

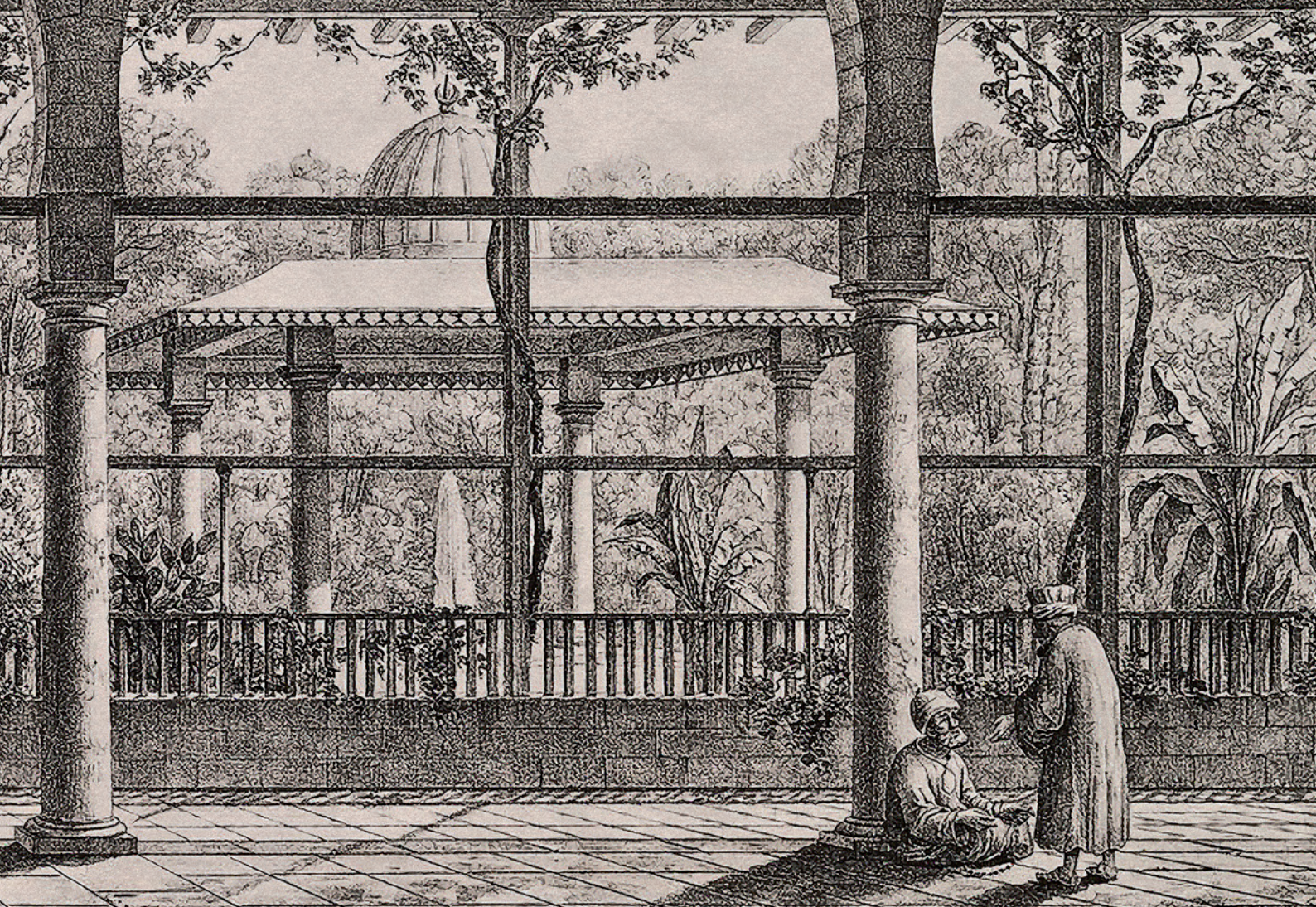


ILUSTRACIJA – *Derviška tekija*. Osmanska Turska 16. stoljeće.

ILLUSTRATION – *Dervish tekke*. Ottoman Turkey 16th century.

Hamza Halitović je rođen u Novom Pazaru 1984. godine. Osnovno obrazovanje je završio u rodnom mjestu, da bi zatim visoko obrazovanje nastavio u Skoplju, gdje se stekao zvanje diplomiranog historičara umjetnosti na Filozofskom fakultetu, a kasnije i zvanje magistra iz oblasti Međunarodnih Odnosa i Svjetske Politike. Pokraj toga autor je dugogodišnji istraživač klasične islamske filozofije i književnosti te je iz ovih oblasti do sada objavio veći broj tekstova i knjiga. Od do sada objavljenih knjiga se posebno izdvajaju *Palača od Ruže* što je antologija turskih sufijskih ilahija objavljena na bosanskom jeziku u Mostaru 2015. godine, zatim *Na Dalekom Putu – Ašik Veysel i tradicija turske narodne poezije* (Beograd, 2019.) i *Okean u Krčagu – Antologija persijskih rubajija* (Beograd, 2020.) zatim na makedonskom jeziku objavio je knjige *Zborovi na utrinjskiom vetер* (2017.) o Hafizu Širaziju i *Патот на Љобовта во рубаиите на Мевлана Џелалудин Руми* (2021.) o duhovnoj filozofiji Mevlane Dželaluddina Rumija.
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BEKTAŠIJSKA KNJIŽEVNOST U BOŠNJAKA

BEKTASHI LITERATURE IN BOSNIAK CULTURE

Abstract

The Bektashi spiritual path was very widespread and influential throughout the Ottoman Empire. Bektashi sheikhs and dervishes were active participants in the earliest Ottoman endeavors. In the later period, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the teachings of the Bektashi spiritual path spread throughout the Balkans. From Greece to Budapest, from Thrace to Bosnia, there were Bektashi tekkes and there were local educational and cultural centers. Since Bosniaks were very active participants in all events throughout the Ottoman Empire, and especially in the cultural field, some of them also contributed to Bektashi literature. In this paper, we will present three of our authors who wrote Bektashi sacral songs – *nefes*.

