The Shaping Shaikh

An Ethnographic Inquiry into the Role of the Shaikh in the Adaptation of Naqshbandi Sufism in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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OCMS, Ph.D.

May 2018

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnographic investigation of living Naqshbandi Sufi practitioners in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its epistemology presumes that a nuanced understanding of Islam that recognises complex realities and contradictory perspectives requires an examination of its embodied form. As a result, this research project engaged in a localised analysis of Sufi Muslims by evaluating experiences and practices from their point of view. Following this strategy, two specific communities led by different Shaikhs were identified. Although each Shaikh claimed a shared Naqshbandi origin and was located in a similar traditional, cultural, linguistic and historic milieu, there were considerable manifest dissimilarities ranging from theology, ritual practices and levels of social involvement. In light of the historic evolution of the Shaikh's institutionally established authority in Sufism, this empirical contrast suggested that universal norms, theoretical constructs and traditional principles within a common Bosnian Naqshbandi framework were ultimately subservient to the Shaikh. This thesis argues that while operating within doctrinal continuity and a broadly defined, normative framework, each Shaikh remained free to engender legitimate adaptations that shaped the contours of religious belief and contextualised its application within a contemporary setting. Ultimately, his agency accounted for the notable diversity encountered in the field. The present study thereby underlines the inherent malleability of Sufism and advances the recognition of the Shaikh's cardinal importance. Primarily it adds to empirical studies of Islam through an ethnographic approach that focuses on the role of the Shaikh in Sufism in general and the Naqshbandi in particular.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Middlesex University

May 2018

Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

DECLARATIONS

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed(Candidate)

Date   25/5/ 2018

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote.

Other sources are acknowledged by midnotes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed(Candidate)

Date   25/5 /2018

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if approved, to be available for photocopying by the British Library and for Inter-Library Loan, for open access to the Electronic Theses Online Service (EthoS) linked to the British Library, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organizations.

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Date   25/5 /2018

DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this thesis not to a particular person, but to an idea. In no small terms, this idea encompasses by necessity both humanity and God. As is customary in the writing of dedications, which usually start with the broad and move to the specific, by God I mean the first cause of all existence. He created and now continues to sustain the world, which is filled with human beings that are somehow reflective of His image. Since the majority of this world, in one way or another, aspires to find out something about this God, I propose the following: A sincere commitment to searching out the wonders of humanity will ultimately result in a glimpse of God. In light of this premise, I devote this work to all those who dare to look for that which they seek and value most of all in the face of others.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH

1.1. Introduction

This introductory chapter outlines the overall rationale and relevance of the present empirical investigation of living Sufi practitioners. I will introduce where the study is located and how its central research focus gradually evolved. I identify the fundamental question this thesis aims to address, and highlight the anticipated contribution to scholarship that such an exploration expects to achieve. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of specific limitations and deliberate strategies pursued to overcome them, as well as the logical arrangement of chapters in order to provide a useful map that facilitates a clearer comprehension of the subsequent material.[1]

1.2. Rationale for Research

Imran and I were sitting in a smoky café in downtown Sarajevo.[2] I did not know, at the time, how much cigarette smoke was going to become a constant and unwelcomed companion during my upcoming fieldwork among Sufi practitioners. After lighting another one, he became exceedingly frustrated with me, saying. "You are only going to describe the form in your thesis. You will stop with the allegory. I am alive. I am not a book. You are not experiencing that which I have tried to explain to you. If you really want to write down the truth, you have to actually feel what I am explaining yourself." (DAH#11) He was right, but only partially. There was a real danger of engaging in a mere top-down description of the external, empirically verifiable world of my informant and miss the internal, actual meaning of how he saw the world from his own point of view. This was exactly what I wanted to avoid, and was the initial reason that motivated me to begin this research project in the first place.

Although I was never able to fully experience things as Imran, I wanted to comprehend what he valued and why. Mandaville offers the following insight, "In this sense there is only one Islam, but this does not necessarily have any direct correlation with the lived experience of being (or making oneself to be) a Muslim" (2003: 56). My own experience of sharing life with my Muslim friends taught me that Islam was not a universal category with sufficient

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[1] I have provided a glossary of relevant foreign terms used throughout this thesis, their proper pronunciation and Bosnian transliteration, in Appendix P.

[2] The capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

explanatory power to elucidate the diversity of opinions and practices that I encountered on the ground. Relevant literature confirmed my empirical findings, stating that the multiple, localised forms of Islam necessitated a holistic investigation of those people who put its theoretical tenets into practice (Kreinath 2011: 18). I realised that in order to understand Islam, I first needed to understand people like Imran. This strategy provided an important and necessary alternative starting point where one begins with real human beings, who draw from their traditional religious framework and apply it to their own context (Bowen 2012; Marranci 2008).[3]

As I will explicate further in chapter two, studies of Islam in Europe tend to either generalise its multiform expression, or attempt to define what precisely constitutes European Islam, and thereby limit Islam's inherent universality (Merdjanova 2013: 114; Nielsen 2007: 45). The problem with this approach is that there is no monolith Islamic community, but rather an intricate variety and plural expression under the general umbrella of a universal religious system. In other words, "A living tradition in good order does not imply that all those located within it share identical interpretations of history, present circumstances, or even ends worth pursuing" (Rasanayagam 2013: 115). Consequently, generalising complex realities is inherently reductionistic (Geaves 2009: 20), lacking methodological rigor and accurate explanatory categories. While the proclivity toward macro approaches to the study of religion helps the design of succinct definitions, safely contained within strict boundaries, it ultimately fails in achieving real understanding (Ammerman 2007: 234).

