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BY
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I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master (M.A.) in **Islamic Thought**

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الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
بِوَسِيَّتِي إِسْلَامِيَّاتِنَا إِنْبَارًا بِعَسَا مِلْدِسِيَّاتِنَا

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Thanks, then, to all these people, I had the strength to persist on this long road of mind, that has enabled me to be involved in events and to make my modest contribution to an appreciation of the place of architecture and religion, in particular of Islam, in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

THE REASONS FOR THIS CHOICE OF THEME

The ideational basis of architecture has never been so transparently clear as it was during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When one knows that sacral buildings above all were destroyed, but also others, both residential and secular (mahalas, harems, bridges and so on) that in appearance and function were determined by a specific code (matrix), even in areas where there was no actual armed conflict as such, it becomes clear that these buildings were destroyed for very specific reasons.

Without going into greater detail on the reasons for this destruction, which belong for the most part to the political and military domain, there arises the question, what determined, and why, that a particular building should be destroyed. How did the average person recognize a building destined for destruction, and why did the same average person not even attempt to destroy certain buildings?

During the 1992-1995 war the majority of mosques in the areas intended to belong to non-Muslim peoples were destroyed. Orthodox and Catholic places of worship were also destroyed in the same conflict when they were on the "other" side, but neither Orthodox nor Catholic churches were destroyed where Bosniaks were in a majority or held power.¹ At the same time, urban centres suffered major damage, together with individual buildings that more or less explicitly indicated that they were inhabited by members of the Islamic cultural milieu.²

During the same period there occurred a phenomenon that also leads to reflections on the matrix of the architecture of specific circles. During 1992-1995 there came about an extraordinary spiritual revival of urban centres, particularly in areas under siege, such as Sarajevo, taking the form of an exceptionally powerful return to their original functions both of mahalas and of mosques. Since the mahala and the mosque are the point of departure of

¹ It is not a question here of destruction as a consequence of war actions, nor of individual excesses. The same thing happened again in 1999 in the war in Kosovo, Yugoslavia.

² Again, the same thing occurred once again in 1999 in the war in Kosovo, Yugoslavia.

Bosniak identity, it is particularly important to analyze their architectural characteristics, the starting point in their creation, that is their code.

When one knows:

- that the mahalas experienced a revival through the common use of the rare sources of water and of auxiliary premises, of association, information, accommodation of refugees in other words, that what happened was something scarcely if at all remembered by post-Second World War generations;
- that regardless of the danger from incessant shelling, the mosques were always full, not just for prayer but because, among other things, women intellectuals organized lectures on health, cultural and educational issues (which can be considered a unique case in this area as a whole), even for women who were entering these houses of prayer for the first time;

then the inevitable question is, what is the matrix in this architecture that made possible this spiritual revival at the most critical moment? A recognition of the language of architecture, the code or matrix of a specific region, is essential not only for an understanding of the phenomena of a given moment, but also for the preservation of the values that have shown themselves to be truly worthy of attention.

Elements of mosques such as the Ferhadija in Banja Luka, which indicate the multiple repetitions of the number twelve (twelve windows, twelve steps to the mimbar, and so on) are not mere accidents. This is a clear expression of the ideational starting point of the builder, in this instances members of the Sufi order of the Bektashis, who in establishing this matrix probably wished to suggest the philosophy of life of their order.

In this case there is a transparently expressed ideational basis. The ideational basis is less evident in the case of less imposing buildings, and particularly in the case of residential architecture, that is the mahala as group or series of residential buildings.

It is for this very reason that these less monumental buildings, residential architecture as a whole and old urban zones particularly including the mosque as the nucleus of the

mahala, are very vulnerable to the impact of new construction that, failing to recognize the ideational basis of the old ways of building, often indiscriminately, unnecessarily and even wrongly introduces innovations into these areas.

The English word "man" is generally defined as an autonomous human being. The Arabic word "insan", often used by Bosniaks instead of the Slav word "čovjek" (which is also translatable into English as "man") means servant of God = a being that has specific obligations towards the Creator.³ These obligations are clearly defined, and are not limited to the relation Lord – man, but also – which is more important for the purposes of this paper – refer to the relation man – man and man – community.

