Albanian or Turkish populations amongst whom they live.

Sufism as a means of Islamic Propagation during the Ottoman Era
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As with other Muslim lands, the historical role that the Sufi tariqats played in the preservation and propagation of Islam in the Balkans cannot go without notice. It can be said with all fairness that the implantation of Islamic Civilization here could not have been possible without the efforts of these Sufi shaykhs and their orders. The Sufis of the Ottoman Balkans added enormously both to the development of an Islam of the intellectual arena as well as a 'folk' Islam of the masses. Though now a mere shadow of a once vast manifestation, the influence of Sufism can still be felt at both the popular and academic level among the Balkan Muslim population. The extent of the impact of Sufism and its role in Balkan Islam can be seen through the number of tariqats (mystical brotherhoods) that functioned in the region over the centuries.

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The largest and most wide-spread of these tariqats were the Halveti (Khalwatiyyah) and the Bektashi. Though minimally represented at present, these two orders dominated all others during the Ottoman Era. They were followed by the Naqshibandi, Qadiri and Rifa`i in size and distribution. All three of these tariqats have managed to survive to this day. Several other groups such as the Mevlevi, Bayrami, Melami, Sa'di, Jelveti, Shazili and Bedevi, appeared during various intervals of the Ottoman period but have since ceased to exist.

Though the overwhelming majority of Sufis in the Balkans are associated with the Ottomans, the one of the first Sufis to have come into the area was the Bektashi saint Sari Saltik. Though most of the exact details of his life are clouded by legend, this fourteenth century Sufi traveled throughout the region decades well in advance of the Ottoman armies. His maqams (shrines) can be today found in any number of places including Bosnia (Blagaj), Romania (Babadağ), Macedonia (near Ohrid) and the most famous in Albania (Kruja).

As the Ottoman Empire extended its rule into the southeastern Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries, the dervishes of various tariqats followed in its wake. These early Sufis often established zawiyas or hospices that served not only as symbols of Ottoman authority over a newly conquered region but as bases for the diffusion of Islam among the local people. Two of these distinguished hospices were established in the Bosnian city of Sarajevo immediately after the conquest of the area in 1463. Both of these were built through grants made by local Ottoman notables and administered by members of the Naqshibandi Order. Later, as imperial administration became more entrenched and the Islamic religious establishment more present, tekkes were built to cater to the spiritual needs of the dervishes and local populations.

The first Ottoman Sufis tended to be primarily from among the Naqshibandis and their known centers during this time were established in Bosnia and Macedonia. Announcedly tied to the Sunni 'ulama, the Naqshibandi were in the vanguard of securing "orthodox" Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the urban centers of the Balkans. There were, in fact, three distinct waves of Naqshibandi implantation into the Balkans during the Ottoman period. The earliest phase of implantation was made through the shaykhs who were the direct representatives (khalifahs) of Khwajah Ubaydullah Ahrar. Notable among these were Mulla Abdullah Ilahi (d.1491), who settled in Serres (Greece) and Shaykh Lutfullah, who established an early Naqshibandi tekke in Skopje. It is also probable that the earliest Naqshibandi teachers in Bosnia (namely Uyan Dede and Temsi Dede) had affiliation with the two previously mentioned shaykhs.

In the late 18th century, the Naqshibandi Order in Bosnia was revived (after having

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been eclipsed for nearly a century by the Halvetis) by the work of Abdurahman Sirri Dede (d.1847) who was a follower of the Mujaddidi branch that was founded by Ahmad Sirhindi. Sirri Dede and his disciples turned central Bosnia into a Naqshibandi stronghold and their descendants still run fully functional tekkes up to this day. The third surge of the spread of the Naqshibandi into the Balkans came short after the second. In the late 19th century the Khalidi branch that was established by Khalid al-Baghdadi made its way into central Bosnia as well as parts of Kosova and Macedonia. Here too does this branch continue to function (though to a very limited extent presently in Kosova and Macedonia).