Key words: *Bektashi, Bosniaks, spiritual path, literature, poetry, nefes.*

BEKTASHI LITERATURE IN BOSNIAK CULTURE

Introduction

Throughout its long and rich history, Bosnia has been the most religiously and ideologically specific and diverse country in Europe. Remains of Mithraism and Manichaeism can be found in this area since the time of Roman rule, and at one time Arianism was represented in Bosnia, because in the fourth century Arius of Alexandria, the greatest schismatic of early Christianity, was exiled to Bosnia, together with his bishops. In the Middle Ages, there was a majority acceptance of the Bogumil faith in Bosnia, both by the authorities and the people, which was the reason why Bosnia was the only country in Europe that did not profess either Catholicism or Orthodoxy during the Middle Ages. With the arrival of the Ottomans in this area, the Islamization of Bosnia developed very rapidly. Islam arrived to Bosnia and different directions, spiritual and philosophical, characteristic of the Islamic doctrine of that period. One of these directions was the Bektashi spiritual path - **tariqat** or Bektashi **dervish** brotherhood - as some call it.

This year marks 750 years since the founder and spiritual leader (**pir**) of the Bektashis, Hajji Bektash Veli, moved to the hereafter. Therefore in Turkey and by UNESCO this year was declared the year of Hajji Bektash Veli, which is reason enough to look back to the cultural and literary heritage left to us by the followers of this spiritual direction.

ILLUSTRATION ~ The symbolism of the Bektash dervish.
ILUSTRACIJA ~ Simbolizam Bektaša derviša.



The life and work of Hajji Bektash Vel

hajji Bektash Veli was born in Khorasan in 1210.¹ His real name was Muhammad ibn Ibrahim² and according to the data provided to us by the Velayetnama he was a sayyid - a descendant of the Messenger of God. Although he came from an aristocratic family, at an early age Hajji Bektash showed interest in the spiritual path. He entered the **tariqat** before one of the heirs of Hadhrat Ahmed Yesevi, whose name was Lukman Perende.³ When his sheikh moved to the hereafter, Hajji Bektash set out on a journey through the Middle East. He visited all important places in Iran and Iraq, went on Hajj and spent some time in Mecca and Medina. He later went to Jerusalem, where he also spent some time in solitude. He left Jerusalem for Anatolia and settled in the village of Karahoyuk, in the area of Nevsehir, which is located in the very center of Anatolia. He lived and worked here until his relocation to the hereafter in 1271. Five written works are attributed to him, of which The Interpretation of Bismillah - *Tafsir-i Bismille*, The Interpretation of the Fatiha - *Tafsir-i Fatiha* and A Collection

¹ When it comes to the life and work of Hadhrat Hajji Bektash, there are very different interpretations, as one comprehension is based on hagiographic works, while other data come from early Ottoman historians, such as Ashik Pasha and Wahidi. This review is mainly based on historical data.

² Hajji Bektash is his honorary pseudonym.

³ Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, *Early Turkish Mystics in Turkish Literature*, p. 33.

of Forty Hadiths - *Hadis-i erbein*) are very controversial attributions, so almost all researchers of his life and legacy believe that he did not write them. The works that are considered authentic will be presented later in this paper.

1. *Makalat*

This short work contains eleven chapters in which topics related to the spiritual path are discussed. The tome is especially significant in that it explains the teaching of the four gates - and this is very important for the Bektashi notion of spirituality. Those four gates are: the **sharia** - religious law, **tariqat** - spiritual path, **marifet** - spiritual cognition and **hakikat** - spiritual reality. In the original, *Makalat* was written in Arabic, but the original manuscript was unfortunately lost. So the current editions of this work are based on the translation of the Arabic text into Turkish - the translation was made in the early fifteenth century.⁴

2. *Kitau-l-Fevvaid*

This work is a collection of Hajji Bektash's advice and instructions written in Persian. The main topic of these tips is how to truly live according to high ethical standards, which spiritual path requires it of man, and what attitude towards God, the world and people a spiritual traveler should cultivate. There is some disagreement among researchers as to whether this tome was written by Hajji Bektash or whether it is a compilation of spiritual instructions compiled by some of the Bektashi dervishes in a later period. Dr. Esad Čošān believes that all the advice and lessons given in this work cannot be attributed to Hajji Bektash Veli, because it has been proven that some of them were written by previous and later authors. However, in the opinion of Dr. Čošān, the core of this work consists the sayings and teachings of Hajji Bektaş.

Hajji Bektash is also credited with certain sayings that are not recorded in his corpus but are passed down from generation to generation as his oral instruction. Among them are the following sayings:

“Do not hurt anyone even if you are hurt.”
(**İncinsen de incitme.**)

“Do not blame any nation.”
(**Hiç bir milleti ayıplamayın.**)

“The most significant book that can be read is Man.”
(**Okunacak en büyük kitap insandır.**)

⁴ Hünkar Hacı Bektaş Veli, *Makalat*, p. 23.

“The end of a path that does not pass through knowledge is darkness.”
(İlimden gidilmeyen yolun sonu karanlıktır.)

“Whatever you ask for, seek within yourself.”
(Her ne ararsan kendinde ara.)

“Educate women!”
(Kadınları okutun!)⁵

“Knowledge is the light that illuminates the path to truth.”
(Bilim, gerçeğe giden yolları aydınlatan ışıktır.)

“Those who do not live from their work are not from us.”
(Çalışmadan geçinenler, bizden değildir.)

“Bind faith to your heart, not your knees”
(Dinine dizlerinle değil, kalbinle bağlan.)⁶

“Remember that your enemy is also human.”
(Düşmanınızın bile, insan olduğunu unutmayınız.)

“Be the owner of your hand, tongue and dogs.”
(Eline, diline, beline sahip ol.)⁷

“The greatest miracle is dedicated work.”
(En büyük keramet çalışmaktır.)

“The greatest wealth is knowledge.”
(En yüce servet, ilimdir.)

“The light of the eyes comes from the heart.”
(Göze nur gönülden gelir.)