Inevitably these clearly defined obligations (and rights) have left their traces on the architecture built or used by man, by members of specific cultural or religious circles. The recognition of these codes or matrices, that is the language of the architecture, enables us not only to understand the reasons for its destruction, which is of lesser importance, but also to minimize our own mistakes when it comes to its restoration or reconstruction.

For an individual or community that does not respect its own identity cannot earn the respect of others. It cannot demand of others what it does not possess itself. And this is true of architecture too, the physical expression of its identity. Against this background, the basic aim of this paper is to : discern the ideational basis or code of construction of mahalas and their mosques as the fundamental phenomenon of the architectural nucleus of Bosniaks in this region

Numerous authors have written about the mahala as a residential area, and about the mahala mosque as an interesting architectural object – from Josip Pospil (1908), Dusan Grabrijan⁴ and Juraj Neidhart, who were first to draw attention to the mahala, with their

³ Ziauddin Sardar, *An Early Crescent, The Future of Knowledge and the Environment in Islam*, (London: Mansell; 1989), pp. 168.

⁴ Dusan Grabrijan's book *The Bosnian Oriental Architecture in Sarajevo*, (Ljubljana: DDU Univerzum; 1984) is well known

exceptional regard for its architectural value, Mehmed Mujezinovic⁵, Hamdija Kresevljakovic⁶, Alija Bejtovic⁷, Andrej Andrejevic who dedicated an entire book to the Aladz mosque in Foca and its treasures, Ahmed Smajlovic⁸, Madzida Becirbegovic⁹ who studied all the mosques with wooden minarets, etc. highlighting the value of this architectural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

However, no one has attempted to explain why the kilims in the mahala mosque are important, why the "neighbour gate" in the mahala is important, what is the real or fundamental function of the *duvar* (from Persian *diwar*) or wall in the mahala; that is, no one has attempted to elucidate the ideational code or matrix, or the language, of the architecture of these, the most important parameters in the entire architecture of Bosniaks in this region.

In working on this basic objective, I also wished, as far as possible, to indicate the ideational roots of this architecture, which draw on earlier cultural strata defined as the period of the Bosnian Church and, it could be said, the transitional period of the arrival of dervishes, predecessors of the Ottomans, without overlooking the incontestably deeper influence of the Ottoman period in the development of architecture. For a more detailed elaboration of this thesis, it would be necessary to conduct much more field research, which is objectively impossible in the present circumstances.

I also wished to point to possible sources of the diversity of architectural expression, which can be felt in this region as regards the architectural expression of Islamic buildings in general, although the basic starting point is the same or almost identical. And in conclusion, a final objective inescapably imposes itself: to demonstrate the need to preserve and value

⁵ See Mehmed Mujezinovic, *Islamska epigrafika Bosne i Hercegovine* (Islamic epigraphy of Bosnia and Herzegovina) (Sarajevo: Veselin Maslesa; 1977)

⁶ Hamdija Kresevljakovic, *Izabrana djela*, (Selected Works) (Sarajevo: Veselin Maslesa; 1991)

⁷ Alija Bejtovic, *Spomenici osmanlijske arhitekture u Bosni i Hercegovini*, (Monuments of Ottoman Architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina) (Sarajevo:OI; 1980)

⁸ in articles such as Ahmed Smajlovic, *Uloga dzamije*, (The Role of the Mosque) *Islamska Misao*, (Sarajevo: Islamic community; 1986)

⁹ Madzida Becirbegovic, *Dzamije sa drvenom minarom u Bosni i Hercegovini*, (Mosques with Wooden Minarets in Bosnia and Herzegovina) (Sarajevo: Veselin Maslesa; 1990)

the mahala and its spiritual expression on the one hand, and the mahala mosque in its original and authentic functionality and purposes on the other.

There is nothing that would make it impossible to continue the development of the mahala in the full meaning of the word; the development of its spirituality; the advancement of the interpersonal relations that are so profoundly disrupted in this post-war period. The basis for this advancement is an understanding of its ideational basis, as expressed in form, dimensions, use of materials, environment and way of life as a whole.

