Muslim Brotherhood Networks in South-Eastern Europe

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From the fourteenth century onwards, Muslim brotherhood networks spread throughout South-Eastern Europe in the wake of Ottoman domination. They were subject to continuous restructuring due to political, social and religious developments. On a supra-local level, the threads of the networks followed the connections between spiritual teachers and disciples, even though the local level in the shape of "social cores" remained their essential basis. Brotherhood members moved freely for reasons of spiritual formation and devotional obligations, but also jihād. This mobility, together with economic and social connections, played an important part in spreading and maintaining these networks (and, by default, also in their disappearance).

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Introduction

"European Turkey" or "Rumelia", as the European part of the Ottoman Empire was known, was pervaded not only by military-administrative and trade networks, but also by religious, both Muslim (➔ Media Link #ab) and non-Muslim, networks.[1] There were mainly two kinds of Muslim religious networks: on the one hand those formed of scholars in religious studies – the *'ulamā'* – who held the positions of *qadis* (judges of Sharia Law), and of *müderris/mudarris* (teachers in the *madrasa* – establishments of religious instruction) in accordance with a hierarchy first devised in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries,[2] and, on the other, those of Sufi brotherhoods, i.e. brotherhoods of Muslim mystics. However, the two types were not always clearly separated.

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These brotherhoods (*tarikat*, from the Arab *tariqa*, pl. *turuq*) did not really begin to take root in the Balkan peninsula until the Ottoman conquest of the region. Before the Ottomans' arrival in Europe, we can find only a more or less mythical thirteenth-century warrior saint of the name of Sarı Saltık Dede (➔ Media Link #ac)[3] who settled in Dobruja with some Turkish tribes from Sinop, and then served as a buffer between the Byzantine Empire and the Golden Horde. There were also communities of followers of Baba Ishak (d. 1240) (➔ Media Link #ad) ("heterodox" mystics), who had existed in Dobruja and in the Ludogorie (Deliorman) since the thirteenth century.[4] Regarding the distribution of brotherhood networks in the Balkan region after the early days of the Ottoman conquest (mid-fourteenth century) and the role played by their members in society, we can distinguish three great phases.

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The Three Phases of the Expansion of Brotherhood Networks

The first phase was that of the early conquests of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, during which we can observe the developing networks of colonizing "heterodox" dervishes (Kalenderis, Bektashis or others): dervishes who migrated into the recently conquered areas and settled either in regions which the previous, Christian populations had abandoned

or in strategic points along lines of communication; dervishes who tilled the soil themselves, worked to spread Muslim religion and culture and took part in military campaigns or sent their followers. They were not yet, however, organised into what would become known as *tarikat* (brotherhoods). Brotherhoods began to take shape in the fifteenth century, and to extend their networks as far as the Balkans – the Bayramiyye, Nakshbandiyye and Halvetiyye, in particular thanks to the patronage of Sultan Bayezid II (1448–1512) (➔ Media Link #ae).[5]

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The second phase corresponds to the conquests further afield, which took in Hungary and led the Ottoman armies to the walls of Vienna (1529). (➔ Media Link #af) This period is also characterised by the Ottoman authorities implementing a policy of "Sunnicisation", which was devised because of the external threat posed by the Safavids in Iran and by various groups within the Empire itself who had connections to the Safavids. On the whole, the consequence of these changes in policy, in Bulgarian and Albanian territories in particular, would be the restructuring and reining in of certain heterodox groups into the reorganised Bektashiyye. Furthermore, because brotherhoods were seen as politically and religiously more "orthodox", they would spread more widely, take part in the struggle against heretics and infidels (such as the Austrians and the Venetians), and preach the "true path" to the population: these were in particular various branches of the Halvetiyye, who spread all over the peninsula, and also the Jelvetiyye. In this way, new and essentially urban brotherhood networks could develop as far as the frontier regions of the newly conquered areas. Most of these networks owed their existence to foundations by great men, such as the Halveti *tekke* which was founded by Gazi Husrev-beg (1480–1541) (➔ Media Link #ag) in Sarajevo in the 1530s. (➔ Media Link #ah) At this time, the connection between a *tarikat's* status in Istanbul and its distribution in South-Eastern Europe was very close. Shaykhs from Istanbul played a part in the expansion of the networks in Europe, as many a future Rumelian shaykh went to study in the capital. The connections a network maintained in the centres of political power in Istanbul as well as in provincial capitals had a decisive influence on its standing in society.[6]

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However, besides the various and extremely close-knit Halveti and Jelveti networks, other brotherhoods spread through the peninsula. Evliya Çelebi's (1611–1682) (➔ Media Link #ai) *Seyahatname* – account of his travels – shows that brotherhoods were found in practically all the urban centres in the Balkans around the middle of the seventeenth century. The Nakshbandiyye was already established, while the Kadiriyye was brought to Yenishehr-i Fenar (Larissa) in 1601 by a shaykh from Damascus (d. 1630), but spread with much greater momentum in Thrace, Macedonia, Kosovo and as far as Bosnia in the wake of Ismail Rumi's (d. 1643) (➔ Media Link #aj) journey. He was the founder of a new Kadiri network with its two principal centres in Istanbul and Edirne. The rather elitist Mevlevi brotherhood (the whirling dervishes), for whom poetry and music were most important, settled in several important towns and cities during the seventeenth century, such as Pécs, Sarajevo, Salonika, Serres, Elbasan and Plovdiv.[7]

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Despite the intention of the Ottoman authorities, "heterodox" Sufism was not entirely eradicated in the peninsula. During this time we even see the spread of a new movement – the Melami-Bayramis (or Hamzevis) – from Anatolia to the Edirne region, then also to Thrace, Bosnia, the region around Belgrade, and as far as Hungary. The most famous among these spiritual teachers was Hamza Bali (d. 1573) who would be accused of heresy and arrested in the region of Tuzla in Bosnia, where he had taken refuge after fleeing the Ottoman capital. He was taken back to Istanbul, where he was tried and executed in 1573.[8]