El-Zein rightly noted that, "neither Islam nor the notion of religion exists as a fixed and autonomous form referring to positive content which can be reduced to universal and unchanging characteristics. Religion becomes an arbitrary category, which as a unified and bounded form has no necessary existence. 'Islam' as an analytical category dissolves as well" (1977: 252). Bowen suggested a real need for research at the grassroots level, saying, "Islam is best seen as a set of interpretive resources and practices" (2012: 3). Moreover, since at the heart of practices are human beings, a thorough study of Islam ultimately contains a comprehensive investigation into the lives of people. Precisely for this reason, an exploration of individual Muslim communities in their local context can help unveil the intricate mosaic of

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[3] The word "tradition" is an exceedingly vague concept, usually referring to an idealized and sacred past, which according to the beliefs of the worshiper guarantees that his beliefs and the rituals he is performing have been historically legitimized (Iqtidar 2016: 426 – 427; Rozehnal 2007: 5 – 6; Duderija 2016: 584). Although tradition is elusive, contingent and escaping any clearly demarcated boundaries of definition, it is fundamentally important. Here, I will treat tradition as a collective memory of oral narratives and written sources rooted in the past, acknowledged by individuals and community alike, while remaining fluid, evolving and continuously expanding.

various expressions of Islam. In light of this, my objectives were to identify a distinct Muslim community, investigate its everyday practices and lived faith, and thereby contribute to existing empirical studies an original, localised investigation of contemporary Muslims.

One helpful distinction when it comes to European Islam is Nielsen's classification according to "Old" and "New" Islam (2013: 5). The former is characterized by a long established presence and maturation in Europe,[4] while the latter is largely made up of relatively recent immigration that came predominantly from areas outside Europe. At the time of this research project, I lived in the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina.[5] I purposed to study the lives of Bosnian Muslims, who consider themselves as European Muslims (Merdjanova 2013: 122). Due to their historically long-term presence in Europe, they can be classified under the rubric of old Islam (Kulenović 2012: 263). From my survey of sources, I realised a critical lack of research on Bosnian Muslim lives and practices (Hayden 2007: 105; Bougarel et al. 2007; Cesari 2015: 460 – 469). The scant record of grassroots studies on real life realities and human experiences in general (Henig 2011: 29), and the paucity of ethnography in particular (Bilic 2013: 27), combined with my desire to understand the world from the perspective of others, motivated me to commit to a long-term ethnographic project. I knew that in order to investigate practices and everyday life, an ethnographic approach using fieldwork that combines both systematic data collection through participant observation and diverse layers of interviews would be the most promising approach to attain a valid, explanatory picture of reality. In order to go beyond religion in general, my study investigated localised perspectives of practitioners in their natural setting, "whose voices have elsewhere been sidelined" (Kurtović 2014: 51).

Having narrowed down my methodological strategy, I now needed to establish where I was going to search for answers. My original research question began by investigating the role of love in Islam and how it provided navigation for everyday life.[6] I was interested in this topic both because of my exposure to the "Common Word" movement (Volf et al. 2009)[7] that I studied extensively, and the centrality of love in my own personal spirituality. Moreover, since

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[4] Defining the term "Europe" presents epistemological problems due to shifting borders, pronounced heterogeneity and differing values. Some have understood "Europe" to be more of a metaphor for liberalism, multiculturalism and secular values (Coles 2007: 260). For the purpose of the above illustration, I am looking at a demarcation in terms of borders that frame what is generally understood as Western and Eastern Europe.
[5] I will use the shortened form of Bosnia from here on forward.
[6] For a sample of relevant works, see: (Azdajic 2015; Derin 1999; Lewisohn 2015; Chittick 2013).
[7] This document, originally signed by 138 Muslim dignitaries invited Christians to a dialogue based on the common goal in both religions to love God and one's neighbor. In this thesis I make no attempt to enter into the discussion if Allah and God can be used interchangeably (Volf 2011), rather I consistently use the term God and attempt to employ Allah only when directly quoting my informants or referring to secondary literature.

love in Islam is fundamentally represented in Sufi writings (Derin 1999: 280) and of central importance along the Sufi path (Werbner 2017: 167), I ventured to study love in the practices and lived realities among Bosnian Sufi Muslims. Various schools of thought have tried to define the nature of love as it relates to God and human beings, but because of God's unknowable essence, humanity's inherent limitation of knowledge and love's emotional, inexpressible dimension, the responses have varied significantly (Abdin 2004; Chittick 1989; Griffel 2010). Within the key works the tendency is to either focus on the philosophical and speculative dimensions of love (Chittick 1984), or remain descriptive (Ernst & Lawrence 2002). Therefore, locating love within an epistemological emphasis in terms of practices and human experience promised original insight on this important topic.

Although only a minority of Bosnian Muslims would self-identify as Sufis, or dervishes,[8] the influence of Sufism on the religious inclination, practices and how individuals relate to God notably transcends the demographic scarcity (Biegman 2009; Hazen 2008). Sarajlić explains why Sufis are important:

> They provide necessary links between religious and secular domains, contributing thus to the build-up of group influence in society. Notwithstanding their non-formal nature, the networking potential of these groups is significant since most of their members belong to the higher or upper-middle class with strong links to the country's institutions of power, from political parties to state institutions (2010: 27 – 28).

In other words, in spite of relatively limited numbers, their significance is demonstrable.

Among the various Sufi groups in Bosnia, the Naqshbandi Order dominated the scene (Henig 2011: 227). As one of the officially recognised Sufi Orders (Le Gall 2005; Trimingham 1998), it takes its name from Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389). It quickly spread across the Muslim world and has been characterized by strict adherence to Shariʿah, an intentional political engagement and cooperation with the ruling powers (Nasr 1997b). This is evident today in Bosnia, where besides Mevlevi, Halveti, Qadiri, Hamzevi and Rifa'i, the Naqshbandi are the closest Order to the ʿulamā (Islamic leadership) (Henig 2012). As I investigated my topic further, I discovered a rich representation concerning love in Naqshbandi thought, where, for example, it is written that "the heart is reserved for God and love for him" (Ćehajić 1986: 71 – 72). The contemporary social impact and theological representativeness of the Naqshbandi, the scarcity of comprehensive research on distinct Sufi communities in general

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[8] Bosnian Sufis predominately use the term dervish rather than Sufi or *murid* (disciple, member of a Sufi Order).