“The first step in discovering reality is to know that we will (soon) become soil.”
(Hakikatin ilk makamı, toprak olacağımızın bilinmesidir.)

He is also credited with a number of short poems from which I have chosen and translated the following:

(KERAMET BAŞTADIR TACDA DEĞİLDİR)

The miracle is in the head, not in the hat,
The heat is in the oven, not on the hob.

⁵ It is very important to note that the Bektashi tariqat from the very beginning was very much in favor of including women in public life. Women were accepted as disciples in tekkes, which was not the practice of most other tariqats, and Bektashi women were also very active in spreading the teachings of the order as well as in the social events of their time.

⁶ In other words, do not serve God only in formality.

⁷ This is one of the most famous Bektashi principles that calls for self-control in acting, speaking and curbing desires.

What you seek, look within yourself,
Because it is not in Jerusalem or Mecca.

(SAKIN, BIR KIMSENIN GÖNLÜNÜ YIKMA)

Do not break a heart
Do not abandon a word of the true awliya
Even though you are human, do not be afraid, you will not die
The worm will never eat the body of one in love

(MADDE KARANLIĞI, AKIL NURU)

Matter is darkness, reason is light
Ignorance is darkness knowledge is light
The soul is in darkness, cognition is light
The heart is in darkness love is light

(MALİM MÜLKÜM SERVETİM, HEPSİ EVDE KALDI)

All my possessions and wealth will remain in the house
On this path, neither a friend nor a woman follows you
But I have a friend who will always be with me
The good deed I have done for Allah will not leave me.

From these sayings and verses we can conclude that Hajji Bektash Veli, in addition to being a spiritual teacher and one of the greatest spiritual authorities in the history of the Ottoman Empire was also an educator in the true sense of the word. His insistence on education, social action and the acquisition of knowledge, as well as on the inclusion of women in social life, is an unequivocal indicator of this.

Bektashi tariqat in the Balkan

The Bektashi **tariqat** was present in Balkan society at an early phase. The followers of this order stood out, among other things, through their participation in military campaigns. Due to this, the **tariqat** gained the aura of the **Gazi**-warrior movement early on. Abdal Musa, one of the most important successors of Hajji Bektash Veli, took part in the conquest of Bursa with the army of Sultan Orhan. It seems that on that occasion he gave his blessing to

the newly formed Janissary troops⁸ thus initiating a connection between the Bektashi **tariqat** and this elite infantry that would last until 1826, when they were abolished by Sultan Mahmud II. After the conquest of Bursa, Abdal Musa left Ottoman territory and settled in Elmalia, where his student would become the prince of the Antalya Sandzak. His name was Alauddin Gajbi, and he would become better known by his poetic pseudonym Kaygusuz Abdal. Kaygusuz would later leave Anatolia and go to Egypt. He would build a Bektashi **tekke** in Cairo that existed until the middle of the twentieth century when it was demolished by the Nasser regime. Kaygusuz was also the most prolific writer in the history of the Bektashi tariqat. He left behind the Divan poetry with about six hundred poems, two shorter and three longer *Masnavi*, and *Đulistan*, a collection of his verses. He also wrote five other prose works. Many Turkish historians consider him one of the most important Turkish **Tasawwuf** writers and thinkers.



ILLUSTRATION – Turbe Kajgusuz Abdala - a poet from the Bektashi dervishes, in the village of Kabaca, Beypazari district in Ankara.

ILUSTRACIJA – Turbe Kajgusuz Abdala - pjesnik iz reda bekaških derviša, u selu Kabaca, okrug Beypazari u Ankari.

Another disciple of Abdal Musa, by the name of Sayyid Ali Sultan, would also play a very significant role in spreading the teachings and spiritual views of the Bektashi tariqat. The birthplace of Sayyid Ali Sultan (who

⁸ Although in the Bektashi hagiographic works the blessing given to the Janissaries is attributed to Hajji Bektash Veli, it is quite certain that from a historical perspective this was impossible, because Hazrat Hajji Bektash moved to the hereafter about 50 years before the founding of the Janissary troops.

is also known by the nickname *Kizildeli*) is mentioned as the town of Hojj in the Khorasan area. By order of the Messenger of God, s.a.v.a., whom he saw in a dream, Sayyid Ali set out for Anatolia. There he met Abdal Musa and became his disciple. Confirmation that Sayyid Ali Sultan was a disciple of Abdal Musa can be found in several places in the *Velayetnama* of Abdal Musa.⁹ It is also known that at one time Sayyid Ali Sultan went to the military camp of Sultan Orhan, with his dervishes, in order to make his contribution to the liberation of the Balkans. He played a very important role in that conquest, since he is mentioned, in most sources from that time, as one of the most important personalities of the Ottoman campaign in the Balkans. Sayyid Ali Sultan together with Suleiman Pasha¹⁰ commanded the right wing of the Ottoman army.¹¹ According to some sources, together with his dervishes, he knew how to act independently and conquer towns and villages without the help of Ottoman troops.



ILLUSTRATION ~ Bektashi levha (quotes from the Qur'an written and framed in Arabic script).

ILUSTRACIJA - Bektaška levha.

⁹ U jednom od tih mjesta čitamo kako je Abdal Musa poslao Sejjid Ali Sultana zajedno sa svojim sinom u Soludžu Karahojuk da podignu turbe na grobu Hadži Bektaša i da mu donese određene amanete koje je Hadži Bektaš ostavio. Vidjeti Abdal Musa *Velayetnamesi* str. 147. Drugi dokaz možemo pronaći u pjesmama Sadika Abdala koji je bio učenik Sejjida Ali Sultana i koji ga također povezuje sa Abdal Musom.

¹⁰ Sulejman-Paša je najstariji sin sultana Orhana i budući prestolonasljednik, poginuo je nakon pada s konja i sahranjen je u Bolajiru, a na mjesto prestolonasljednika je došao njegov mlađi brat Murat.

¹¹ Dok je lijevo krilo predvodio princ Murat, zajedno sa Lala Šahinom, vojskovođom koji će kasnije uništiti srpsku vojsku u Bici na Marici.