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The third phase in the spread of brotherhood networks begins with the checkmate of the Ottoman armies before Vienna in 1683 and the subsequent Hungarian and Venetian "reconquista" as well as the upheavals affecting the Ottoman Empire afterwards: the loss of some territories, then of other, even more important territories, and the constant fear that the Christian population might revolt. These were probably the reasons why the Ottoman authorities began around the middle of the eighteenth century to support the Muslim element in the Balkans more strongly, aided by the influx of refugees from the lost territories and by the continuing Islamisation of some Western regions. These developments were accompanied by the spread of new brotherhood networks which played a large part in strengthening the cohesion of newly converted Muslim populations as well as those who were already established in these regions. These new networks not only partially replaced older ones in towns and cities, they also enjoyed an unprecedented expansion in rural areas, in particular those which nowadays make up Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, Northern Greece and Bulgaria, which remained under Ottoman rule the longest.[9]

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Some of the already existing brotherhood networks experienced new impulses, as in the case of the Rifaiyye and the Kadiriyye. The Bektashiyye, while officially banned in 1826 when the janissary corps was disbanded, saw a rather surprising and clear expansion in present-day Southern Albania during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Thus it would come into its own towards the end of the century when it was used by Albanianists who sought to establish an Albanian identity. It would be separate from the Turkish identity and grounded in a Muslim Bektashi identity (➔ Media Link #ak) that was seen as "non-fanatic" in order to legitimise the existence of a mostly Muslim Albanian nation within Europe.[10]

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New brotherhoods or branches of brotherhoods also spread into Rumelian territory at this era, and sometimes as late as the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century. These were especially brotherhoods originating in Arabia. The Sadiyye, since the beginning of the eighteenth century and mainly in the Western part of the peninsula, recruiting from the middle and lower classes and only rarely from the *'ulamā'* (experts of Islamic religious sciences) and the Rifaiyye, whose religious practices were similar to the ones of the Sadiyye: using musical instruments, rituals of mortifying the flesh, ingesting red-hot coal and glass and exercising power over serpents. In Bulgaria and Kosovo we find the Shaziliyye, and the Tijaniyye was introduced into the city of Shkodra in what is now Northern Albania around 1910–1911 via the circuitous route of the Pilgrimage to Mecca. At the same time, during the last decades of the Ottoman era, the Arab provinces furthermore exerted their mystical influence over the Balkans through the activities of an Egyptian and in the shape of a new brotherhood network, the Melamiyye–Nuriyye. Having visited the sacred places of Islam, this Egyptian, Muhammad Nur al-'Arabi (1813–1888), effectively introduced a new, very reformist, path into Macedonia (first in Skopje, later in Strumica). He quickly contacted certain highly-placed officials in Macedonia who allowed him to go to Istanbul and find disciples even in the heart of the Ottoman capital. However, it was when Macedonia came to boiling point twenty years after his death that the faithful followers of his movement played a most important political part in the Young Turk revolution. Over the last five decades of the Ottoman Empire, the movement spread throughout Macedonia and Kosovo, from there to Bosnia-Herzegovina, mostly into urban centres among the educated classes and the administration, both civilian and religious.[11]

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Meanwhile, the Halvetiyye remained the most widely spread brotherhood with new networks emerging steadily, some of which originated in the Balkans themselves (in Edirne, Salonika, Ohrid and Lovech in Bulgarian territory, and also in Serres in Macedonia). This was a recent phenomenon which one might link to the rise of local powers and the spread into more rural areas. However, one of the most successful Halveti networks was that of the Shabaniyye, which had become the Halveti branch with the largest number of establishments within the capital. The boost it sustained during the nineteenth century in Istanbul as well as in the Bulgarian territories, most notably Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, was certainly due to its doctrinal principles at the time: emphasis on Sharia Law, insistence on the practice of *rabita* (imaginary link between the disciple's heart and that of the teacher) and *halvet* (spiritual retreat), which, indeed, it shared with the similarly expanding Halidi branch of the Nakshbandiyye.[12]

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Although the Halvetiyye – all its branches taken together – remained the most widely spread brotherhood in the Balkan peninsula, it still had competition on the political and religious levels during this third phase, from the very Nakshbandiyye that took over, as it were, the role and the place occupied by the Halvetis during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was a brotherhood firmly rooted among the *'ulamā'*, supporting the Sharia, defending "the glorious Empire on which is based the victorious existence of Islam" against "the cursed Christians and the apostate Persians" and situated close to the Sultans and their circle. With two new branches (the Mujaddidiyye, which first emerged during the eighteenth century, and, in particular, the Halidiyye in the nineteenth century), the Nakshbandi networks were weaving themselves more closely all over the peninsula, especially in Bosnia. Their increasing popularity was due above all to the activities of Hüseyin Baba Zukić (d. c. 1799) who, after extended travels to Istanbul, Konya, Samarkand, Bukhara, Baghdad and elsewhere, founded an establishment in Vukelići-Živčići near Fojnica.[13]

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Despite this success of brotherhoods advocating the Sharia on the one hand, on the other we see the emergence of a

phenomenon we might call "Alevisation" of other brotherhoods, in particular in the western part of the peninsula. The Rifaiyye, Kadiriyye, Sadiyye and even some branches of the Halvetiyye began to adopt practices and beliefs popular with the Alevi–Bektashis, such as the cult of Ali (the Prophet's son-in-law, c. 600–661) (➔ Media Link #al), the feast of *matem* in memory of Husayn's (one of his two sons, 626–680) (➔ Media Link #am) martyrdom etc. Mortification of the flesh such as piercing their bodies through with large needles also took place in numerous branches of these various brotherhoods. (➔ Media Link #an)

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However, in order to understand more clearly what these brotherhood networks stood for within Ottoman society in South-Eastern Europe, we must first of all look at how they worked.