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(Dressler et al. 2009: 3) and on Bosnian Sufis in specific (Henig 2014: 753), led me to situate my research question within that particular framework. At this point, I had enough background information to know that in order to accomplish my objective, I needed to identify a succinct representative sample of Bosnian Naqshbandi Sufis and begin my collection of relevant data.[9] After taking into consideration a multiplicity of factors and gaining access to two distinct groups, I began this long-term project. Since I knew precisely how I wanted to approach my research, where I wanted to seek answers and what underlying question I intended to answer, I began gathering various types of data and deeply immersed myself into the communal life of my research participants. As I sought a nuanced and contextualised approach in order to gain insight into the lived realities of my interlocutors, their motivations and conceptualizations of their identity, something unanticipated occurred.

1.3. The Evolution of the Research Question

As my research progressed, my preliminary question that investigated the role of love became increasingly obsolete, since evidence began to mount that love was subordinate and auxiliary to a far more central dynamic in the lives of my informants.[10] Although I previously knew in theory that the Shaikh[11] was an important figure in Sufism, and that absolute submission to him was one of the principal requirements (Lindholm 1998: 214), I was relatively ignorant regarding the degree of significance that his role entailed. He was not only perceived as a spiritual leader, or a "reflection of the Divine" (Kriger & Seng 2005: 779), his pragmatic role in everyday affairs was equally paramount. He taught and expounded upon theological doctrines and was entrusted with the crucial task of leading seekers to God (Ajmal 2009: 241). Similar to the role of the prophet Muhammad who led his followers on the right path, the Shaikh became necessary to provide personal guidance ranging from spiritual disciplines to mundane matters (Silvers-Alario 2003: 84 – 85). In addition, his impact also went beyond the community under his authority and extended into the socio-political domain (Muedini 2015: 27 – 28). The enormity of the Shaikh's influence was indeed surprising, and as my conversations with primary and secondary informants continued to unfold, I became

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[9] I will provide further details of my selection strategy in chapters two and three.

[10] Retaining flexibility during interaction with the data was intentional, since it enabled me to assess the validity and representativeness of the data, which was a key strategy of my methodological approach (O'Reilly 2009: 3).

[11] Due to the centrality and frequency of the term "Shaikh" in this thesis, as well as its common use in secondary literature, I have chosen not to italicize the word, but use it consistently as a proper noun.

increasingly impressed with the reality that it was imperative to follow where the data led and make appropriate adjustments to the research endeavour (Denscombe 2010: 62).

It became critical to redefine the conceptual framework and begin developing a new set of questions. This was especially important in light of my growing understanding of the two research sites I examined. I initially expected to encounter mainly similarities with only minor divergences, since both groups shared a common Bosnian Naqshbandi heritage, culture, tradition, language and spirituality. Consequently, the apparent and multiple dissimilarities that I encountered were unforeseen. Although Buehler makes the following useful comment, "Sufi lineages at any given time are not interconnected networks, since the shaykhs in each individual branch – even in the same city – hardly ever communicate with each other" (2016: 76), the lack of networking did not sufficiently explain the multiple quantitative and qualitative empirical divergences. While the multifaceted nature and flexibility of Sufi Orders is acknowledged, a thorough investigation that provides more specificity and precise justification for its occurrence is lacking, the contrast I observed was wide ranging, and included the external dimension, such as dress, ritual performances, level of societal involvement and cooperation with official leadership structures. It also included the internal dimension, with differing theological interpretations, distinct teaching emphases and disparate leadership methods. Hence, the question of what generated these empirically evident discrepancies became central in my thinking.

Aware that the Naqshbandi were especially noted for the distinct feature that provides the Shaikh with the necessary authority to adapt inherited forms of Sufism (Weismann 2007: 2), my scope became more limited. In addition to increasing observable evidence on the ground, my continuous review of empirically oriented studies that focused on the role of the Shaikh (Pinto 1995; Rozehnal 2007) and theoretical investigations regarding his broader function (Dahnhardt 1999; Muedini 2010; Knysh 2000), required me to realign my priority. My growing assumption was to seek an explanation by investigating the role of the Shaikh, since the enormity of his authority enabled him to make independent decisions that were not simply conforming to an externally established, traditional and unchanging blueprint, but were dependent on his individual choice.

Hence, I began to suspect that it was the Shaikh, who with his own individual characteristics and personal preferences shaped the community under his leadership. If this presumption turned out to have enough evidence for its support, it would have reliable

explanatory power to account for the diversity I observed in the field. Moreover, it would locate the inherent flexibility within Sufism to the agency of the Shaikh. After making necessary adjustments, my provisional argument and evolving exploration during the remainder of research now focused on interrogating the centrality of the Shaikh as the main mechanism behind community formation and adaptation of a perceived single religious tradition to current circumstances. By gaining a detailed understanding of the Shaikh's function through a multi-layered empirical analysis, I anticipated that this would contribute to the relevant literature a more refined comprehension of Sufism in general and the operation of Sufi institutions in particular. Because of this newly defined research objective, I reframed my central question as follows, "To what extent does the Shaikh shape religion and lived realities of Bosnian Naqshbandi Sufi followers and what are the wider implications?" While my study continued in its commitment to grassroots ethnography, I was no longer investigating love, but intended to contribute a new perspective on the role of individual Sufi leaders in the shaping and adaptation of inherited forms of religious tradition.