The cities he liberated were in the area of Thrace.¹² After the death of Suleiman Pasha, Sayyid Ali Sultan chose a place in Dimetoka where he built a tekke, further command of the Ottoman army was left entirely to Evrenos Gazi. He settled in those areas and began his mission of converting the local Christian population to Islam as and the spiritual education of their dervishes. Its great significance for the conquest of the Eastern Balkans is, without a doubt, a historical fact that can be confirmed independently of Ottoman sources. He is also mentioned by Constantine the Philosopher in his *The Work of Despot Stefan Lazarević* written in 1431. In it, Constantine calls him by the name of *Seidi* and presents him as an Iranian prince who joined the Ottoman army. He says: "before and after this the son of Hurricane called Suleiman crossed the Calipol Sea first with Seidia and opened the way to the others for (the time of) Emperor Andronicus who had a war with his brother."¹³ Sayyid Ali Sultan was the first to establish a Bektashi **tekke** in the Balkans, which would later become an important area of activity for this tariqat. For that reason, he is still known in Bektashi circles as *Rumeli'ningözcüsü Seyyid Ali Sultan / The Guardian of the Balkans Sayyid Ali Sultan*, just as Abdal Musa known as the guardian of Anatolia. According to census registers and other official documents, it can be concluded that Sayyid Ali Sultan received a certain **waqf** first from Sultan Bayezid I, in 1402. Later these possessions were confirmed by his son Musa Čelebija in 1412. Since he personally received the **waqf** from Musa Čelebija, this means that he was alive until 1412, but moved to the hereafter, most likely immediately afterwards.¹⁴ In the next few centuries, there was a significant spread of the Bektashi tariqat in the Balkans, especially in the southern provinces that make up the present-day territories of Macedonia, Greece, Albania and Bulgaria. One of the first Bektashi **tekkes** built in this area is the Harabati Baba **tekke** in Tetovo, built in 1538 by Sersem Ali Baba. He was for a time a high official at the court of Sultan Suleiman,¹⁵ when the revolt of the Bektashi **Sheikh** Kalender Čelebija in Anatolia began. Refusing to take part in the government that was fighting against his spiritual brothers, he asked Sultan Suleiman to dismiss him from his service, to which Suleiman responded: "Go as you are *sersem*."¹⁶ He accepted the word as a great honor and took it as his poetic pseudonym. For a time he stayed in Pir Evi, the central Bektashi **tekke**, where he gained the greatest recognition within the Bektashi **tariqat**, before heading to the Balkans and settling with his **dervishes** near the city of Tetovo, where he raised a tekke and moved to the hereafter. The **tekke** founded by Sersem Ali Baba has over time grown into a large tekke complex and is currently the largest tekke in Europe. It was customary that when one of the dervishes became Baba, as the sheikhs are called in this tariqat, he would set out until he found a place to settle down and establish his tekke in which he would continue to spread the teachings of the order. Albania, away from

¹² Sajjid Ali Sultan je prema tim istim izvorima zajedno sa svojim dervišima osvojio Ipsalu, Dimetoku, Edirne, Ruščuk, Silistru i Emlakdže.

¹³ Konstantin Filozof, *Povest o slovima - Žitije Despota Stefana Lazarevića / The Work of Despot Stefan Lazarević*, p. 84.

¹⁴ If the year 1310 is accepted as the year of his birth, it means that he lived more than a hundred years.

¹⁵ According to one version of events, he was the brother of Mahidevran, the first wife of Sultan Suleiman.

¹⁶ *Sersem* is a Turkish word meaning naive, dumb.

the center of Dimetoka, seems to have already become a center of Bektashi activity in the second half of the sixteenth century.¹⁷ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Bektashi **tariqat** spread considerably in Albanian territories, especially in the southern provinces of present-day Albania. In the nineteenth century, Albanians were already a significant component of the Bektashi **dervishes** - they were the majority. When all Sufi tariqats were officially banned in Turkey in 1925, all tekkes were closed and **waqfs** confiscated. The then supreme leader of the Bektashis, Salih Nijazi Dede, who was of Albanian origin, returned to Albania, where several different congresses were convened on his initiative, in which Bektashi grandmothers and **dervishes** from Albania participated. At the Third Bektashi Congress held on September 26, 1929, in Korca, the statute of King Zogu proclaimed the establishment of a world Bektashi center in Albania under the name *Kryegjyshata Botërore Bektashiane* and Salih Niyazi Dede was proclaimed the head of all Bektashis. The Bektashi center was shut down in 1967, when Enver Hoxha declared Albania the world's first atheist state and closed all religious facilities in the country. It was rebuilt in the 1990s.



ILLUSTRATION ~ Detail of Harabati Baba tekke in Tetovo.

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Detalj Harabati Baba tekije u Tetovu.

¹⁷ It is likely that the tekke in Tetovo played a significant role in spreading Bektashism among Albanians, just as the tekke in Dimetoka played a significant role in spreading Bektashism in Thrace and Greece.

The Bektashi in Bosnia

The presence of Bektashis in Bosnia and Herzegovina was significantly lower compared to the southern provinces of the Balkans. The reasons for this can be sought in various social and political circumstances, which we will not go into here. But while it can be said that the Bektashi tariqat never had as many followers in Bosnia as it had in Albania or Thrace, yet its presence has been constant over the centuries. At an early point, Bektashi *tekkes* became established in Sarajevo and Banja Luka.¹⁸ Awliya Čelebija also mentions the Bektashi tekke, which was located in the vicinity of Čajniče, in his travelogue: “On the southeast side of the town on the right and left side of the road leading from Tašlidža (Plevlje) to Čajniče from Sinan-paša's fountain, which is located on that road half an hour away, all the way to Čajniče there are huge cherry trees. Away from that tree-lined avenue in the southeast, on a hill some thousand steps away, there is Gazi Murad-baba's garden with a Bektashi *tekke* (*asitan*), which deserves to be seen. It is such a high observation post that from this tekke, which is full of refrigerators, the whole town of Čajniče can be seen....”¹⁹ The existence of Bektashi Bosniak writers, poets and dervishes, who were active in the nineteenth century, in addition to the above data, further supports the fact that Bektashi teaching was constantly present among Bosniaks during the Ottoman rule.