During the early decades of the 16th century, having become firmly entrenched in Istanbul and among the Ottoman ruling class, the shaykhs of the various Halveti branches sent out their deputies to various points in the Balkans. Theirs was an order wide spread and popular, that had literally hundreds of tekkes established in nearly every region of the peninsula. The Gültenis had a very early presence in southern Albania and Epirus and the Jemalis established important bases in the cities of Sofia (Bulgaria) and Uzica (Serbia) from which the order further spread into Bosnia and on into Ottoman Hungary. Also present were the Sinanis and Sünbülis who had tekkes in various cities from Sarajevo to Niš to Skopje to Athens. Later, in the 17th century, a new wave of Halveti implantation occurred as the new branches of the Jerrahis, Karabatis and Hayatis came into fore. These three sub-orders eventually surpassed the older branches and came to dominate the Halveti presence in Albania, Kosova and Macedonia, where two of them (the Hayatis and the Karabatis) still function to a much reduced extent today. The Jerrahi sub-Order played a significant role in the re-establishment of Muslim life in the Morea and later in Bulgaria. A reformist minded sub-order of the Halvetis, the Tabanis spread into Bosnia and Bulgaria during the mid-19th century and met with considerable but short-lived success.

Like the Naqshibandi, the Halveti were propagators and defenders of Sunni Islam. Many of the top ranking Balkan 'ulama of this period were shaykhs of this order. The eminent Balkan Muslim theologian of Sofia, Bulgaria, Sofyalı Bali Efendi (d.1553) along with other Halveti shaykhs took an active role in combating the spread of non-orthodox ideas and groups (such as the Hamzevi movement in Bosnia, the Bedreddinists and Kizilbat of Bulgaria, and to some extent even the Bektashis) that had taken root among certain elements of the Muslim and neo-Muslim populations.

The Bektashi Order, which had long been associated with the Ottoman military establishment, had during the 15th and 16th centuries only limited appeal in the Muslim populations of the region. The early center for Bektashi activity in the Balkans was the tekke at Kızıl Deli in Thrace. It was here that the second founder of the tariqat, Balim Sultan (d.1516) sent several of his disciples out to the Balkans. Though details on the activities of these early Bektashi shaykhs is difficult to uncover, the tombs of several of them stand today in Macedonia (Sersem Ali Baba in

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Tetova), Bulgaria (Demir Baba near Razgrad) and Albania (in and around Kruja). It was not until the 17th century that the Bektashi began to make headway in its spread into the Balkans primarily as a result of the destruction by Ottoman authorities (then under the influence of the anti-Sufi Kadizade movement) of the main tekke at Kızıl Deli and the subsequent dispersal of its dervishes.

The Bektashi Order formed the “left” end of the Sufi spectrum in the Balkans. Avowedly Shi’ah (and often antinomian) in outlook, their shaykhs (known as babas) were able to gain sway over rural areas and villages throughout Greece, southern Albania and Macedonia, as their toleration and ability to absorb local custom provided this element of the population with a “folk” Islam that they could easily relate to. Likewise, the Kızılbaş of Bulgaria (who are the progeny of extremist Shi’ah Turkoman tribes who were deported from Anatolia and settled in Bulgaria by the Ottomans following their conflicts with the Safavids) quickly and easily assimilated many Bektashi saints and practices into their own religious doctrines (for reasons that are beyond the scope of this paper to discuss).

In other areas of the Balkans, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and in large urban centers (in both where their functioning was limited due the strength of the orthodox Sunni establishment), the Bektashi found restricted appeal and were limited in operation to the Janissary garrisons. These tekkes were established as a result of the Ottoman military presence and disappeared as that crumbled. Several of the more renowned tekkes were found in Budapest (where the tomb of its founder, Gül Baba, still remains and is open for visitation), Eger (also in Hungary, the building of which still stands), Belgrade and Banja Luka (both of which ceased to exist long ago).

In the 19th century, the Bektashi began to gain an immense footing in Albania and Greece, following the destruction of the Janissary Corps and the banning of the tariqat in 1826. Many Bektashi babas and dervishes fled to the remote areas of the Balkans far from the reach of the Ottoman government. During this period (especially after the order outlawing of the Bektashis was rescinded in the 1860’s), the tariqat had gained a sizeable presence in southern Albania. It was even remarked by one English traveler in the area during the late-19th that were as only one out of ten Albanians north of Tirana followed the Bektashi Order, in the south it was the exact reverse, with nine out of ten Muslims affiliated with the tarikat! By the end of Ottoman rule in 1912, there were nearly one hundred Bektashi tekkes in the Albanian populated lands of the central and western Balkans.