Consequently, my objective became to advance ethnography of Bosnian Naqshbandi Sufi communities, contribute to the study of Muslim life-worlds in their natural context, and explore their experiences, meanings and select practices from their point of view. In this way, I aspired to discover insights that would enhance a comprehensive understanding of the mosaic of religious expressions and thereby provide a more nuanced, alternative narrative. Fundamentally, this thesis evaluates the role of the Shaikh and the extent of his ability to appropriate Naqshbandi Sufism in the Bosnian context. While Shaikhs operate within doctrinal boundaries, the degree of influence to effect change manifestly requires further investigation. As a result, an in-depth empirical study of the Shaikh's function promises to add new layers of understanding and generate important knowledge regarding his overall role in organised Sufism, while contextually focusing on the Naqshbandi Order in particular.

1.4. Research Limitations

Any investigative project, and especially in qualitative, empirical research, is subject to intrinsic limitations, and a fully exhaustive representation of complex truth is fundamentally restricted. I was continuously aware of the paradoxical dynamic where I understood from the literature that one of the justifiable criticisms of ethnography is its limited scope (Moore 2010: 90), but at the same time I was nearly overwhelmed by the evolving amount of material that needed to be categorized and analysed. This became especially acute when during analysis I

needed to make definitive decisions on what to include and exclude in the final writing of this thesis. Although my selection was deliberately aiming to attain the highest possible representativeness of the actual data, it ultimately retained a level of subjectivity. Another challenge to overcome was to maintain balanced objectivity during the rigours of fieldwork (O'Reilly 2009: 43), ongoing reflexivity and an appropriate level of distance, while simultaneously preserve good relationships, remain vulnerable and actively participate to gain more accurate impressions. Frustration, a reduced ability to control the variables and the fluctuating willingness of informants to participate in interviews, continued throughout the process. Not being an insider also restricted the absolute genuineness of my observations (Rock 2001: 32), affirming that some level of subjectivity is unavoidable. While I pursued strategies to overcome particular insufficiencies, maintain awareness and a critical attitude, which I discuss in chapter three, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that even the most deliberate, long-term project can only attain modest success.

1.5. Chapter Overview

I have purposively organised this thesis into eight distinct chapters. After establishing the general scene and principal research question in the introduction, chapter two develops the background framework for where the investigation was situated. I first provide justification for the need to contribute original ethnographic studies on Muslim communities and the apparent gaps in that field in general and Bosnia in specific. Next, I offer a broad look at unique aspects of Bosnian Islam, its organisational dimension and defining characteristics. I then narrow my focus to investigate relevant literature and existing studies on Sufism, the Naqshbandi Order and its influence and significance in its Bosnian context. I particularly identify and succinctly introduce the importance of the Shaikh, who will increasingly become the focus of this study. After outlining the overall framework of this research and introducing my particular setting, I then turn to the specific methodological strategy that served as the foundation for the project.

In order to achieve the desired collection and analysis of valid primary data, it is necessary to choose the most appropriate methodological framework. Chapter three, consequently overviews my foundational philosophical commitment and methodological reasoning, demonstrating evidence for the deliberate choice of ethnography as the most promising strategy to attain my objective. After establishing the theoretical basis for my approach, I give a detailed account of the multiple methods employed to generate reliable and representative data from a variety of sources to achieve the highest possible epistemic value.

These diverse data sets constituted the central framework for the subsequent transcription, analysis and interpretation. This chapter also serves to present specific challenges that emerged and strategies pursued to overcome them. I also reveal the deliberate manner of how I engaged in a continuous self-reflexive process and show my ethical positionality. The aim of the overall discussion is to demonstrate the way this research was systematically carried out and evaluated.

While the preceding material identified the "where" and "how" of the investigation, chapters four through seven engage critically with original material, where diverse layers of evidence include interviews, personal observation, field notes and relevant secondary literature. Chapter four sets the stage for the location of each research community by giving a comprehensive assessment of the actual scene on the ground. I provide introductory material on the physical setting, organisational structure and pertinent biographical data regarding the Shaikh of each community. By presenting contextualised detail, I aim to highlight specific contrasting examples between the two groups. The cumulative effect of the evidence presented, indicates that due to his personal background, inclination and individual choice, the Shaikh is the one who initiates the empirical diversity in the respective communities under his authority.

Chapter five continues to develop the central importance of the institution of the Shaikh as it historically evolved during Islamic history, and looks at the dominant legitimizing factors that established the validity of the role. I purposively locate the sequence of this examination at this point and not at the end of the thesis in order to establish the basis upon which the Shaikh's authority is founded, before continuing to explore specific ways in which this authority is manifested. Throughout this section, I evaluate primary evidence from the field in light of pertinent secondary literature. After reviewing objections and criticisms regarding the office of the Shaikh, my analysis then interrogates the critical prominence of follower legitimization as one of the key factors that validate the Shaikh's claims. I discuss specific ways by which a relationship between the Shaikh and disciples is established, highlighting that the direct consequence of its inauguration results in the Shaikh's authority to profoundly influence most aspects of the lives of his disciples. This level of authority offers an important explanation as to why he is able to shape the community under his domain. The goal of this chapter is to emphasise the significance of the Shaikh in Sufism and highlight the need for further concrete explorations and insights regarding his ability to initiate creative adaptation of an established Sufi tradition.

Building on the evolving evidence, in chapter six I analyse salient features of the inner, theological and theoretical leadership strategy of each Shaikh. Although I demonstrate the presence of some overlapping similarities regarding general categories, my deeper examination underlines significant dissimilarities pertaining to pedagogical emphases, theological interpretation and methods of spiritual guidance that were critical in determining the life of the community. I point out that these contrasting choices pertaining to the theological orientation were largely a matter of personal preference and independent from any theoretically established, rigid Naqshbandi principles. At the end of the Chapter, I systematically arrange the most relevant divergent concepts into a succinct thematic table, which illustrates the major points of difference between the two Shaikhs and highlights the significance of their fundamental individual agency in bringing about such diversity.