This work is the result not only of an analysis of accessible literature in Bosnian and English world-wide and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by an analysis of the fundamental religious postulates relating to this theme and a comparison of the literature and ideational starting points of its authors, but also of personal field research (Sarajevo, Herzegovina, Bosanska Krajina, the Middle East and the Far East).

INTRODUCTION

The architecture of every region is individual and characteristic. The specific elements that influence it are:

- **Climate** (for example, buildings in Africa, with its tremendous heat, cannot be the same as buildings in northern Europe where cold weather is experienced for much of the year);
- **Location** (the construction of buildings in the mountain regions of Bosnia is not the same as in the plains of, for example, Vojvodina)
- **Local materials**, which have a major influence on construction, as a result of lower costs of transport and of building materials themselves, as well as the nature of a given environment, etc.;
- **Technology** (in Paleolithic times, with only the simplest of tools, people were not in a position to influence nature and their environment as is mankind today)

Numerous other factors of this kind could be cited which influence the development of individual locales at a given period of construction.

However, these are not the only factors, since if they were, architecture would be the same throughout the world in conditions of identical climate, terrain and so on. The foregoing elements are merely those that are not in dispute and for which evidence is scarcely required. Primary among the additional elements, which may be called non-material, that influence the disposition of a specific space are:

- **Religion**, which by means of its norms, its concept of life, influences people and shapes their interpersonal relations and their relationship with life, and thereby also their architecture, as a constituent part of life and the human environment;
- **Culture**, which is a way of life encompassing the norms of behaviour that as a whole influence the organization of towns and villages, that is of urban and rural milieux, and

also individual buildings, facilitating human existence. The best examples are those of the culture of nomads centred on constant movement, who as a result do not erect permanent structures, while the culture of long-settled, agricultural populations leads to the very opposite approach to building in relation to the formation of their living environment;

- **Civilization**, the culmination of a given era; among its constituent elements are religion and culture, as well as the previous strata of earlier historical periods. Civilization sets the seal on a given era, preserving its every aspect, including in architecture. From a general perspective, does not Roman civilization encompass in itself a specificity which characterizes the entire Roman Empire, defined in the case of architecture by impressions such as mosaics, atria, distinctive Roman bricks, aqueducts and so on. In the same way, Euro-Christian civilization would be defined by impressions such as monumental buildings, tall steeples, decorative arts, and a disciplined, exterior-oriented architecture.

There exists a third group of elements which influence the development, formation and ideational concept of architecture, and which can be defined as wholly abstract. Insufficient attention is devoted to them in architectural circles and among theoreticians of architecture, since quite simply they touch too nearly upon philosophy.

One of the elements of this abstract group is vision. A visionary view of the future town, its totality, its structures, is indispensable to the formation of a given society, its moral values and its ethics. The vision of a socialistic society where the way of life is directed from above, from the command economy to programmed society, including also the way in which family life is organized, culminated, in the case of architecture, in cold, monumental buildings, vast spaces inimical to people, and widespread uniformity in construction, attributes which were oppressive to the traditional cultural organization of space, and also to traditional, specific religious expression . . . Language, as the code or matrix of a specific architecture, also falls into this group of elements.

Why language as CODE?

Language has become so much a part of us that people no longer recognize its fundamental significance, nor its many strata, regardless of the fact that language reflects a given society or even that it influences society as such. People strive for the "right to speak", conscious of what the "power of speech" means, but forget the importance of what precedes and causes language, which is voice, or more exactly thought, that is ideas. Most would define their voice as sound, but a painter would define it as line, and an architect as the shaping of space. John B. Watson asks how it is possible to think without interior speech, that is, without some internal mediation of language?¹⁰ That means, if thought has its own structure, that speech is merely its next phase, which is as tangible as an object, quite clear and obvious.

If a person can express himself (his ideas and thoughts) through words, and if he can express himself through society, a city, a building, . . . then is not the reverse also true: buildings can express themselves in a code, that is in the idea which they carry with themselves and in themselves. To understand the idea or code of a given building, it is necessary to "read" or to "hear" it.

As Porter points out, wrong words, thoughts wrongly selected, bad spelling . . . can influence people, adversely affecting their health by influencing their state of mind.¹¹ It is the same with a city or with a building. A building that is not "read", a totality of which the code is forgotten, an architecture whose message receives insufficient attention, is in itself exposed to the risk of destruction or degradation, even by those who not infrequently believe that they are in fact improving it by means of their intervention.