At the beginning of the 17th century, two more tariqats, the Qadiris and the Mevlevi, were to make their appearance in the Balkans, both of which were to play an important role in

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the Sufism in the region. The Qadiri Order began to fan out from its base in Istanbul under the initiative of Shaykh Ismail Rumi (d.1631). By the 1660's Qadiri tekkes could be found in Prizren (the Kurila Tekke of Shaykh Hasan Horasani), Berat (the Sheh Ahmet tekke), Skopje (Aldi Sultan Tekke), Sarajevo (the Had_i Sinan Tekke), Gasoutni (the tekke of Delikli Baba) and other major urban areas. The Qadiri tarikat became entrenched in Bosnia due to the work of the distinguished shaykh Hasan Kaimi Baba (d.1691). This prolific writer directed at least two Qadiri tekkes in the city of Sarajevo, before his outspoken involvement of local politics led to his expulsion from the city.

The Qadiri Order continued to function throughout the Ottoman era and it received a further boost in its activities at the end of the 19th century. During this period two notable shaykhs, Mehmed Sezai and Hajji Kadri (both Albanians and well-educated 'ulama) rejuvenated the order in Kosova, Bosnia and to a lesser extent Macedonia after their return from studying shari'ah in Istanbul. Hajji Kadri (d.1936), who received his ijazah in the Qadiri tarikat from the famous Turkish shaykh Mehmed Emin Tarsusi, established a well-organized network of deputies throughout the region from Travnik in Bosnia to Peshkopi in eastern Albania.

As the Qadiris made their entrance into the Balkan Peninsula, so did the order founded by the great mystic Jalaluddin Rumi. In a short space of fifty years the Mevlevi were able to establish noticeable tekkes in Plovdiv, Serres, Salonika, Elbasan, Skopje, Belgrad, Pécs (in Hungary) and Sarajevo. Due to the highly sophisticated outlook of the order, its appeal was generally restricted to the cities and to the educated elite. During the Ottoman era, scores of Balkan Mevlevi ranked among the finest literati of the empire. Such figures as Habib Dede (d.1643), Fevzi Mostarac (d.1707) and Fazil Pata Šerifovic (d.1882) left their indelible mark on Ottoman religious literature.

However, due to the limited attraction of the order and its elaborate ceremonies, which required considerable practice, the Mevlevi soon vanished from the Balkans once the Ottoman Empire left the region and the main center of Konya was later closed by Atatürk. The last functioning Mevlevi establishment in the Balkans was located in the city of Skopje. It was demolished in the 1950's after its last shaykh, Hakki Dede left for Turkey.

During the Ottoman era, several smaller tariqats gained establishment on a much smaller scale. The Bayrami Order of Hajji Bayram Veli (d.1430) built tekkes in scattered locations throughout the Balkans, such as Skopje in Macedonia, Sofia in Bulgaria and Shkodra in northern Albania. Two of the branches of the Bayrami tariqat, the Jelveti and the Melami had comparable success. Only the later received considerable success in Kosova and Macedonia in the late 19th century thanks to the efforts of the Egyptian born shaykh Muhammad Nur ul-`Arabi

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(d.1897). He gained considerable a following in the region due to his charismatic appeal.

A much earlier offshoot of the Bayrami-Melami fraternity, the Hamzevi was established by a Bosnian shaykh, Hamza Baliya (d.1573). Through his preaching an extremely heterodox interpretation of Islam (which was undoubtedly influenced by Hurufi and Ismaili doctrines) he gained a popular following all along the Drina River valley in eastern Bosnia. The order caused much alarm among the Sunni religious establishment and the 'ulama of the Balkans (who were nearly all affiliated with the Naqshibandi and Halveti orders) came out in adamant opposition to the Hamzevis. Finally, Hamza Baliya's open criticism of the state caused alarm from the Ottoman government. Following the issuance of fatwas, he was arrested in Bosnia, brought to Istanbul to stand trial and executed. His followers were suppressed and forced underground while Hamzevi leaders executed or exiled. Decades later, the Hamzevi Order came out from hiding, but had by then moderated some of their original heterodox teachings.