▲13

Teachers, Disciples and Sympathisers: Brotherhood Connections

The relationship between teacher and disciple lies at the heart of Islamic mysticism. Guided by the teacher (*murshid*, shaykh), the disciple follows the path (*tarikat*) that leads to God. In the early days of the Ottoman Empire, new trends in Sufism would be spread by groups of wandering dervishes, some of them antinomian, who would in some cases settle in cells arranged around the main prayer hall of a mosque. After the first quarter of the fifteenth century a more "institutionalised" Sufism began to take shape in the Empire and in Transoxiana, thanks to greater political stability and with the support of interested political elites. A similar development had already taken place in the Middle East, in the form of tarikat, paths defined diachronically as well as synchronically.[14] From that time onwards, authority would be legitimised by a chain of transmission (*silsile*) going back to a spiritual ancestor, who was the source of the respective path, and from him to the Prophet. This chain would determine the membership of the group. Moreover, the relationship between the teacher and the disciple would be identified with a more closely defined framework (a *tekke* or other dervish establishment),[15] with strictly codified rituals and practices, some of which would be conducted regularly and jointly in the presence of the teacher (shaykh), with a specific course of initiation, and also with rules of behaviour to be observed within the group as well as within wider society.

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In addition, hierarchies were emerging between the teacher, his disciples who had themselves become teachers and left to oversee other establishments where they could eventually educate new shaykhs (in which case they would be called *halife*, *khalīfa* in Arabic), and the disciples who had attained various degrees of initiation. Thus links between different generations of spiritual teachers were underlying the networks between different establishments, one or more of which would be recognised as being the principal institution (*asitane*). Initiatory links were more and more frequently paralleled by kinship ties, as hereditary succession (*evladiyet*) took roots in a number of brotherhoods around the second half of the seventeenth/beginning of the eighteenth century, and the shaykh overseeing a *tekke* would be succeeded by one of his descendants.

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However, these brotherhoods must not be seen as rigid institutions. Multiple affiliations to a number of teachers from different tarikat were frequent, among literate as well as illiterate followers. Brotherhood "hierarchies" were also very fluid. Networks were constantly restructured according to the charisma of the spiritual teachers. In some brotherhoods, this even led to the creation of additional branches, which might be more or less autonomous, and to the development of new practices and doctrines. Even those brotherhoods that are usually presented as very centralised, such as the Mevleviyye with its centre in Konya and the Bektashiyye with the principal *tekke* in Haji Bektash in Central Anatolia, must not be seen as strictly structured organisations.

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Of course, connections between places could be activated at any moment. This might be due to membership of the same *tarikat* or one of its sub-networks, because of formal allegiance to another *tekke*, under the pretext of religious or familiar connections with other establishments, or indeed because of the charisma of another shaykh. However, the local level did remain fundamental to life within the brotherhood. At this level there would be a number of circles around the shaykh: firstly, his family and his close disciples who served him permanently or very regularly. Secondly, the circle of the other initiated disciples who would participate regularly in rituals and other meetings but who, as every initiated

disciple must, would submit to the shaykh's authority "as the corpse in the hands of the washer of corpses" and show complete obedience. The third circle would be formed by prospective members and by sympathisers who only visited the *tekke* at irregular intervals. We might add a fourth circle containing all those who came to request the shaykh's blessing or to visit the tombs of saints associated with the *tekke* in order to pray for their intercession. (➔ Media Link #ao)

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Besides the ties that bind the shaykh to his disciples, the brotherhood was a "social core" which contributes to the shaping of the society within which it settles.[16] The *tarikat* and its leader would have social and political functions beyond the purely religious aspects, depending on the doctrine of the *tarikat* regarding the Sufis' place in society. Thus certain brotherhoods such as the Bektashiyye or the Kalenderiyye would insist that their members renounced the world (*terk-i dünya*), which led them to embrace celibacy and to settle at a distance from urban centres, while the majority of the other brotherhoods presented the Sufis' role in society according to the principle "retreat within society" (*halvet der enjüman*). However, more decisive were such factors as personality and the shaykh's charisma, as well as the individual context of time and place. Indeed, all the experts state that one and the same brotherhood may play diametrically opposed parts at different times and in different places.

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In the Balkans, just as in the other parts of the Ottoman Empire, the tarikat were at first vectors for the spread of different trends of mystical Islam, and more generally of the exoteric as well as the esoteric fields of Islamic science, written as well as oral. The *tekke*, like the *medrese*, were places where manuscripts would be edited, copied, read, commented upon and conserved – and, from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, printed. Besides, the brotherhood establishments were the starting places of the oral spread of mystical Islam, transmitted by means of *sohbet* (spiritual conversations between the shaykh and his disciples) or *ilahis* (religious singing), or indeed by means of particular practices, such as the *zikr* (ritual of tirelessly recalling formulae and the names of God) (➔ Media Link #ap), spiritual retreat etc. In the field of religious practice in particular the brotherhoods created a kind of Islam within which the shaykh would be the intercessor between God and the faithful. Being close to God, he could perform miracles (*keramet*) which testified to this closeness and to the powers it conferred upon him. Thus his disciples, but also everyone else who wished (be they Muslim or not), would come to see him in order to enjoy his blessing and to have him solve their problems: infertility, sickness, a decision to be taken, success for an enterprise, protection, etc. The shaykh retained these powers even after his death and people would visit his tomb, bringing water for a sick person to drink, or one of their garments, circle the grave a number of times or sleep beside it. In fact, the brotherhoods were among the most popular places for the veneration of saints to take roots, in the Balkans as well as other parts of the Empire and even beyond;[17] also they often oversaw visits to tombs of very different saints, even in "ambiguous" sanctuaries, such as ancient Christian or Pagan places of worship which were still visited by non-Muslims.[18] The brotherhoods also provided a setting that was most favourable to the development of Muslim magic (magical recitation of the Koran, manufacturing amulets and talismans, divination by various means, and interpretation of dreams – the latter could also be used for spiritual guidance). This trend must not, however, be seen as Islam "for the lower classes"; on the contrary, the Sultans just like their simple subjects, *'ulamā'* as well as guildsmen or soldiers would turn to the shaykhs as intercessors.