I then expand on the evidence presented in chapter seven, which investigates the outer, performative and socio-political dimension. I begin by presenting difficulties of determining a representative definition that ought to characterize the essentials of the Naqshbandi Order, challenging the assumption that strict normative frameworks are firmly established and commonly upheld. The analysis shows that it is ultimately the Shaikh who defines what a Naqshbandi is, and by implication the identity of his followers. I continue by assessing two central Sufi ritual practices, which demonstrate remarkable divergent choices by each individual Shaikh. Although the contrast is predominantly empirical and primarily relates to the form of the ritual, by implication it also advances additional understanding regarding the beliefs behind the decision of what ought to constitute a proper religious manifestation. The evaluation concludes with a comparative exploration of the disparate social and transnational involvement of each respective leader. The analysis of the data serves to assess the role of the Shaikh in the selection and appropriation of distinct factors that ultimately affect the community. The collective evidence suggests that each individual Shaikh comprises the main mechanism that accounts for the shaping and adaptation of Naqshbandi Sufism in Bosnia.

The progressive integration of the overall data and its original contribution to advancing a more comprehensive understanding of Sufism, particularly as it relates to the function of the Shaikh, constitutes the objective in the concluding chapter. I intend to evaluate all of the material that interrogated the extent of the Shaikh's agency to shape the contours of the religious community under his leadership, and determine the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments that were presented during the course of this study. My goal is to summarize and

review relevant scholarship and its strategic engagement with Sufi adaptability in light of the Shaikh's role in its inauguration. This approach consequently aims to locate the distinct contribution of my particular research within the wider field. The section concludes by offering a sample of relevant suggestions for possible further research endeavours. Having introduced the thesis, I now continue by establishing the specific background context of where the present research was located.

2. CHAPTER TWO: THE RESEARCH BACKGROUND

2.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to present the background within which the thesis is located. I begin by demonstrating why I principally decided to investigate Muslims rather than Islam. After establishing the philosophical framework and rationale for choosing an ethnographic approach, I then situate my inquiry in the context of Islam in its Bosnian expression. I highlight unique features of Bosnian Islam and discuss particularities that are useful for contextualising this study.[12] Due to the objective of my research to examine the role of Shaikhs, I then outline a general overview of Sufism, its specific manifestation and relevance in Bosnia and salient elements of the Naqshbandi Order in particular. The chapter ends with an overall introductory presentation of the Shaikh's central importance, seeking to provide initial evidence for why this matter comprised the focal point of the present study.

2.2. The Study of Islam as the Study of Human Beings

During my interview with Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, a widely respected Bosnian intellectual, he emphatically claimed that, "Islam never came to Bosnia. Muslims did. For Islam cannot walk, because Islam does not have legs." (DAOI#13)[13] His statement had a profound impact on me, which only increased when I found it corroborated by secondary literature, "Islam does not brush its teeth. Islam does not take a shower. Islam eats nothing. And perhaps most importantly for our consideration, Islam *says* nothing. *Muslims* do" (Safi 2011: 22).[14] This realisation sparked my interest to search out living voices, go beyond texts and investigate what in fact Muslims say.

Increasingly, scholars have noted the insufficiency of looking at Islam as an abstract monolith, but rather a lived religion that is performed by individuals in specific localities best understood by studying practices and how these inform experiences and meanings of Muslim everyday lives (Marranci 2008; Varisco 2005; Bowen 2012; Boddy & Lambek 2013). It is

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[12] Some authors use the expression "Bosnian Islam" with reservation (Karić 2002), emphasising that Islam is a universal concept and should not be qualified by a geographical description. A better term for Bosnian Islam would be to call it the "Islamic tradition of Bosnian Muslims" (Cesari 2015: 435), but since the term "Bosnian Islam" frequently appears in the literature, I will likewise apply this phraseology.

[13] Professor of applied physics at Sarajevo University, philosopher and author. For more details on the background of all secondary informants included in this research, and how I strategically identified the epistemic validity of their voices, see Appendix B.

[14] Unless otherwise indicated, when italics appear in direct quotations, emphasis is the author's.

crucial to avoid a simplistic, one-dimensional view of a complex reality, and not present Muslims as passive agents whose actions, moral concerns, experiences and narratives about the world are strictly shaped by a theologically "unified system" (Ahmad 2012: xiii). This approach does not intend to derogate the role of doctrine for it is important in shaping religious practices, but it highlights that the reverse is also true. Practice and doctrine mutually inform and transform one another (Mitchell 2010: 617 – 620). Consequently, it is necessary to contribute to an understanding of how Muslims put their religious beliefs into practice and what it means to them (Varisco 2005: 141).

A survey of studies on Islam in Europe reveals a preoccupation with integration and Islam's compatibility with Western values (Cesari 2015; Hellyer 2009; Karić 2002). There is a significant imbalance in research areas, where predominant emphasis is placed on macro realities, which reduce Islam to a set of creeds and symbols, issues of Islamophobia and Islam's ability to adapt (Ramadan 2013; Cesari 2009). There has also been a negative tendency in both popular and academic discussions regarding Islam toward generalisations that remove thoughtful nuances and, more importantly, the human element. The paradoxical result has actually made integration increasingly difficult (Ramadan 2013: 8), intensified Muslim discrimination (Allawi 2009: 180 – 185) and failed to address Islamophobia (Shryock 2010). This approach has added little to apprehend the multifaceted nature of Islam in its diverse manifestations. These challenges are not surprising due to the political and popular climate in Europe that uncritically accepts "old myths and fabrications" (Geaves 2005: 33). To overcome this unhelpful cycle, it is imperative to view Islam not primarily as a universal system in a theoretical and doctrinal sense, but in its real expression through the lives of human beings. This can help to explain Islam's heterogeneity by consulting actual believers and learn from their point of view. It is with this conviction that I set out to study Islam's embodiment by living Muslim communities, in order to attain a clearer understanding of Islam itself.