The Sa'di Order founded by Shaykh Sadeddin Jibawi (d.1330), first came into the Balkans in the late 17th century through the efforts of Adzizi Baba, a native of northern Albania. He established a main tekke in Prizren and the tarikat spread further into Albania and Kosova. The Sa'di Order still today plays a considerable role in these areas. Another order of Arab origin, the Rifa'is, came into the region in two waves; the first in the late 1700's was limited to Macedonia and Bulgaria and was implanted through the efforts of several Arab shaykhs, and the second, which occurred in the late 19th century, that securely established the order as a significant force in Balkan Sufism. This imbedding of the Rifa'i into modern Balkan Muslim life was a result of the work of Shaykh Musa Muslihuddin of Kosova (d. 1917). He built up a strong network of disciples and tekkes in Kosova and northern Albania. Like the Qadiri shaykh Hajji Kadri, Shaykh Musa had close contact with the Muslims of Bosnia and even established a small Rifa'i group in Sarajevo. Two other Arab tarikats, the Shazeli and Bedevi remained restricted to one or two tekkes in Kosova and Bulgaria and they have all but disappeared from the region, although a Qadiri-Bedevi branch does function to this day in Sarajevo under the leadership of Shaykh Zakir Bekitc.

During the Ottoman period Sufism in the Balkans can be seen to have several currents that gave it its character. First was that most of the shaykhs of the staunchly Sunni orders of the Halvetis, Naqshibandis, and Qadiris were members of the ulema. The numerous shaykhs who had brought these orders into the region had been for the most part educated in the important Islamic theological institutions in Istanbul, Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus and Madinah. Many of these shaykhs and their disciples were functionaries in the Sunni religious hierarchy that upheld the Ottoman State. This may have given a few of these orders an elitist tint. The many members of these tarikats (especially the Mevlevis and Bektashis) were prolific writers of prose and theology who wrote not only in Arabic, Persian and Ottoman but also in the vernacular. For instance Shaykh Umar Kashari al-Qadiri developed the first Albanian-Turkish lexicon in 1804.

Such figures in Balkan Sufism were ranked among the most scholarly and intellectual in the Muslim World at that time.

For the average Muslim citizen of the Balkan provinces of the empire the appeal of certain tariqats depended on the social surroundings in which they lived. In the urban centers of Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia (that were primarily Turkish speaking) the Halvetis, Rifais and Qadiris proved to be easily accessible to those who desired to pursue a spiritual path. The vociferous and physically intense zikrs of these orders definitely held some attraction to the masses as opposed to the more somber practices of the Naqshibandi and the highly intellectual philosophies of the Mevlevi. These three tariqats also remained inside the general Sunni worldview (unlike the Bektashis for instance) which made them free of social stigmatization.

In rural areas, often far removed from the educational institutions of the religious establishment, the orders that were the widest spread tended to have had heterodox and syncretistic teachings. Here, in order to facilitate an easy transition from Christianity to Islam, the people often kept elements of their old ways (which were often of pre-Christian in origin themselves). For instance, the Hamzevis found considerable appeal along the very rural districts of the Drina River valley in the 16th century shortly after the population of the area had converted to Islam. The 14th century religio-political movement of Shaykh Beddrudin Simavi (if it can be defined as a Sufi tariqat) was confined to the wilds of the Bulgarian backcountry. Both of these movements were crushed by the Ottoman government, but many of their ideas are believed to have filtered into the Bektashi Order, the Sufi order that held enormous influence over large parts of the rustic Balkans.

The Situation of Sufism in the post-Ottoman Balkans

The decline of the Sufi Orders in the Balkans of course mirrored the general collapse of Ottoman rule in the area. The first lands to go were the Danubian provinces of Hungary and Slavonia that had by the early part of the 18th century been completely cleaned of its Muslim population. The Sufism that had once been a vibrant part of the Islamic presence in these areas vanished during this holocaust. In the formerly Muslim regions of Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, traces of these Ottoman institutions no longer survive due to the virulent eradication policies of Orthodox Christian chauvinism.

The end of Ottoman rule in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 did not spell the end of Sufism in the area. Though greatly affected by a mass migration of a considerable portion of the Muslim population out of the province, several new Sufi shaykhs managed to establish new centers of

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influence in Bosnia. For instance, the Naqshibandi-Khalidi Order was introduced into central Bosnia by Mufti Shaykh Husnija Numanagic (d.1931) and the Halveti-Sabanis of Shaykh Sejfudin Iblizovic (d.1889) opened tekkes in the northeastern parts of the country. During the Austro-Hugarian occupation, Sufis were allowed to maintain their contacts with their brethren elsewhere in the Muslim World. An example of this was the visitation of the two most important Kosovar shaykhs of the time, Hajji Kadri and Musa Muslihudin. These two men traveled to Hapsburg Bosnia and met with local Sufis there. Likewise the Bektashi Babas of Kosova were in regular contact with the small community of Albanian Bektashis that resided in Sarajevo.