Bektashi literature

One of the characteristics of the Bektashi tariqat is that the followers of this spiritual direction mostly wrote poetic works. Although there are a few exceptions, the writing of prose works and epistles by Bektashi authors is a very rare occurrence.²⁰ The Bektashis wrote their poetry mainly in the vernacular Turkish language and their favorite poetic form was the *koshma* or *dortluk*²¹, a type of Turkish folk song that the Bektashis transformed for spiritual purposes.²² They called their poetry by the name *nefes*, which literally means breath, and this in itself tells us that the Bektashi considered songs of this kind to be an inspiration and that they have a sacred meaning for members of this order. *Nefes* serve as the main transmitters of spiritual teaching in the Bektashi *tariqat*, so they could only be written by people who had made significant progress on the path of spiritual awakening. The theme of most *nefes* refers to building relationships with God, the world, their spiritual master, brotherhood, and one part of them shows the importance of certain spiritual practices and teachings. In addition to the fact that these songs were sung to music during dervish gatherings, they

¹⁸ Džemal Čehajić, *Derviški redovi u jugoslovenskim zemljama*, p. 168-169.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 167.

²⁰ And even prose works written by Bektashi authors are necessarily interwoven with poetry. An example of this is Kajgusuz's *Sarajnama* and Virani's *Fakrnama*.

²¹ Koshma is a poem in which each syllable consists of four verses, while the last verse is most often repeated in each syllable.

²² Of course, there are exceptions, i.e. Bektashi poets who wrote poetry in the classical divan style, and one of them is our Ahmed Gurbi Baba.

were also the basis for educating students, because often a spiritual teacher would quote a certain song in a speech and then talk about its meaning, which served as the main means of deepening their understanding.²³ In the anthologies of Ottoman literature one can find more than a hundred poets who wrote Bektashi poetry and each century had its most significant representatives, so we will mention them briefly. In the fifteenth century they were Kaygusuz Abdal and Sadik Abdal, in the sixteenth century they were Muhjiddin Abdal and Pir Sultan Abdal, in the seventeenth century they were Kul Nesimi and Teslim Abdal, in the eighteenth century they were Gurbi Baba and Ashik Derli, in the nineteenth century they were Hilmi Dede i Edib Harabi and in the twentieth century they were Basri Baba i Riza Tevfik. Although the Bektashi **tariqat**, as we have seen, never had a large number of followers among Bosniaks, the Bektashi Bosniaks still made a significant contribution to Bektashi literature. There are three writers in question²⁴ whose biographies and literary legacy will be discussed later in this paper.

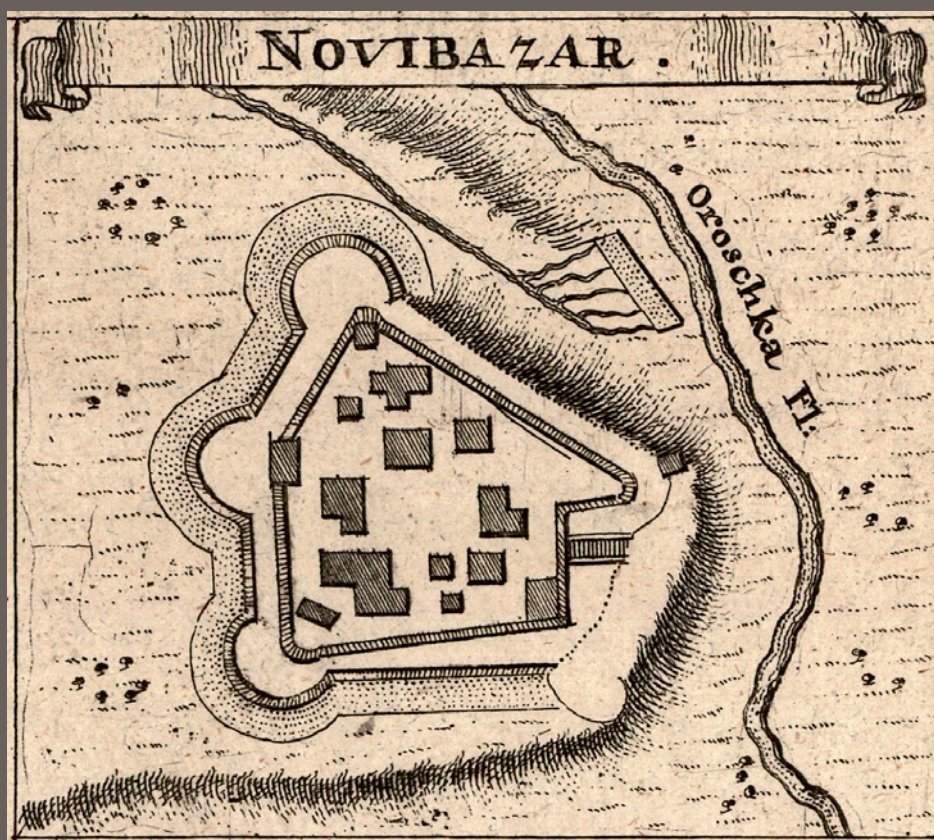


ILLUSTRATION – NOVI PAZAR plan Lidl, Johann Jakob between 1738 and 1750.
 ILLUSTRACIJA – NOVI PAZAR plan Lidl, Johann Jakob između 1738. i 1750. godine.

²³ See the book Francis Trix: *Spiritual Discourse: Learning with an Islamic Master* which is entirely devoted to this type of teaching in the Bektashi **tariqat**.

²⁴ Many also consider Ahmed Vahdeti a Bektashi writer based on a poem in honour of Hajji Bektashi, but this poem has very controversial attributions. From the reading of his *Divan*, it can be concluded with certainty that he belonged to the Mevlevi tariqat, so I did not include him in this review..