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This position of the shaykh as intercessor together with the rule of submission observed by the initiated disciples and the rules of behaviour observed by the disciples among themselves brought with them further duties for the brotherhood, especially in the economic, social and political areas. In return for his blessing, the shaykh would receive remuneration in coin or in kind, which allowed him to build and maintain and eventually enrich his establishment. A number of *tekke* or *zaviyye* were founded in European Turkey thanks to pious endowments (*vakf*, pl. *evkaf*) by Sultans, great persons of the Empire or local notables. Other, small or medium-sized establishments were financed by goods accumulated over time, thanks to the financial contributions of the shaykhs and their disciples, such as the Nakshbandi *tekke* of the early centuries.[19] Often the two systems would exist together. Among the gifts to and acquisitions by the shaykh might be lands, shops, mills: so many production sources would enrich the establishment and provide the shaykh or, if need be, his family, with potentially considerable economic power. However, whether they were rich or modest, the resources of the *tekke* would be partially redistributed to ensure the everyday working of the establishment (maintenance, improvements, salary of particular officiants), to support the life of the group (books, meals) and to allow hospitality towards visitors – hospitality was one of the basic tenets of the brotherhoods.

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The *tekke* was also the place where the shaykh's disciples as well as sympathisers could socialise. Everybody could be received, lodged and boarded for three days and nights, sometimes longer in the case of affiliated members. In some rural areas, the *zikr* would take place on market day, which meant that the peasants and mountain dwellers could do their shopping and visit the *tekke* where they would find lodgings. Besides ritual ceremonies, which would usually take place once or twice a week, and on special feast days, the disciples would gather round the shaykh for the *sohbet* and also for freer discussions. Here, partaking of coffee, which had been introduced into the Empire by the Sufis in the sixteenth century, played an important part. As we have seen, the *tekke* might be a place of instruction beyond mystical initiation. The playing of musical instruments during the rituals in some brotherhoods (e.g. among the Mevlevis), the high status awarded to poetry (also among the Mevlevis) and to calligraphy, turned some of the *tekke* into places where sociability arose out of artistic achievements.[20]

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All of which means that the *tekke* could be seen as "social clubs in a sense, but also networks of communication and mutual trust"; networks joining people of diverse social status, which might enable some among them to reach networks of power, allowing them to, for instance, rise socially as well as professionally.[21]

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And the place of women? It was probably less marginal than we might think. While they could not reach the position of shaykh, some of them – if they were members of a family of shaykhs – could play a central part in the life of the brotherhood. Many were initiated (to varying degrees, according to the *tarikat* and the times) and took part in rituals, either in an adjacent room or on a gallery separated from the men. They would sometimes form circles in private houses, led by one of their number, and some of them wrote mystical texts, for example Bektashi poetesses.[22] Some women were revered as saints, during their lifetime or after their deaths, for instance Dervishe Hatije at Tirana.[23] As for social relationships, we may be sure that they played an important part in marital alliances which would be tied either within the brotherhood circle or under its auspices.

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In Ottoman society in South-Eastern Europe, shaykhs were not only recognised for their spiritual authority but often had social roles as well, which would go beyond the limits of the community life within the *tekke*. They were often called upon to advise on a variety of questions, and in particular brought in to help solve conflicts.[24] In this area they might find themselves in competition with local notables (*beys*, *agas*), or with provincial governors. Their spiritual authority, their economic power and the relationships they might have with other shaykhs also gave them the power of mobilisation in some regions and enabled them to strengthen some social units or surpass others. Consequently the shaykhs could be called upon to play a political part, be it for or against the reigning powers, as intermediary for the authorities or as mouthpiece of the people.

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There are still only comparatively few written sources on the history of the Sufis in South-Eastern Europe. There are deeds of religious foundations, bio-hagiographical collections, spiritual chains of transmitters and works on doctrine, which allow us to understand, at least in part, the position of the brotherhoods in this part of the world. In order to comprehend what their networks were really like, we shall now look at two documents providing evidence of two different eras: firstly, the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and, secondly, the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The first is the bio-hagiographical collection of a shaykh who lived in Belgrade (in modern-day Serbia),[25] and the second is the history of a branch of the Halveti brotherhood which was compiled in Istanbul in the mid-twentieth century. This latter document departs somewhat from bio-hagiographical style, most notably in that it adds elements on the associated religious foundations.[26]

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Brotherhood Networks as Seen from the Borders

Ibrahim ibn Iskender, called Müniri Belgradi (1551–ca.1620), who was born in the region of Bosnia or Srem, an died in Belgrade left behind works which clarify certain aspects of the lives of mystics and saints in the border regions of the European part of the Empire – the regions of Belgrade, Bosnia and Hungary[27] – in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[28] One of the most striking aspects is undoubtedly the mobility, which enables us to grasp the networks pre-

cisely in their dynamic nature. There are different kinds of mobility: mobility linked to the acquisition of knowledge and to initiation, mobility linked to accomplishing *jihād* and, finally, mobility linked to devotion. Besides the mobility of individuals we must take into consideration the circulation of written and oral texts, as these could also contribute to form a sense of belonging, even at a distance, to a network.