This situation remained as so during the years of the first Yugoslav state (1918-1941). However the continued migration of many Muslims from Bosnia led to the rapid decline of several orders. By the 1930's the Halvetis had all but disappeared in Bosnia-Hercegovina and by the end of WWII there was not a single one of their tekkes in operation. Though both the Naqshibandis and Qadiris continued their operation, they were limited in reach to the solidly Muslim areas of central Bosnia. Following the end of WWII and the establishment of communist rule over Yugoslavia, a period of general decline marked the Sufi Orders. In 1952 all tariqat activities were banned, not as might be thought by the communist government, but by the modernist minded `ulama of the government sanctioned Islamic Community, who saw the orders and their shaykhs as a remnant of archaic superstition and innovation. As a result all tekkes were officially closed in Bosnia-Hercegovina, but they continued to function in Kosova and Macedonia simply because there the shaykhs' residences were often the tekke itself.

This ban remained in place until the early 1970's when thanks to the efforts of several prominent scholars in the Muslim community, notably the Qadiri-Mevlevi shaykh and imam Fejzulah Hadzibajric (d.1990) and the Rifa'i shaykh of Prizren, Xhemali Shehu (b.1926), made a successful move to revitalize Sufism in Yugoslavia. In 1974 the Community of Islamic Dervish Orders of the SFRY (ZIDRA) was formed as an umbrella organization to promote tasawwuf. With this organization in place, the restrictions on dervish activities in Bosnia-Hercegovina were disregarded.

During the wars that racked Yugoslavia between 1991-1995, the Sufi Orders and their followers played an active role in the defense of the Muslim community against the might of Serb and Croat aggression. Shaykhs of both the Naqshibandi and Qadiri tariqats had their dervishes formed into fighting units that took to the fronts notably in central Bosnian and along the Brcko corridor. The current situation for Sufism in Bosnia-Hercegovina is bright. Never having had the stigma of heresy attached to it, Sufism is accepted overall by both the religious establishment (many of whose members are openly involved in the orders) and the laity. Except for the Wahhabi presence that has now invaded Bosnia thanks to missionaries of the sect from Arab countries, the legitimacy of Islamic mysticism was never in question both during the Ottoman period and at the present.

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In Kosova, the post-Ottoman situation resembled that of Bosnia. With the exception of the Serb terror of 1912-13 and the 1952 ban, Sufism continued to flourish unabated. Though certain orders disappeared by WWII (such as the Mevlevi), others actually grew in influence. During the 1970's the Rifa'is came to dominate the spiritual scene in the former Yugoslavia due to the inexhaustible efforts of Shaykh Xhemali Shehu of the Prizren tekke. Other surviving orders in Kosova included the Sa'dis, Qadiris and the Halveti-Karabatis. The Bektashi also had a modest tekke in the town of Gjakova in an otherwise sea of Kosovar Sunnism. It is unknown as to the extent of damage the Serb genocide of Albanians in Kosova has affected these Sufi institutions. In the summer of 1998, the beloved 76 year-old shaykh of the Karabatis of Orahovac, Muhedin Shehu, was shot dead by Serb para-militaries.

In the area of Macedonia, the tariqats suffered tremendously from the constant migration of the Muslim population to Turkey. By the 1930's many tekkes in the once Turkish dominated regions of central and eastern Macedonia stood abandoned as a result of these population shifts. Today one can still find the turbes of shaykhs that still exist in areas where Muslims no longer form an element of the demographic make-up. Often the local Macedonian Christian population gives these sights considerable veneration. The tariqat that suffered the most from this decline was the Halveti, which was represented in Macedonia in its Sinani, Hayati and Jerrahi branches. Of these only the Hayati remains functioning today in the Albanian regions of western Macedonia. The Rifa'is (of a different branch than those of Kosova) and Sa'dis continue to operate through out the region and are at this time dominated by Roma (Gypsies). The Bektashi also have small communities in the Albanian towns of Gostivar, Kicevo and Tetova as well among the Turkish-speaking communities of Kanatlar and Strumica.