Anthropological work among Muslims suggests that religion in general, and Islam in particular, is more than a system of principles, formal doctrines and community affiliation (Sunier 2012; el-Aswad 2012). Assumptions about Islam have further been challenged by the array of beliefs, localised particularities and different emphases of practising the faith. Even though doctrinally prescribed obligations are the same across the global spectrum of Islam, local varieties and a diversity of individual application continue to highlight its complexity (Rasanayagam 2013: 113). Islam as a religion is really about morals, decency, personal and

communal experience, identity and especially meaning making practices (Carter & Norris 1996; Dijk & Bartels 2012; Pedersen 2014). Moral and experiential legitimization can sometimes even override theological norms. Being a Muslim might require certain "Islamic practices" (Ibrahimpasic 2012: 362 – 363), but it also may suffice to believe that one belongs to a traditional community without much practice at all (Jeldtoft 2011: 1146).

Hence, Muslims do not always behave Islamic, and in order to come to a comprehensive understanding of Islam, a different strategy is required. By suspending, while not abolishing, Islam as a universal category and focusing on human beings in their local context who are making sense of their everyday world through an Islamic lens, a more nuanced picture ought to emerge. Coleman puts it well, "The rendering both immanent and unbound of Islam helps us to disrupt the ultimately static assumptions about the workings of culture that lies behind the notion of Islam as 'blueprint for social life'" (2013: 251). It is therefore my epistemological position that the study of Islam must ultimately include an empirical investigation of the lives of its adherents.

Islam is remarkably diverse and shaped in different ways in various places and one of the fundamental goals throughout this thesis is to discover possible reasons behind such diversity. Who or what shapes Islam and how are everyday habits and religious performances adapted within an Islamic paradigm? Ammerman, for instance, affirms the inherent, natural dynamism within religion, where "religious traditions and autonomous individual choosers have created a dynamic religious culture in which official religious views and practices are shaped into everyday strategies of action" (2007: 12). However, she does not provide explanatory specificity regarding the mechanism behind its inauguration. If creative individuals are actively adapting a religious blueprint for their own context, how is that possible in the confines of a supposedly uniform, traditional system and what are the resulting implications? By what authority do these agents transform and contextualise Islam without trespassing normative boundaries? To address these questions appropriately, it is important to situate them in a particular research setting.

2.3. Islam in Bosnia

The gap in the social sciences regarding grassroots studies of Muslim communities is explicitly highlighted in the context of Muslims in Bosnia (Henig 2012: 753). Due to its relative isolation from Western scholarship, and its own internal sociological challenges, Bosnia in

general and Islam in specific have a scant anthropological research record (Ibrahimpasic 2012: 27).[15] Such studies have been marginalized by the local Academy (Kurtović 2014: 1) and existing structures are not favourable for indigenous researchers to contribute (Bougarel et al. 2007: 18).[16] Current literature reveals the predominance of a top-down approach which focuses on religious identity, nationalism and post-war reconciliation (Cesari 2015: 430). Buchowski argued that anthropological research in Eastern Europe in general has been completely marginalized (2012: 29). Work that has been done, has reasserted the immense value of studies that reveal insider perspectives and highlight a more comprehensive understanding of important issues (Hayden 2007: 126 – 127; Henig & Bielenin-Lenczowska 2013: 2 – 3). Nevertheless, the role of Islam in everyday life in Bosnia remains a neglected field (Bringa 2002: 24). While there is a clear lack of research, Bosnian Muslims offer a worthwhile opportunity for an in-depth examination from the bottom up (Henig & Bielenin-Lenczowska 2013: 8), where everyday experiences and meanings behind religious practices are explored. So, who are Bosnian Muslims?

Bosnian Muslims are autochthonous Europeans who largely identify Islam with European multicultural values (Carter & Norris 1996: 54; Cesari 2014: 433; Moe 2007: 374), and often self-identify as both European and Muslim (Bringa 1995: 6 – 7). Although increasingly feeling forgotten and disenchanted by Western Europe (Abazović 2012: 163), most Bosnian Muslims still consider themselves as firmly located in Europe as their home, believing that their future depends on European integration (Moe 2007: 394; Sarajlić 2010: 3). Due to their long experience of living in Europe, the issue of integrating Islam with a secular government has been less of a problem for Bosnian Muslims than immigrant communities. Some have proposed that Bosnian Islam can be viewed as a "symbol of European Islam" (Bougarel 2007: 96). While Leaman disagrees and makes no categorical distinction between Bosnian Muslims and other Muslim communities in Europe (2012: 8 – 11), Roy paints a rather positive picture, saying that the, "Muslims of the Balkans could bring their rich and diversified living experiences, strengthened by their credentials of being both loyal citizens and true believers to the new generation of European Muslims, a generation that is looking for models

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[15] There are only a handful, albeit excellent anthropological studies relating to Bosnian Muslims in the pre-war period. See for example (Lockwood 1975; Bringa 1995; Sorabji 1989).
[16] My survey of anthropological research in Bosnia during the last two decades shows that it has primarily been conducted by Western scholars. See for example: (Doubt 2014; Sorabji 2006; Kolind 2008; Funk-Deckard 2012; Maček 2011; Helms 2013). Notable exceptions by Bosnian scholars include (Abazović 2012; Spahić-Šiljak 2010), as well as (Bilic 2013; Ibrahimpasic 2012), albeit the latter two scholars earned their degrees outside Bosnia and do not reside in the country.

that neither its forefathers nor the country of their ancestors could provide" (2015: 251). Other authors highlight the progressive status of women (Helms 2008: 103), the advanced intellectual life of Bosnian Muslims (Macháček 2007: 427), a culture of tolerance and modernity (Lederer 2001: 25 – 27) and a highly organised, nationwide Islamic authority structure (Alibašić 2007: 8 – 9). In spite of these, Bosnian Muslims have rarely entered mainstream European academic discussions and continue to be marginalized (Helms 2008: 91).