If language (voice) is the medium of the human endeavour to express itself, to exchange ideas, to plan, then does not language, code, matrix as a function of formation (of space, city, entirety) deserve attention? It is entirely evident that everyone, and every people

¹⁰ Dan I. Slobin, *Dijalog*, časopis za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju (*Dialogue*, journal for philosophy and social theory) no. 1 (F.F.: 1981, Sarajevo), p. 196

¹¹ Peter Burke and Roy Porter, *Language, Self and Society* (Polity Press, 1991, Cambridge), p. 12

or nation, uses language, as it always has in the past. However, the final aims were different, since the parameters of values differed from society to society, from civilization to civilization, and above all from religion to religion.

Different concepts of religion can be observed even in specific language terminology, in linguistics. That problem is clearly expounded by Ziauddin Sardar, when he explains the secular equivalence of two essentially conceptually quite different phenomena:

- Architecture and Imrah (derived from Umran) as activity of building. That is, as Sardar explains, Architecture is a Greek word composed of Arch and Techture, which literally means "The Master Technique". Thanks to the cultural milieu in which this word was born, as early as the time of the Renaissance this expression was understood to mean the art of construction in unique technical and aesthetic forms.

- Against this, the Arabic word "Imrah" is a Qur'anic concept derived from the root Arabic word "Umr". In its meaning, this word is linked with the terms life, habitation, revival, and as such can be translated as shaping the built space, enclosed with the aim of making a better life on this earth.¹²

But this very thinking imposes a completely different approach to the life of an individual Muslim, and accordingly a different approach also to building – architecture as a constituent part of life and the realization of a lived idea.

By way of example, the Chinese philosophical approach to this problematic is relevant. That is, the ancient Chinese philosophies of Daoism and Confucianism associate every building in equilibrium with natural elements (nature), moral, ethics, human behaviour and aesthetics. The architect building old Chinese cities was not a free creator, but followed, with the philosophers, the norms given by the centuries-old traditions and philosophy of that people.¹³

¹² Ziauddin Sardar, *An Early Crescent* (Mansell, 1989, London), p. 167

¹³ Gideon S. Golany, *Ethics & Urban Design* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995, USA), p. 87

Where these norms do not exist, the builder has no constraints, which as its ultimate consequence means that anyone has the power to influence him, and to change not only his surroundings but even the Cosmos as Lord of the Worlds, as he desires (by landing on the surface of the moon, man accomplished the reconstruction of the moon, and now it is only a question of time when and who will annex the moon and build on it). It is clear that man as a free, autonomous being, without the concept of obligation, has none of the single, distinctive approach that characterized ancient civilizations such as the Islamic and the Chinese.

In the case of Islam, building is in the majority of cases the work of an individual who, by allocating his own wealth for the public good, ensures for himself the mercy of God. Building, architecture, therefore frequently serves that fundamental purpose. The builder is therefore often anonymous, even in the case of waqfs, other than those that transcend the context of local regions.

Building for the sake of the commonweal, both the waqif and the builder must uphold the fundamental religious postulates, the hadiths and unwritten norms valid for their specific surroundings. Proceeding from the philosophical approach that only Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala is the One and Only, Almighty and Eternal, nothing merits continual attention. The result is the relative lack of concern for personal material wealth, for architecture, which is then subject to decline in proportion as its ideational basis is forgotten.

On the other hand, recognizing Holy Scripture, the Islamic builder respects the existence, which includes the architecture, of the members of all the monotheistic faiths. Bosnia, one of the Islamic rare countries of Europe, is an example of this. On the other hand again, the freedom with which the Christian Church places itself in the man-God relationship, as a mediator that can stand between them, from which it derives that individuals can be excommunicated from its ranks, demonstrates a special characteristic that manifests itself everywhere, including architecture, that is buildings. The fundamental

postulate, particularly present in mediaeval Europe, of *cuius regio, eius religio*, is explicitly and specifically reflected in the understanding of values to this day.