Ahmed Gurbi Baba

Not much is known about the life of Ahmed Gurbi Baba, as well as about the lives of most divan poets. We draw most of the information about him from his *Divan*, from which it can be concluded that he was born in Novi Pazar in 1698 or 1699. His original name was Ahmed ibn Ali, but he took the pseudonym Gurbi – the Foreigner because he spent a long time outside their homeland. Namely, he belonged to the spahi order and had a carpentry shop near Edirne, where he spent quite a long period of his life. Since the Bektashi *tekke* of Sejjid Ali Sultan in Dîmetoka was located near the place where he lived, Ahmed Gurbi Baba entered the *tariqat* before Mehmed Musli Rahmî Baba, who was also a Bosniak.²⁵ Ahmed Gurbi Baba started writing his work *Divan* in 1744.²⁶ In addition to this information we get from his *Divan*, we also have another source of information about his life. He is also mentioned by Mehmed Tahir Bursali in his anthological work *Osmanlı Müellifleri - Ottoman writers* - where he says of Ahmed Gurbi Baba that he had a difficult life, that his wife died young and then his sixteen-year-old son Abdulvehhab. So Ahmed Gurbi continued to live with his daughter and younger son alone. Mehmed Tahir further says of him that he was a good poet who most often wrote poems in *redif* meter.²⁷ At the end of his life, Ahmed Gurbi Baba returned to his native Novi Pazar, where he moved to the hereafter in 1771 or 1772.

Divan by Ahmed Gurbi Baba there are over one hundred and eighty poems, most of which are written in the form of ghazals. In his poems, the main motives of Gurbi Baba were the spiritual path, self-knowledge, prayer and ascetic life, but what is very interesting and characteristic of him is that strong expressions of patriotic feeling can be found in his *Divan*, which is not typical of divan poets. In one of his poems Gurbi Baba says:

(DIYĀRUMDUR BENUM BOSNA BİLĀDİ)

*My homeland, know that it is Bosnia
The whole world knows her name
God made her the hearth of heroes
When the saber is greased it is strong*

Gurbi Baba composed several songs about his hometown of Novi Pazar, including a *qasida* with over sixty verses in which he celebrates the beauty of his hometown, as well as several long poems in which he prays to God for the health and well-being of its inhabitants. One of these poems begins with the following verses:

²⁵ Dr. Seydî Kiraz/Mustafa Ramazan Yüksel, *Derviş Ahmed Gurbi'nin Yeni bir Eseri: Risale-i Münacat*, str. 24, HIKMET – Akademik Edebiyat Dergisi, p. 24.

²⁶ Hazim Šabanović, *Književnost Muslimana BiH na orijentalnim jezicima*, p. 465.

²⁷ Dr. Seydî Kiraz/Mustafa Ramazan Yüksel, *Derviş Ahmed Gurbi'nin Yeni bir Eseri: Risale-i Münacat*, str. 24, HIKMET – Akademik Edebiyat Dergisi, p. 24.

(YENIBĀZĀRUN ALLĀHUM SER-Ā-SER CUMLE NĀSINA)

*My Allah, from one end to the other of my Novi Pazar
Only You can help, publicly and secretly, both rich and poor
Honor them at rallies and help within everyone's place
Do not send sorrow, Lord, to the foundations of this city
To You, verily, the request of Your slave is not hidden
Coming to Your Being is the only desire that is in me.*

Ahmed Gurbi Baba is one of the most significant and profound Bosniak writers of the Ottoman period. Below we bring four poems from his Divan, which the author of this paper has selected and translated.

HAKKI HALK İÇRE MEGER BULMAĞ İMIŞ 'ĀRIFLIK

*He who has seen the Truth in the created has knowledge
And the one who did not reveal it to anyone is refined
True knowledge is possessed by one who has known the soul
It is a heroism that only the inspired understand
Everything created, dear heart, is like the perfect word
This is what the True God has revealed to us by inspiration
The treasury of the heart has been made accessible to everyone by Allah
But one man is generous while the other is not
In God's justice if you want to talk about me, Gurbi,
Say: Where did you find this gift full of secrets?*

HER NE KİM İSTERSEN İY DİL SENDEDUR

*Whatever you seek, dear heart, it is in you
Everything in you, you know, is clearly - hidden
Why would hope in good be placed in others
When the solution to all difficulties is in you?
If you are looking for a conviction, a dream is enough for you
Solve this riddle because it is in you
"I want to find the Being of God" if you say so
Then remove the rust from the heart that is in you*

Why do you wander outside like a tramp, Gurbi?

What you seek is not far away, it is in you

DILÜMÜZDE NE OLA HAMD U SENĀDAN ĞAYRI

Apart from praise and glorification, what is there to say?

To whom else but to God should we raise our hands?

What can I say when except in you the heart of the world two

In nothing did our eyes see so much light and radiance?

In passing, everyone gets what they dream of

Except peace of mind and heart and true joy

No doubt, at least he lived a thousand summers

Apart from trials and tribulations, there is nothing else in the house of the world

There is no better home and abode for an honest ashik

From the house of eternity that is best for man

O Gurba, it does not suit you at all if you are here

Nothing but to let the Creator into the heart

SU GIBI YIRE SÜRÜP GĀHI YÜZİÇAĞLARUZ

Sometimes like water scattered on the earth we flow,

And sometimes we throw the chest of the beloved on the fire.

In this world that is built by power and property

Sometimes we get sick on the move, sometimes we get health in rest

Looking at the divine world and the created world,

Sometimes we laugh at our condition and sometimes we cry.

From the very beginning we have been created for eternity,

To keep this heart pure, we shed tears constantly.

Still, for the sake of this self, they are for houris, heaven and hell

We connect you to din, dunyaluk and acquisition here

What would happen, O Gurba, to his beard, mustache and eyebrows,

We sometimes smear it with the scent of those close to the Ruler?



ILLUSTRATION ~ Siege of Belgrade 1688, Justus van den Nijpoort, 1694.

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Opsada Beograda 1688, Justus van den Nijpoort, 1694.