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Müniri was himself comparatively mobile. We know he grew up in Sremska Mitrovica where he was initiated into the Halveti brotherhood by two shaykhs (Shaykh Ali and Shaykh Muslihuddin), that he studied to become a religious scholar – maybe in a great city in the Balkans, or in Istanbul – and embarked on a career as *'alīm* (Muslim legal scholar) in Belgrade and the region around it, finally attaining the position of mufti in Belgrade. As the author of several works, some of which were intended to put religious and moral knowledge within reach of a wide public, and as copyist, he appears to have achieved great influence in the region. His name was still well-known several decades after his death. He was also a Sufi master and, from Belgrade, was able to collect and collate bio-hagiographical narratives concerning important personalities – who had died long ago or were indeed still living in the border regions at his time – who were members of networks linked to him in some way. In cases where he was not himself a witness of the events he narrates, he even mentioned here and there that he received his information from certain shaykhs or their disciples, whom he had met.[29]

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In his narrative, mobility is often part of the formative period of the shaykhs' initiation. The famous Ali Dede Sigetvari (d. 1598) (➔ Media Link #aq) (named thus because he had been appointed guardian of the tomb of Süleyman the Magnificent (ca. 1494–1566) (➔ Media Link #ar) in Sigetvar in Hungary) was of Bosnian origin, but was probably in Istanbul when he submitted himself to the shaykh Muslihuddin Nureddinzade and became his disciple. Later he spent many years in Mecca where he devoted himself to Arab poetry and the mystical doctrine of Ibn Arabi (1155–1240) (➔ Media Link #as). Afterwards he returned to the capital of the Empire, where the Grand Vizier sent him to Sigetvar, so that in effect he had travelled the Empire from North to South and South to North.[30] In other bio-hagiographical narratives, mobility may even be a condition of advancement along the path of mysticism, set by the spiritual guide. Shaykh Muslihuddin was originally a craftsman from Sarajevo, but was initiated by Shaykh Ayni Dede in Istanbul and served him diligently until the latter sent him to Sremska Mitrovica to visit a saint. Muslihuddin did not want to leave his teacher. At the very most he would agree to go to the very famous shaykh Bali Effendi who lived in Sofia. However, at his teacher's insistence, Muslihuddin went to the border regions of Srem and in Mitrovica tried to find the saint he had come to see. When he met the shaykh, the latter told him to remain in his place and then left, as two holy men could not stay together in the same place. Of course, this is a hagiographical *topos*, but the fact remains that Muslihuddin left his native Bosnia in order to find a spiritual teacher in the Ottoman capital, was then sent by him to a different region on the European borders in order to find another teacher and, ultimately, to begin guiding numerous disciples and attract sympathisers to the establishment that would be built for him in this place.[31] These cases illustrate the mobility that was part of the path of initiation, through which shaykhs and disciples of different degrees of initiation would meet. Sometimes mobility would also be linked to the study of exoteric religious subject matter. These two kinds of mobility facilitated contacts between people born in South-Eastern Europe and Sufi networks established on the Peninsula and the capital, and even in the Arabian provinces.

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The dynamics of brotherhood networks in the European border regions are also the result of a second kind of mobility, linked to the Sufis' duty to undertake the small *jihād*, namely the *gaza* or war against the infidels (the great *jihād* being the struggle against one's own self, or *nefs*) and, more generally, to the wish to defend the frontiers of Islam.[32] Indeed, the story of Müniri contains a number of examples of shaykhs who came from various South-East European regions and beyond to the border regions, where they stayed until the end of their lives, or for some years, or even just for a few months, spending the time of one or more campaigns – including one or more winters – in Belgrade or one of the fortresses in the region.[33] The shaykhs themselves would fight, and sometimes fall as martyrs, such as Shaykh Hizir who died during the Eger campaign.[34] They would foresee the outcome of battles and, in some cases, were rewarded with part of the booty.[35] They were present for protection, support, advice, encouragement and to promote the outcome of battles.

▲29

After the capture of Sigetvar, Kurd Effendi (d. 1587) (➔ Media Link #at), who was a disciple of the great shaykh Sofyali

Bali Effendi (d. 1553), went to support the governor Mustafa Pasha (c. 1511–1580) (➔ Media Link #au) in Buda, where he would stay for many years. Among the shaykhs who passed through Belgrade on their way to the theatre of war, Müniri mentions Shemseddin Sivasi (1520–1597) (➔ Media Link #av), who was a spiritual teacher from Istanbul and of great renown. There were others like him who came to accompany the Ottoman armies on their various campaigns: Muhammed Effendi from Nevrokop in Bulgaria, Shaykh Hızır (d. c. 1596) from Istanbul who took part in two campaigns in the 1590s before dying a martyr's death during the second, and also Shaykh Mahmud from the Edirne region who stayed in the castle at Esztergom after its capture in 1543 and would there initiate many disciples, among them Ali Effendi, one of Müniri's spiritual teachers. After some time, Shaykh Mahmud returned to his native country. As before, this spirit linked South-Eastern Europe and the Arabian provinces: one of Emir Evhaheddin's disciples is mentioned as arriving from a place "beyond Aleppo", and Shaykh Ama Bali Effendi came originally from that very city.[36]

▲30

Shaykhs and their disciples would also move around in order to fulfil their devotional obligations. The pilgrimage to the Holy Places of Islam formed another link to the Arabian provinces. The pilgrimage to Mecca (the Holy City of Islam) might even be undertaken more than once in a lifetime. Mecca would appear like a sanctuary, far away from the difficult life in the border regions. Furthermore, going on the pilgrimage meant visiting and staying at other Middle Eastern places and establishing connections with other mystics. In Müniri's narrative, Damascus in particular appears in this context. These visits would contribute to the weaving of brotherhood networks, since Damascus is also mentioned as the home of certain shaykhs who were members of a network extending as far as the European *serhad* (border region). Müniri even wrote about the lives of several Damascene spiritual teachers who were part of his own spiritual tradition.[37]

▲31

The dynamics of the networks may also be seen in the circulation of written and oral texts. Müniri claims to have read or copied the works of his fellow mystics who were active in various places all over the Peninsula and beyond. Thus he writes concerning Hizir Effendi, who lived in the Ottoman capital:

▲32

> The deceased was industrious and hardworking in exotericism and esotericism. He would annotate the margins of anthologies with perceptive truths and subtleties. As [the texts] were most difficult to understand and as he had the gift of making them more intelligible, those around him wrote in the margins that according to them his two anthologies of important information must needs be property in mortmain. Consequently they completed them with talent in discussions and commentaries. He had also begun to write a commentary on an excellent book, *Mülteka ül-ebhur*.[38] He undertook sufficient and perceptive verifications of his writings by basing himself on the *kelam* [of the Qur'an]. He also wrote an excellent essay on the *sure-i kadr*, which your humble servant copied.[39]

There are letters to illustrate that a person like Müniri might have maintained connections with different shaykhs through correspondence.[40] There are also passages in Müniri's works which contain explicit references to the circulation of oral communications and the information as well as narratives he received from his fellow mystics. Thus he describes gatherings of believers and meetings of dervishes during which people would memorise actions and gestures as well as the miracles of deceased or living shaykhs. At gatherings of this kind, Müniri reports that he himself had the opportunity of narrating how Shaykh Muslihuddin had brought his spiritual assistance to some military campaigns, or of talking about a shaykh from Temesvar.[41]

▲33

Brotherhood, Social and Economic Networks

The Halvetiyye-Jerrahiyye began to spread at a rather late time, from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards,[42] from the Ottoman capital through the Peloponnese and other Southern regions of the Balkan peninsula, such as Thrace, Macedonia and Bulgaria. (➔ Media Link #aw) This is an example which allows us to consider the phenomenon of the network from a different angle, namely that of the possible influence of kinship ties and economic connections.

▲34

Shaykh Nureddin Mehmed Jerrahi (1678–1721) (➔ Media Link #ax) had acquired a great reputation in Istanbul and initiated a number of *halife* who had achieved positions of influence within the political, military and religious authorities in the capital. While some of the Jerrahi *tekke* in the Balkans were founded by young disciples who came to the capital to study and then returned to their homeland in order to extend the scope of the brotherhood, its spread into the Peloponnese (or Morea) was closely linked to the participation of several disciples in the military campaign which resulted in the reconquest of the region in 1715.[43]

▲35

Thus Shaykh Yahya Moravi, the *halife* of Nureddin Mehmed Jerrahi who had taken part in the reconquest with a number of disciples, found himself appointed shaykh of a *tekke* in the fortress of Nafplion (Anaplion). Although the Peloponnese had not been officially and by treaty reassigned to the Ottoman Empire, the *tekke* was richly endowed by the *aga* of the cavalry corps stationed in the fortress. As the first basis of the brotherhood in the re-conquered Peloponnese, this *tekke* would become the core of a sub-network of the Jerrahiyye around the shaykh Yahya Moravi, his family and his disciples, as well as the rich endowments from which they would benefit. Later, the network would have twin centres of gravity, when Shaykh Yahya was appointed the head of the *asitane* (the principal *tekke*) in Istanbul. The other gravity centre would be located in Tripoli which had become the regional capital of the Peloponnese.

▲36

The shaykh's companions who lived around him at Nafplion would soon become the leaders of other establishments on the Peloponnese (Patras, Nafplion, Kalavryta, Tripoli, Gastouni, Vostitsa/Aigio) through several *modi operandi*: important people founding a *tekke* for them, founding their own *tekke* or taking over the leadership of a *tekke* previously led by members of another brotherhood. There were usually rich *vakfs* (properties in mortmain) linked to each *tekke* – great agricultural domains, olive groves etc. The new shaykhs would be beneficiaries, and often also the administrators, even if they were not the actual owners.

▲37

The family of Shaykh Yahya in particular played a central part in setting up and maintaining this sub-network for a century, until the uprising of 1821, as the shaykh, who lived there for 45 years before moving to Istanbul to take over the leadership of the principal *tekke* there, had two of his sons among his disciples. And by that time it had become the custom, according to the acts of endowment, that the spiritual leadership of the *tekke* as well as the administration of its possessions should revert to Shaykh Yahya's descendants. Accordingly it was his elder son Abdüshekur who succeeded him, and his son in turn. In actual fact they were shaykh of the *tekke* in name only, as they followed Shaykh Yahya when he left the Peloponnese and went to the capital. Like his father, Abdüshekur combined the two posts, while his son, before also becoming shaykh of the *asitane* in 1805,[44] spent several years in the Peloponnese in order to look after the possessions of the *tekke* in Nafplion, which proves that these connections lasted long, especially on the economic level. It is known that, thanks to their possessions in the Peloponnese, Shaykh Yahya and his son made donations to the principal *tekke* in Istanbul in order to provide it with food.[45] Because of the support of his cousin who was at the time the head of a *tekke* in Tripoli, Shaykh Yahya's grandson would also be appointed head of a *tekke* in Vostitsa, as *vekil* (deputy) of the shaykh who was away leading another establishment in Istanbul – combining posts in this way appears to have been common at that time.

▲38

Through his younger son Abdülbaki, a second line of Shaykh Yahya's descendants established itself in the Peloponnese. Having been initiated by his father Abdülbaki became mufti of Tripoli, where he undertook the restoration and expansion of the *tekke* which had been founded by one of his father's *halife*. When some of his own *halife* went to lead brotherhood establishments in Gastouni and Vostitsa, his son succeeded him as spiritual master as well as administrator (*mütevelli*) of the foundation. His grandsons had to flee to Egypt in the wake of the Greek uprising during which their father was killed. They founded a *tekke* in Cairo and went on to occupy high positions in the Ottoman administration. In order to depict this very kinship-oriented brotherhood network, we must add the existence of a third line, that of Abdüshekur's son-in-law, whose members were shaykh of a *tekke* in the Üsküdar quarter of Istanbul, holding concurrently the title to and some of the income of *tekke* in the Peloponnese.