Due to the loss of political control by the Ottoman Empire in 1878 (Karčić 2010: 522), two World Wars with tumultuous geopolitical consequences, a long history of Communism (1948 – 1992) and its resulting secularization (Fazlic 2012: 314), Islam in Bosnia tends to be practised less widely, and is moderate, tolerant and mild (Tottoli 2014: 82; Kolind 2008: 195). The protracted period of non-Muslim domination with varying levels of intensity in persecution and government control, shaped the character of Islam in Bosnia. Merdjanova explains, "The experience of living under tight political constraints in largely secularized societies marked in important ways the modes of development of Islam in the Balkans in the second half of the twentieth century" (2013: 117). Politically speaking, Bosnia continues to be a democratic country, where separation between religion and state is welcomed by a majority of Muslim intellectual leaders and ordinary believers in the country (Dijk & Bartels 2012: 473 – 474). In spite of relegating religion to the private sphere, the current trend of Islam in Bosnia indicates a movement towards reversing secularization and a revival of religious adherence.

This enthusiasm for practising Islam began during the war of 1992 – 1995, where Muslims were forced to defend their religious and national identity and thereby rediscovered their faith (Maček 2011: 171 – 172; Fine 2002: 20 – 21). After the war, religion continued to move from the private to the public life. From the proliferation of Islamic literature to a high percentage of children receiving Islamic religious education, Islam is now highly visible in the country (Macháček 2007: 404). This has led to a significantly higher religious commitment and the public practice of prescribed obligations by Bosnian Muslims (Mesarič 2017: 593). Abazović points out that motivation for religiosity can range from pure motivations to pragmatic ones (2012: 168 – 171). Being seen at a mosque can have politically beneficial consequences for some people, while for others prayer can fulfil the deep longings of their heart. This relatively new religious conscience is not necessarily reflected in an adherence to the required ritual prescriptions. As a whole, Bosnian Muslims remain more liberal regarding regular daily prayers, the consumption of alcohol, premarital sex and other Islamic laws when

compared to Muslims from Turkey, Pakistan or the Arabian Peninsula (Cesari 2015: 460).

Although the relaxed implementation of religious duties by some Muslims is in stark contrast to a growing trend of Islamic revivalism and high religious observation by certain groups, this variety of individual devoutness is one of the common characteristics of Bosnian Islam (Funk-Deckard 2012: 95 – 96). Living in a secular country with religious liberty provides believers the freedom to follow their faith or not. In spite of mounting societal and cultural pressure, some choose to be Muslim in name only and disregard the required practices. Faith tends to be a matter of individual choice, resulting in a rather secularized adherence to Islam. The return to religion, or the return of religion into the public sphere, has assuredly had a profound effect on certain segments of the population. Nevertheless, regardless of the level of participation, Bosnian Muslims consider themselves as true believers even when neglecting religious requirements (Kolind 2008: 230 – 232; Ibrahimpasic 2012: 29, 269).

2.3.1. Competing Voices

Another dynamic that has characterized the last two decades of Islamic revivalism has been the emergence of competing voices trying to define Bosnian Islam. Having a better sense of their own Muslim identity and the support they received during and after the war by their Muslim brethren worldwide, Bosnians have increasingly felt less isolated from transnational Islamic communities (Rucker-Chang 2014: 157 – 158). They now consider themselves as rightful members and contributors to a wider discourse (Alibašić 2005: 4). Young Bosnian scholars who received their education abroad brought new ideas back to their home country (Merdjanova 2013: 54). Moreover, foreign donors from Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia have invested money into reconstruction, and are now vying for the legitimate right to interpret how Islam ought to be practised by Bosnians (Fazlic 2012: 194 – 180).

Henig expresses the ensuing struggle for doctrinal supremacy as follows, "Such an environment of competing discourses on religious authority; (dis)continuity of practice, and debating as to which Islamic tradition is 'correct', let multiple discursive frameworks emerge into which people might locate their narratives on what it means to be a good Muslim today" (2011: 233). The competition for what constitutes true Islam in Bosnia is ongoing, revealing a dynamism and fluidity that makes it impossible to reduce it to a uniform interpretation of Islam (Schlesinger 2011: 6). The Islamic leadership takes pride in permitting such discussions and variances of opinion (Alibašić 2007: 6). Although the tension is real, it does not undermine the

fundamental culture and tradition that ordinary believers have held for centuries. In spite of the multiplicity of voices and intellectual debates, local believers sternly refuse foreign imposition on their traditional practice of Islam. This is clearly demonstrated in the example of Salafi groups who have been unsuccessfully trying to establish their own normative practices and ideological interpretation of Islam in Bosnia (Sarajlić 2010: 21).

These groups have publicly criticized the way Bosnians practise Islam and have declared the Muslim leadership as illegitimate. They have also disrupted the Ottoman style mosques by introducing Saudi architecture, resulting in strong, even violent resistance by the local population (Raudvere & Stenberg 2009: 55 – 56). Locals criticize Salafi behaviour as odd and inappropriate, making them the most effective opponents to Salafi ideas (Mesarić 2015: 109). Their staunch resistance is not solely based on doctrinal grounds, but is primarily concerned with cultural appropriateness, local customs and traditions. Even in the case of the culturally closer Turkish version of Islam, there are elements both accepted and rejected by Bosnian Muslims (Göle 2013: 253 – 254).[17] Political, social and humanitarian narratives all play important roles, but when it comes to tradition and custom, Bosnian Muslims proudly protect their own form of Islam. Although local Islam trumps foreign expressions, it is too simplistic to suggest that there is an overall local versus foreign dynamic, forging a clearly defined bulwark against foreign ideas. A more meticulous approach recognises the existence of fluidity, complex ideologies and multiple expressions best understood in a study of everyday lives of believers (Roy 2015: 244 – 245).