Agahi Jašar

Almost nothing is known about the life of this Bosniak poet, except that he was born at the end of the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century in Belgrade and that his real name was Jašar. In Belgrade, Agahi most likely entered the Bektashi **tariqat** because they operated a **tekke** in this city.²⁸ He also traveled to the central Bektashi **tekke** in Anatolia, to which he gave a collection of Bektashi songs as a gift,²⁹ in which his two poems are also found. His seal from 1275/1859 is imprinted on this collection year, which helps us determine the time frame in which he lived. Two of Agahi's poems are included in the famous anthology of Bektashi poetry composed by Sadettin Nüzhet.³⁰

TEVELLÂSIN, TEBERRASM BILEN ABDALA AŞKOLSUN

Abdal³¹ who knew the secret of love and renunciation, ashq olsun³²

Abdal who fulfilled his wish and found solace, ashq olsun

The dervish who once traveled to God through all things

Abdal, who had a desire to get lost in God, ashq olsun

To Abdal who drank all but God, ayvallah

²⁸ Džemal Ćehajić, *Derviški redovi u jugoslovenskim zemljama*, p. 170.

²⁹ Hazim Šabanović, *Književnost Muslimana BiH na orijentalnim jezicima*, p. 628.

³⁰ Sadettin Nüzhet, *Bektaşi şairleri*, p. 8

³¹ The word *abdal* comes from the Arabic word *bedel* meaning replacement, change, and denotes those people who have changed the state of their worldly life for a spiritual path - in Turkish literature it has almost the same meaning as the word dervish.

³² The phrase *ashq olsun*, which literally means "let there be love," is used in a variety of situations and contexts, but in this poem it has the meaning of congratulating and paying homage to those who have surrendered to the spiritual path..

Abdal who did not abandon love of the people of the ruins³³, ashq olsun

*The one who passed the cloak and clothes of passing time
Abdal who wore the clothes of extinction and poverty, ashq olsun*

We surrender our soul to a man who has gone through a period of solitude³⁴

Abdal who came to know the names³⁵ and the Named, ashq olsun

*To the one who, by obedience, made his being a mirror of God
Abdal who scraped the impurities from the mirror of his heart, ashq olsun*

Congratulations to the lover of the Prophet's family ten thousand times

Abdal who loved and respected his friends, ashq olsun

*We are humble before those who seek the secrets of true heroes
Abdal who drank the wine of love, the wine of the greatest, ashq olsun*

*Hey Agahi, again you wrote a dervish style song
Abdal who himself became like a thousand beauties,³⁶ ashq olsun*

EY SOFÎ BANA MESCIDÛ MEYHANE DE BIRDIR

*Hey sofia, for me mosque and meyhana are the same
The sound of gasping and the sound of drunken thumping, too*

*If the secret of instruction is not revealed to you by God
Zikr, night worship and night drunkenness are the same for you*

*Come, leave the hypocrisy, look at the throne of the world
Each side of this transient being is the same*

*The hardest thing for you is not to give your heart to this world
For an arif, a madman and one who is full of knowledge are the same*

*Like Agahi, become a light blind man and see
Ashika is a candle and a butterfly that plunges into the flame as well³⁷*

³³ People are ruins, a symbol for people who have destroyed their ego and individual self for the sake of knowing God.

³⁴ The period of solitude, *çile*, in the Bektashi tariqat represents the practice of withdrawal from the world and teaching spiritual practices under the supervision of the sheikh. During this retreat, difficult spiritual practices are practiced that aim to tame the soul and purify the heart, so this type of retreat is practiced only by people who have made significant progress on the spiritual path.

³⁵ This refers to the names and attributes of the Supreme God.

³⁶ I think that the last verse signifies a man who has realized all his potentials and in whom the names of God have been manifested, whose reflection are all the beauties of this world.

³⁷ This poem belongs to the category of *calendars* of poems, and these are Sufi poems in which the message is seemingly contrary



ILLUSTRATION / ILUSTRACIJA - Bitola

Bosnevi Baba

Bosnevi is one of the most important and popular Bektashi poets of the nineteenth century, but almost nothing is known about him for certain – neither name, nor place, nor year of birth. The only thing that is assured is that he lived in the nineteenth century and was a Bosniak, as evidenced by his pseudonym. Researchers of Bektashi literary heritage such as Sadettin Nuzhet and Vahit Lutfi Saldji believe that at one point in his life, Bosnevi set out to travel and visited many places in the Balkans and Asia Minor. During his travels, he became acquainted with the Bektashi **tariqat** after visiting the Hizir Babe tekke in the town of Kičevo (today in Northern Macedonia). He mentions this **tekke** in one of his poems.³⁸ Bosnevi most likely accepted the identity of wandering Bektashi poets – **ashq** – and traveled with a **saz**³⁹ and a dervish hat on his head.⁴⁰ Until recently, it was believed that Bosnevi did not leave a complete *divan*, however, Dr. Ferhad Arslan recently unveiled a manuscript of his *Divan* containing over two hundred poems.⁴¹ Unfortunately, this manuscript is not yet ready for print, so we are forced to use seventeen of his poems which have been printed and which have been

to Islamic ethical teachings and practices, written in such a way as to astonish or offend the average reader while in fact they criticize only rigid formalism and superficial approach to religion. This poem by Agahi begins by addressing the “**sofia**” term used by Sufi poets to denote formalists or enemies of the spiritual path, to compare the practices of piety deprived of spirituality with the practices of drunkards and sinners, as both end in of this transient world and does not transcend it in any way. Then the poet says that for an **arif**, and that is a man who has true spiritual knowledge, a madman and a man who possesses only formal knowledge are the same, ending the poem with a metaphor of a butterfly immersing himself in candlelight, representing the loss of a spiritual traveler in love and true knowledge, which he experiences not only with his reason, like a formal connoisseur, but with his whole being, and he himself, in a way, becomes identical with the light of the spiritual world. The struggle against formalism and superficiality in religion is an old theme in both Sufism and Islamic philosophy. Afzalduddin Kashani, who is one of the most important Islamic philosophers of the Middle Ages, says the following on this subject: “Good deeds and acts of piety are known by their results. All the practices that ultimately lead man to cognition and awareness are good, even though most creatures do not see any good in them and do not consider them beautiful. Any deed and practice that ends in unconsciousness and through which awareness is not attained is not good, even if most creatures consider them good.” Afzalduddin Kašani, *Musannafat*, p. 614.