▲39

The Impossible Institutionalisation of Brotherhood Networks

During the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, developments did not pass by the brotherhood networks and their links with power. The sociability of certain Bektashi and Melami networks approached that of the Freemasons (➔ Media Link #ay), who had made their way into the empire.[46] The Ottoman authorities launched some reforms aiming to build a "modern state" and transform the relation between power and subjects or citizens of the state. Within the framework of these reforms, several measures were taken with the intention of institutionalising the brotherhood networks, in keeping with the reformist ideas of some Muslims, Sufi as well as non-Sufi. In 1812, first the *vakfs* were put under the control of a Ministry of endowments, while the appointment of shaykhs was going to be centralised in the person of the shaykh of one principal *tekke* for each brotherhood. Then, in 1836, there were attempts to regulate the function of a shaykh as well as certain practices and clothing; finally, in 1866, a "Council of Shaykhs" was set up in Istanbul, which was to concentrate the working of the brotherhoods under the auspices of the *sheyhülislam* (Head of the Ottoman religious hierarchy), with intermediary *tekke* in the different regions (independently of the individual brotherhoods they belonged to); the council was supposed to monitor the abilities of the new shaykhs. The council worked until 1917, but in actual fact these measures had little or no effect beyond the Ottoman capital.[47]

▲40

In South-Eastern Europe the end of the Ottoman Empire led to the emigration of many Muslims (➔ Media Link #az) which meant that the brotherhood networks were considerably weakened in some regions. There were also attempts at institutionalising Sufi networks, but this time "from the bottom up", i.e. by the Sufi groups themselves. In the early 1970s, two Sufi organisations would be founded in communist Yugoslavia : the ZIDRA (Community of the Exalted Dervish Orders), which was active mainly in Kosovo and Macedonia, and the *Tarikatski Centar* in Bosnia-Herzegovina.[48] In the inter-war years there had already been a similar attempt in Albania, which had led to the creation of an organisation embracing four brotherhoods (Sadiyye, Rifaiyye, Kadiriyye and Tijaniyye) under the authority of the official Islamic institutions. At the same time two brotherhoods with much larger membership were trying to institutionalise themselves more or less independently from the official institutions. While the Halvetiyye was not really successful,[49] the Bektashiyye was able to obtain a degree of autonomy from the 1920s onwards, developing statutes and regulations in order to be recognised as a religious community in its own right. However, if we look at it more closely, we not only see that the influence of the non-Sufi Muslim environment did not allow the Bektashis' independence to be recognised,[50] but also that the brotherhood itself was not really able to transform itself into an institutionalised religious community. The main reason is that the religious authority within the brotherhoods was essentially defined at a local level and that the legitimacy of supra-local structures could impose itself only with great difficulty, despite the fact that brotherhood networks always have, as we have seen, a supra-local dimension.[51] The latter, however, is always naturally very variable. It can vary with the times and the charisma of spiritual teachers and will not easily adapt to a more rigid framework imposed by institutionalising, or indeed nationalising it.

▲41

Nathalie Clayer, Paris

Appendix

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Notes

1. ^ In spite of the settlement of Muslim populations and conversions to Islam which took place over the course of the centuries, Rumelia – which was conquered gradually from the beginning of the fourteenth century onwards and lost similarly gradually between the end of the seventeenth (Hungarian territories) and the beginning of the twentieth century (Albania, Macedonia, Western Thrace) – always remained predominantly Christian, with only localised or regionalised exceptions.
2. ^ Cf. Veinstein, Les Ottomans 2003; Clayer, L'autorité religieuse 2004.
3. ^ Some time after his death, a legendary rather than real Sarı Saltuk became the figurehead of the Islamisation of the peninsula and of the *gaza* (holy war). His person has been used in particular by the Bektashi brotherhood (Leiser, Sarı Saltuk Dede 1995; Popovic, Morts de saints 1996).
4. ^ De Jong, Problems 1993.
5. ^ Barkan, Osmanlı imparatorluğunda 1942; Zarcone, Nouvelles perspectives 1992; Karamustafa, God's Unruly Friends 1994; Le Gall, A Culture 2005.
6. ^ Clayer, Mystiques 1994.
7. ^ Le Gall, A Culture 2005; Zarcone / Işin / Buehler, The Qâdiriyya Order 2000; and, on the subject of the Mevlevis, various articles in Osmanlı 1994.
8. ^ Clayer / Popovic / Zarcone, Melâmis-Bayrâmis 1998.
9. ^ These regions remained Ottoman until the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, while "Old Greece", Serbia, the Danubian Principalities, Bulgaria and Bosnia-Herzegovina had already escaped Ottoman domination during the course of the nineteenth century (cf. Mantran, Histoire 1989).
10. ^ Popovic, Un ordre de derviches 1993; idem, La Qâdiriyya 2000; Popovic / Veinstein, Bektachiyya 1995; Clayer, Aux origines 2007.