It is an indisputable fact that in Europe every old building, wall, stone, as proof of existence, and at the same time as possibility of continuity (governance), proclaims the cultural heritage. It is exceptionally important as proof of existence in these regions, of civilization, thereby affirming the Church as the essential standard-bearer of that civilization. The bearer of the idea of cultural heritage and its protector is indeed the Church, which is the prime mover and was first to legislate for the field of heritage protection.¹⁴

The dependence on written documentation in which Bosnia (its culture and architecture) finds itself after the recent hostilities demonstrates the existence of thinking about the loss of one's identity in this way¹⁵. Thus the Bosniaks, that is the Muslims of Bosnia, are also beginning to accept European cultural thinking about the importance of the material as the right to existence on a particular territory. It is a question of influence from "without", which is not unimportant, yet it is not even necessary to reject it in given circumstances¹⁶. And yet this cultural premise for Bosnia is not critical. For Bosnia has experienced centuries of suffering. Sarajevo has many times burned and disappeared. But, wonder of wonders (by the will of Allah), through some spoken and unspoken language, through some eternal idea, Sarajevo arose again. Perhaps Bascarsija, with its double doors, is not identical with what it was in those long years of its existence, nor is the mahala built in the identical way as before, with small cobbles, adobe walls; perhaps Morica Han is no longer the Caravan-serai; yet not one of these buildings as a whole, as an Idea, has lost its

¹⁴ Mevlida Serdarevic, *Pravna zaštita kulturno-historijskog nasljedja BiH* (Legal Protection of the Cultural and Historical Heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina) (International Centre for Peace, 1997, Sarajevo), p. 25

¹⁵ Since there are no rights for those who have no material evidence of their existence, the destruction effected by other peoples (destruction of mosques in Bosnia during the recent hostilities) or even the protection of the remains of one's own heritage because of the possibility of unhindered continuity, are fully understandable

¹⁶ Probably this idea lies at the basis of actions to rebuild mosques throughout Bosnia and the imperative demand for the reconstruction of the Ferhadija mosque in Banja Luka

foundational idea and the language which it speaks, that is, its philosophical code or matrix that defines it as a building that has arisen under the aegis of specific idea.

If it is correct to say that the architecture of Bosnia, expressed in its entirety and in individual buildings, constantly changed while maintaining its code as the expression of the fundamental Islamic Idea, then the process of destruction of cultural identity through changes of name, changes in the names of certain places, streets, buildings, is far more dangerous. Foca becomes Srbinje, Bosanski Novi becomes Novi Grad; Duhno, Tomislavgrad; Varcar Vakuf, Mrkonjic grad. At lower levels there are far more examples, but they are less transparent. Localities have disappeared of which the name recalls that they were once musalas, harems and so on. *Basca* (from a Persian word for garden) becomes the Slavic *vrt*, although these are not direct synonyms; *avlija* (from the Turkish and Greek for the courtyard of a house) becomes the Slavic *dvoriste*, *duvar* is equated with wall, *haremluk* with graveyard, and so on. These directly influence changes in language in the literal sense of the word, but also changes in the ideas that are the point of departure of this architecture.

As the name of a person, like it or not, specifies him and classifies him in a specific group, so the language of architecture in the literal sense of the word, or in the sense of idea (matrix, code), whether we perceive it or not, classify architecture in the ranks of a specific philosophy and the specific manner of social existence.

MAHALA

Origins

In conformity with the fact that architecture testifies to the lives of particular populations in particular places, the roots of our Bosnian architecture, as the expression of the lives of us Bosnians, must be sought not only in contemporary society, but far, far earlier. That is, relations in society, the manner of belief, of thought, that is of living, from the distant past, have formed the environment, which influenced people, and thereby also their buildings.

The fundamental idea of contemporary architecture, that is, is conceptually still based on ancient beliefs, ways of comprehending things, the way life is organized, that is, on a Philosophy of living.

The most obvious characteristics of the Bosnian mahala and its comprehension, as well as the detailed analysis of its technical expression and architectonic concept (types of materials, disposition of space, organization of structures, etc.) generally impose the notion that the mahala is the result of purely Islamic influences. Without disputing the fact that the mahala originated in the Ottoman period and under the influence of Islamic concepts of societal organization, it is essential to analyze the pre-Islamic period of societal organization in this region. Taking account of the Idea, one cannot begin with the assumption that Bosnians did not live in an organized manner, or even that they did not exist prior to the arrival of Islam. Nor that their culture did not influence their manner of life, and the conceptualization of the mahala as a later product of this. After all, if the mahala were the result of purely Islamic influence, the Bosnian mahala would be identical with mahalas of Damascus or Fez.