Elsewhere in the post-Ottoman Balkans, the activities of the tariqats is virtually non-existent. In Albania, the largest orders were the Bektashis and the Halvetis, but the Tijanis, Rifa'is, Qadiris and Sa'dis also had a presence. The Bektashi played a prominent role in the inter-war years and the headquarters of the tariqat was moved from Anatolia to Tirana following Atatürk's abolition of the Sufi Orders. There was a formation of an umbrella organization of Sunni Sufi orders in the 1930's known as the Drita Hynorë (Heavenly Light) which was formed by the Tijanis, Rifa'is and Qadiris. The Halveti branches likewise formed the Kryesia e Sektë Alevijanë (The Center of the Alevi Sect) which organized yearly conferences and gatherings.

In the 1950's severe restrictions were placed on the Sufi Orders (and religion in general) and all of them were officially detached from the Sunni mainstream by the communist government. Each order was recognized as a "religion" on to itself in an attempt by the government to divide and rule. Finally in 1967, dictator Enver Hoxha declared all religious belief anathema and outlawed it altogether. Scores of clergy from all faiths were executed imprisoned

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or forced into hiding. Despite these draconian measures many families kept the Sufi traditions alive in secret and those shaykhs who went underground continued to teach even with the knowledge of what would occur if caught.

By the time the ban on religion was rescinded in Albanian in 1991, only the Bektashis and the Halvetis had shaykhs who were still alive. The later made attempts to re-establish itself in the country under the leadership of Shaykh Muammar Pazari and the Halveti Order now holds a meager place in Albanian Sufism. The Bektashis found considerably more fortune in re-organizing themselves. The headquarters of the tariqat was returned by the government (it was a home for the elderly in communist times) and the few remaining babas set about teaching once more. The Bektashi Order managed to recruit dervishes from among the young and it issues a monthly magazine Urtësia. The current head of the order, the dedebaba, is the elderly Reshat Bardhy. The Rifa'i have also managed to re-establish its presence in the country. Through the work of Shaykh Xhemali of Prizren the order has constructed tekkes in Tirana, Shkodra and Berat. Likewise, the Tijani has a well-felt presence among the higher Sunni clergy, including the current grand-mufti, Hafiz Sabri Koçi.

Little is know at this time of the situation of the tariqats in Bulgaria, whose Muslim community suffered through a terrible pogrom during the 1980's. In the pre-WWII period, the Halvetis, Bektashis, Naqshibandis, Shazilis, Qadiris and Mevlevis existed but few survived the communist led assimilation campaign. However, Muslims still visit the graves of various saints, which points to some form of survival. In Greece, there is some lingering Bektashi communities among the Turks of Western Thrace.

Balkan Sufism beyond

It is important to note that the first Sufi lodge to be established in North America was the First American Albanian Bektashi Monastery. This center was founded in the early 1950's by Baba Rexhep (d.1995), native of the southern Albanian town of Gjirokastra. This remarkable figure managed to preserve the Bektashi identity of many Albanian Muslims despite the pressures from the anti-religious programs of his native land and the pull of assimilation in the United States. Over the decades the tekke (which is located outside of Detroit) expanded in size and membership. Following the death of Baba Rexhep, the tekke is now under the directorship of Baba Flamur Shkala, a very energetic and young shaykh who will hopefully serve his community well.

In the late 1970's the Rifa'i Order made its first presence in the United States with the establishment of a modest center in the Washington D.C. area by Dr. Asaf Durakovic, who was a

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khalifah of both Shaykh Xhemali of Prizren and the Halveti-Hayati branch of Macedonia. The Rifa'i Order subsequently expanded in the 1980's and 1990's to include centers in New York, Staten Island, Toronto, Cleveland and most recently in Chicago. In fact, due to the genocidal warfare being conducted by the Serbs in Kosova, Shaykh Xhemali Shehu has taken up residence in the United States.

Also it is important to note the activity of two non-Balkan Sufi Orders into the region. The Halveti-Jerrahis (who had historically been present in the southern Balkans), began a program to assist Bosnian students achieve higher education in the United States. A history of the order translated into Bosnian may help establish its presence in the area. The Naqshibandi-Haqqani Order of Shaykh Nazim has also begun to take root in Bosnia and Albania where his writings have been popularly received.

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