11. ^ Cf. Popovic, Les derviches balkaniques 1994; Clayer / Popovic / Zarcone, Melâmis-Bayrâmis 1998; Clayer, Tijaniyya 2009.
12. ^ Clayer, Mystiques 1994.
13. ^ Gaborieau / Popovic / Zarcone, Naqshbandis 1990.
14. ^ Karamustafa, God's Unruly Friends 1994.
15. ^ Lifchez, The Dervish Lodge 1992.
16. ^ Hamès, Confréries 1996.
17. ^ Clayer / Popovic, Les Balkans 1995.
18. ^ The expression "ambiguous sanctuaries" was first used by F.W. Hasluck (Hasluck, Christianity 1929).
19. ^ Le Gall, A Culture 2005.
20. ^ Ocak, Sufism 2005.
21. ^ Findley, Social Dimensions 1983.
22. ^ Zarcone, Poétesses 2010.
23. ^ Clayer, La Kadiriyye 2000.
24. ^ In the Albanian mountains in particular the shaykhs would intervene frequently as authorities in order to settle conflicts arising from blood feuds.
25. ^ Müniri Belgradi, Silsilat al-mukarrabîn wa manâkib al-muttakîn ("The chain of men close to God and the *vitæ* of religious men"), Süleymaniyye Library, Şehid Ali Paşa 2819, fol. 21–139.
26. ^ İbrahim Fahreddin Şevki, Envar-ı Hazret-i Nureddîn el-Cerrahî (2 vols), typescript given to the author by the shaykh of the *tekke* of Nureddin Mehmed Cerrahi at Istanbul (Edirne Kapı).
27. ^ These regions were part of the second, or even the third, circle of Ottoman possessions according to Gilles Veinstein's definition (Veinstein, Les provinces balkaniques 1989).
28. ^ The text was edited shortly before or shortly after the death of Sultan Mehmet III (1566–1603) and the accession of his son Ahmet I (ca. 1589–1617), i.e. more than ten years after the beginning of the long war between the Ottomans and the Austrians in Hungary and thus during a period of political, economic and social crisis experienced particularly in the border regions exhausted by military campaigns (Clayer, Les miracles 2000).
29. ^ Clayer, Münîrî Belgrâdî 2002.
30. ^ Cf. Müniri Belgradi, Silsilat, fol. 103b–104b.
31. ^ ibid., fol. 82a ff.
32. ^ It might just simply be coincidental in a Sufi's life. Thus Müniri writes, on the subject of Memi Shah Dernevi: "This dervish was unique in his time and without equal in his spiritual ardour and passion. He went to Arabia, the land of Roum and Hungary and wherever he went he would draw the hearts to him and healed what ailed their spirits. He had disciples at Damascus, in the provinces of Anatolia and Karaman as well as Rumelia." (Müniri Belgradi, Silsilat, fol. 139b, transl. by G.G.).
33. ^ Belgrade was an important overwintering place for the Ottoman army. It was called the Gate of the *jihād*.
34. ^ Müniri Belgradi, Silsilat, fol. 96a.
35. ^ See especially the case of Shaykh Muslihuddin (ibidem, fol. 82ff.).
36. ^ ibid., fol. 94a–95b, 97b–98a, 104b–105a, 114a–114b, 125b–127a.
37. ^ ibid., fol. 80a, 82a, 111b, 114b–115a, 125b–132a (concerning the shaykhs Abdülkerim, Mahmud, Davud and Shemseddin of the Damascus Uveysiyye).
38. ^ This is a treaty on Hanafi Law edited by Ibrahim al-Halabi (d. 1549 in Istanbul)
39. ^ Müniri Belgradi, Silsilat, fol. 97a [transl. by G.G.].
40. ^ There is an extant letter by Mahmud Üsküdarî (d. 1628) addressed to Müniri, and also a letter by Hüseyin Lamekani (d. ca. 1624) together with Müniri's reply (Šabanović, Književnost 1973, pp. 193–201).
41. ^ Müniri Belgradi, Silsilat, fol. 87b, 90b, 103a.
42. ^ Yola, Schejch Nureddin Mehmed Cerrahî 1982.
43. ^ Details and references can be found in Clayer, Mystiques 1994, pp. 192, 202–205, 220–223, 256–259.
44. ^ He was succeeded by his descendants until 1925, the date of the closure of the *tekke* by Mustafa Kemal (1881–1938).
45. ^ Clayer, Life in an Istanbul *tekke* 2003.
46. ^ Zarcone, Mystiques 1993.
47. ^ Silverstein, Sufism 2009. A similar attempt at structuring Sufi brotherhoods was undertaken in Egypt during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see De Jong, Turuq 1978, and Luizard, Le Moyen-Orient 1996).
48. ^ Even so, these organisations did not structure all Sufi networks, and their relationships with the official Islamic institutions were prone to fluctuation (see Popovic, Les ordres mystiques 1986, and Duijzings, Religion 2000, pp. 112–120).
49. ^ It would be recognised as an independent religious community by the new communist regime in 1945.
50. ^ Clayer, L'Albanie 1990, pp. 190–212. In 1929–1930 a great debate started on the subject of the status of the

Bektashi brotherhood, which acquired autonomy only from the official Islamic institutions. In 1945 it was recognised as an independent religious community, especially because certain communist leaders saw it as a national and progressive version of Islam, even a non-religious version of Islam.

51. ^ Clayer, Autorité locale [forthcoming].

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- Ismail Rumi (d. 1643) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/26514654)

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- (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/three-religious-leaders-of-the-bektashiyye-brotherhood?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)
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Link #al

- Ali ibn Abi Talib (c. 600–661) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/44268122) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118846582)

Link #am

- Husayn ibn Ali (626–680) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/89661385) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118982532)

Link #an

- (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/implemets-for-piercing-rituals?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)
  Implemets for Piercing Rituals

Link #ao

- (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/prayer-ritual-at-the-tomb-of-ali?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)
  Prayer Ritual at the Tomb of Abbas Ali

Link #ap

- (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/zikr-ceremony-img?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)

A Zikr Ceremony in Bosnia

Link #aq

- Ali Dede Sigetvari (d. 1598) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/61885520)

Link #ar

- Süleyman I. (c. 1494–1566) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/89743257) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118619993)

Link #as

- Ibn Arabi (1155–1240) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/68930500) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118708511)

Link #at

- Kurd Effendi (d. 1587) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/107297685) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/140623175)

Link #au

- Mustafa Pasha (c. 1511–1580) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/103534566)

Link #av

- Shemseddin Sivasi (1520–1597) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/17456529) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/12463799X)

Link #aw

- (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/expansion-of-the-jerrahiyye-brotherhood-in-the-balkans-in-the-18th-and-19th-centuries?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)
  Expansion of the Jerrahiyye Brotherhood in the Balkans in the 18th and 19th centuries

Link #ax

- Nureddin Mehmed Jerrahi (1678–1721) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/69721014) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118519921)

Link #ay

- Freemasonries, 1850–1935 (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/european-networks/secret-societies/freemasonries-1850-1935/joachim-berger-european-freemasonries-1850-1935)

Link #az

- Vertreibung der Muslime vom Balkan (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/europa-unterwegs/ethnische-zwangsmigration/berna-pekesen-vertreibung-der-muslime-vom-balkan)

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