Thus, there is something more than an Islamic "pattern" and design, for the language of architecture is a highly complex creation. To express its thought, and to preserve its Idea, this language influences the mahala in a specific manner. The mahala, in its basic ideational process, is not only the product of a specific influence. It is a living creation, with its own soul, personality, and characteristics, which endure throughout the transformations it has experienced up to the present day.

Generally, the mahala manifests itself as the result of the insistence of Islam on the division of activities and space to the least denominator, such as neighbourhood, *sokaka* (street), house, courtyard, room. . . Activities take place on the basis of:

- gender, so that we always have the well-known division into male and female parts of the whole,

- the organization of life, so that we have the structural division into working areas and living areas: the *carsija* or working quarter on the one hand and the mahala on the other as distinct parts of a single whole;
- family or religious affiliation, so that we have neighbourhoods where Muslims live and others where non-Muslims live. . .

It is as though everything is permeated by the notion of eternal dualism - male/female, open/closed space, public/private and so on.

This division is most often manifested in rigid, unbridgeable elements such as the Wall. That is why the wall (*duvar*, in our Bosnian architecture), in the sense of division, takes such an important place and why is so much said and written about it. But no one analyses the extent to which this created, visual screen – the Wall – is an unbridgeable element, and how far it is only illusion, that is Vision. It is not enough to emphasize other meanings of the Wall, in the positive sense, in the sense of protection (as well as of the mahala) to the present day, in the sense of the mahala as a whole that tells our story and that of our centuries-long existence. That is, the Wall should not *a priori* signify division, but on the contrary protection. After all, did not the Ghetto, symbol of Jewish separateness, protect the Jewish identity?

Analyzing the wall from a single perspective leads to incomplete and even false conclusions. Equally important is the mahala in its entirety. The mahala is not merely a collection of buildings surrounded by walls that create a separate, detached life, whether separate within the group itself (men and women within the family) or separated from the outside world. Although the mahala is indeed set apart, the purpose of this is not separation but the rapprochement of that which is similar or the same. In that way groups are protected, as much in the physical as in the spiritual and ideational sense.

If this is so, the mahala as a living organism to this day, receiving influences to this day too, must comprise within itself the distant traces of life in this region even from before

the arrival of Islam. Thus it is indispensable to emphasize the mahala in the sense of the reflection and evidence of our centuries-old Civilization, that is of the mahala as the distant reflection of the strict division (dualism) that was readily assimilated into Islam as an explicitly monotheistic religion.

The response to these questions must be sought in the period prior to the arrival of Islam. In fact, it is necessary to know the basic concepts of belief and of the lives of our distant ancestors, popularly known as Bogumils.

THE BOSNIAN CHURCH

The people whose roots go further back than the 12th century were called the "Bosnian Church" in the charter of Ban Kotromanic of 1323.¹⁷ With official, state heretical belief, this people, who some say fled from Bulgaria, found refuge in the mountainous Balkans. Isolated, holding on to teachings from which the official church had already distanced itself, they practised the faith as it had been at the time of the apostles – for example, the readiness of believers to martyr themselves for the faith like the first Christians, or the manner of performing their rituals.¹⁸

The members of the Bosnian Church followed dualistic, Manichaeic teachings, ideologically connected with all heretical churches. In their teachings they rejected all the elements which characterize the Christian faith, even the cross, and indeed many elements of their belief appear more pagan than Christian. They were close to the people, for the authorities did not stand behind them¹⁹.

¹⁷ Enver Imamovic, *Korjeni Bosne i Bosanstva* (The Roots of Bosnia and the Bosnians) (Bosna, 1995, Sarajevo), p. 168

¹⁸ Miroslav Brandt, *Izvori Zla* (The Origins of Evil) (August Cesarec, 1989, Zagreb), p. 238

¹⁹ On the contrary, they did not even have any pretensions to become feudal lords. With all these elements, together with the fact that they did not recognize the Old Testament, they were condemned and then not only persecuted (King Dragutin, a Hungarian vassal, persecuted them in the 13th century and later the Serbs did the same) but even forcibly Christianised.