³⁸ Ismail Ozmen, *Alevi-Bektaşi şiirleri antolojisi*, cilt 4, p. 213.

³⁹ A long-necked stringed instrument of the lute family, originating in the Ottoman Empire.

⁴⁰ See: Nail Tan, *Bosna Hersek'te Alevi Bektaşi Edebiyatının İzleri*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

collected from various collections of Bektashi poetry. The author of this work has translated four. We hope that his Divan will be published soon, which will reveal a lot about this intriguing poet of ours.

MAKAMI VAHDETTEN DÜŞTÜM YABANA

*From the station of unity I fell into the wilderness
The paths of the wilderness traveled and came
I am Arif, I have not told everyone a secret
I chose the secret of the arif for myself and came⁴²*

*My mother wrapped me in the elements
Like an angel the soul descends to observe⁴³
I became a man, my foot stood on the world
Seven floors of heaven I surpassed and came*

*The set of love know that the set of awliya is
It takes a long time at a gathering of awliya
At such a gathering a true man stops
I traced his face and came*

*If you are arif, dear heart, listen,
To Murshid⁴⁴ rightly surrender your soul
Never stray from the rescued ones
I saw the beauty of God and came*

*Bosnevi spoke from his essence
The words of the complete lover were not denied
From the Face of Inner Knowledge I read
I prayed for a thousand years and came⁴⁵*

⁴² This verse signifies the coming from the **azal** - the primordial - in which souls existed before they arrived in this world. The poet says that he passed the paths of the wilderness, that is of this material world, to then become an **arif** - a man with true spiritual knowledge

⁴³ From this we can see that Bosnevi considered the purpose of existence as conscious observation, i.e. conviction.

⁴⁴ **Murshid** is a spiritual teacher, an instructor.

⁴⁵ This song speaks in its entirety about the spiritual potential that man carries in himself from the beginning, from **kalu bela** when souls said "yes" to their Lord.

DERVIŞİM DEYİPTE MEYDANA GELDİN

I am dervish saying as you came to the mejdan⁴⁶

Can you reject your existence?

He came to mejdan to learn the rules⁴⁷

But can you reveal the secret of those rules?

The way of the people of hakikat know that the way is right⁴⁸

For a nightingale in love, the rose of love is

The reign of Muhammad is and is the whim of Ali

Can you have a drink you crave?

Did you serve because of the rules of your feast?⁴⁹

Did you do deeds because of your faith?

Did you instill love in your essence for the sake of your soul?

Can you sew a cloak of love for yourself?

Can you be a merchant of being and non-being?

Reconcile disbelief and faith in yourself?

Can you cleanse and build a heart?

Can you rid yourself of doubts?

Look hard at everything here

Do not speak of the beautiful and the ugly anymore

Listen carefully to this advice from Bosnevi

Can you open the eyes of your soul?

MUHABBET NEYDÜĞÜN BİLEYİM DERSEN

„What is to know love?“ you say

At a gathering of heroes, love is one

"I want to have that secret," you say

In the sea of hearts love is like pearls

⁴⁶ *Mejdan* is called a place for gatherings in a tekke and also means a battlefield, in this poem this word can be read with both meanings, because what is required of students is essentially a feat, not on the outside but on the inside.

⁴⁷ Rules - *erkan* have the meaning of the basic and fundamental principles of the spiritual path.

⁴⁸ *Hakikat* is a spiritual reality or reality that is revealed at the end of the spiritual path.

⁴⁹ *Pir* is a spiritual leader, he often refers to the founder of a certain *tariqat*.

*In hadis-i kudsi⁵⁰ the Lord gave the command
So Mustafa wrapped himself in a cloak of love
At the Mirage, every angel greeted him
On the Day of Judgment, love is the companion of the spirit*

*The hypocrite will not cling to the branch of love
He cannot reveal this secret of God
Nightingales sing to roses that will not wither
In the vault of power love is hidden*

*Retreat not from Muhammad and Alii⁵¹
Let them speak of you as they will
Musa's prayer if you want to understand
To this slave Bosnevi, love is Sinai⁵²*

ARZU ILE VEÇHİN GÖRENLER EY MAH

*The moon, that which Your Face observes
What need of it, the sun shining over this world?
Who became the sultan of that wonderful kingdom
What need of it, the rule here over this mud?*

*Disappearance comes, while time disappears
Who gets my share of my words
Like Majnun, he reveals his essence here⁵³
Who is looking for Lord of Leila, what will he do?*

*He never bothers himself
Who really knows the words of a complete man
An ignoramus who doesn't know what he is for himself
He sees an empty story, what will he do?*

⁵⁰ *Hadis-i kudsi* is a hadith in which the Prophet, s.a.v.s., conveys the teachings of God.

⁵¹ Muhammad, s.a.v.s., is a symbol of religious law and faith as a whole, while *Hadhrat* Ali is a symbol of spiritual chivalry and spiritual path.

⁵² Just as Sinai was the place where Musa, peace be upon him, talked with God, so love is the "place" and support of the spiritual traveler in his conversion to God and his knowledge of Him.

⁵³ The *Majnun* mentioned here is Qays ibn-l-Mulawwah, the main figure of the Arab folk love epic. He lost his mind due to his love for a girl named Lejla, so he was called *Majnun* (which means madman in Arabic). In Sufi literature, he is considered a symbol of true love that eventually led him to the knowledge of God. And our Bosnians allude to the fact that *Majnun* has revealed his true essence, which is love.

Bosnevi's speech was lost in silence
When he caught the secret of the hakikat with his hands⁵⁴
A flood of tears for the Beloved
Why would he ever leave this sublime love?



ILLUSTRATION ~ Indeed, We have given to you a clear victory (Qur'an, Sūra ul-Fath 48:1).

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Zaista, dali smo vam jasnu pobjedu (Kur'an, Sura ul-Fath 48: 1).



⁵⁴ That is, when he discovered the reality of the spiritual journey.