With the discovery of many similarities with Islam (quite apart from the fact that Islam and the Bosnian heresy have common roots in the Middle East), such as the prohibition of the worship of idols, pictorial representations; the practice of strict fasting, three times a week in the case of the Bogomils; the ban on eating meat of certain animals; the non-recognition of the cross; the use of the same astral motifs, such as the crescent and star; the recognition of women as equal members of society²⁰ (in relation to Christianity where woman is a mere rib, this is an exceptional, radical stance), they found salvation from persecution by the Christian church in conversion to Islam. Of course a major role was also played by the perspective of the religious, economic and social political equality of those who embraced Islam, and – which is perhaps most important of all – the fact that Islam was already not a monolithic religion, but included a wide compass of divergences.²¹

The spiritual contact and influence of the indigenous people with the arrival of Islam are indisputable.

The conversion to Islam was a process that lasted, according to certain indications, into the 19th century, from which it follows that the influence of the ancestral idea was far greater than is generally believed. The absence of either church or altar, the rejection of all ecclesiastical decorations such as images and icons, and the great attention dedicated to reading, listening to one another (more even than to prayer), imposes a clear idea of the concept of life of our forebears and of their attitude towards the material, that is towards building.

²⁰ Enver Imamovic, *op.cit.*, (Bosna, 1995, Sarajevo), pp. 167-217.

²¹ Miroslav Brandt, *op.cit.* (August Cesarec, 1989, Zagreb), p. 261. The fact is that Islam as the religion that the Ottomans brought with them from the East is explicitly monotheistic. That is, the theological teachings of the Qur'an do not recognize dualistic thought in the interests of constructing a monotheistic religious system. Whether because of the idea that the Qur'anic texts, with some mythological logic, refer to a dualistic base, is not known, but the fact is that many Islamic sects have a dualistic character. Ayats relating how Iblis refused to bow down before man, that is before God's substance in him (spirit), and the consequent fall of Iblis, when because of leading mankind (Adam and Eve) astray he finally became the devil, the source of sin and evil. That is, the reconstruction of these two myths relies on a mitigated dualism which already resembles the weakened dualism of early Bogumilism. Miroslav Brandt, *op.cit.* (August Cesarec, 1989, Zagreb), pp. 131-132.

Unfortunately there is no direct material evidence, in the sense of buildings, as proof of this belief, nor of the way of life and, most important, as the basis for the introduction of Islamic-Turkish buildings, other than the famous necropolises known as *stecci* (sing. *stecak*). The simplicity and purity of tombstones, of the memorial stones known as *stecak*, is the only material evidence of our indigenous forebears and of the Bosnian Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The careful selection of their location, ordinarily on river banks or islands, that is near sources of water, only serves to confirm the simplification of all their material existence as well as their understanding of the essence and eternal nature of one Idea.

Organizing themselves into two categories:

- the perfects (believers who lived in communities similar to Christian monasteries and who became the elders of the church); and
- ordinary believers (among whom were numbered the majority of believers)

they realized that the concept of survival lay in spiritual community.

Living together, relying on one another, communicating one with another, that is, seen from today's perspective, socializing, linking themselves to the people (yet another phenomenon of this Church) and the ruling stratum, they sought to preserve the Idea and thought of their existence; of the existence of man, not as individual units, but as part of an organization. For that reason they completely respected hierarchy.

The so-called *djed* ("grandfather" or senior elder), deputy and successor of the apostle Paul, represented the Bosnian church to the rulers and the outside world. The "gosti" (guests) and later the "elder", assisted him in leading the church and in interpreting the dualistic doctrines, in other words in the conscious effort to resolve crucial enigmas: how did the world come into existence; what is the position and meaning of the human person in the world. . .?²²

²² A. V. Solovjev, *Nestanak bogumilstva i islamizacija Bosne* (Disappearance of Bogumilism and the Islamization of Bosnia) (Annual of the Historical Society of BiH I 42-79), p. 261