2.3.2. The Bosnian Islamic Leadership

In addition to local believers defending their culture, folk practices and established customs, the Islamic Community (IC)[18] defines Bosnian Islam on an institutional and constitutional level. Established in 1882, the IC is one of the most highly organised Islamic authority structures in Europe, and is the definitive voice for all matters of faith and practice among Muslims in Bosnia and the Diaspora. Most of the mosques in the country, religious education, interpretation of Shariʿah and administrative duties are under the monopoly of the

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[17] Some authors have wrongly overemphasised the extent of Turkish influence in the Balkans, often neglecting the complexity on the ground (Rucker-Chang 2014; Solberg 2007). Nevertheless, among the competing voices, although Turkey is evidently the most influential foreign player in the region (Öktem 2012: 53), the Bosnian Islamic leadership ultimately controls its impact.

[18] Henceforth I will use the acronym IC when referring to the institutional, authoritative body on behalf of all Bosnian Muslims in Bosnia and in the Diaspora.

IC (Sarajlić 2010: 17 – 18). It successfully ratified, protected and developed a Bosnian Muslim identity over the last several generations (Alibašić 2007: 7 – 8). The IC regulates and legitimizes the activities of Sufi Orders (Karčić 2015: 250), organises and oversees all major public Islamic manifestations, selects new Imams and approves the construction of new mosques (Henig 2014: 137). Raudvere gives an excellent definition of the IC:

> The Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini) is an administrative body with the responsibility for organising public Muslim life. It has throughout all political changes remained the national structure for control. The first article of its statutes define Islamic Community as 'the sole and United community of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Bosnian Muslims outside their homeland, and of other Muslims will accept it as their own'. In other words, it is intended to oversee all activities taking place in the name of Islam in the country (2011: 5).

In spite of its positive contribution, the IC has also been criticized for being overly political and favourable toward state-sponsored nationalistic agendas (Elbasani 2015: 8). Its powerful presence and alliance with ordinary believers that guard their local traditions, has ensured a perpetuation of the distinct expression of Islam in Bosnia. Karić sums it up as follows, "Our Bosnian Muslim identity is subject to many dangers. The way to preserve it lies not in aping outside models, be they from East or West, but in the promotion of traditional Bosnian values and in nurturing the forms of Islam that have existed here for centuries" (1998: 134).

2.3.3. Distinct Features of Bosnian Islam

Besides being rooted within Europe, Islam in Bosnia also evolved from its own context. Although Islam is universal, it is also shaped by locality, historical and cultural contexts (el-Aswad 2012: 5). The same is true for Islam in Bosnia. On one hand, it derives its normative doctrine and religious identity from the conventional religion itself, while on the other, the local environment and tradition contextualises and modifies the form Islam takes (Mahmutćehajić 2000: 10). That is why it is possible to locate within universal Islam the expression of Bosnian Islam with its unique distinctions. In summary, Bosnian Islam is Sunni Islam of the Maturidi theological orientation in matters of doctrine, the Hanafi School of law and certain institutionally approved Sufi Orders. Other elements include the incorporation and reinterpretation of specific pre-Islamic practices, such as public prayers on specific days of the solar calendar, pilgrimage sites, as well as reformist and modernist trends in interpreting Islamic theology (Karcic 2010; Alibašić 2007: 3 – 4). Most importantly, Bosnian Muslims feel they have a distinct form of Islam and a unique Muslim identity (Henig 2012: 754).

Another key feature of Bosnian Islam is its maturation and emergence from its historic context in the Ottoman Empire as a border province (Karic 1998: 130). After the collapse of the Empire, many Muslims remained in Bosnia, showing their allegiance to Bosnia rather than the Empire itself (Brown 1996: 10). Development in its local setting also meant that Bosnian Muslims shared space with non-Muslim neighbours. Bringa writes, "Yet, Bosnian Muslim identity cannot be fully understood with reference to Islam only, but has to be considered in terms of a specific Bosnian dimension which for Bosnian Muslims has implied sharing a history and locality with Bosnians of other non-Islamic religious traditions" (1995: 231). This religious heterogeneity and long tradition of religious coexistence has had a profound impact on how Islam evolved (Mulalic 2014: 48; Lockwood 2009: 11). Elements of heterogeneity can be observed in the syncretistic adaptation of local traditions and folklore that have been reinterpreted within an Islamic framework, such as harvest prayers, specific pilgrimages and grave visitations (Henig 2011: 30; Karic 1998; Brown 1996: 88 – 92).[19] Prior to the recent war, Bosnians from all religious backgrounds took pride in congratulating, and sometimes attending, the religious holidays of other faith communities. Funk described this as the "Bosnian spirit" (2012: 101). Although this peaceful coexistence between religious groups has decreased in recent years, it nevertheless has influenced the character of Bosnian Islam.

After the official conquest of Bosnia in 1463, Muslim missionaries permitted locals to keep their language and some religious customs, which were reinterpreted and given an Islamized frame (Lopasic 1994: 176). For those who became Muslims, it was more a matter of adaptation than conversion. One example of such syncretism is the pre-Islamic custom of praying for rain in hope of a fertile agricultural year (Rujanac 2013: 121). Petković unpacks this as follows:

> It is certain that Islam has acquired certain specific characteristics in Bosnia, adjusting itself to existing customs, and mentality. Even the religious ceremonies are typically Bosnian in some regions, as shown by the manner in which prayers are performed, the attitude towards the dead and burial ceremonies… Sometimes, earlier holidays were replaced by Islamic ones. New names were given to them, while the contents remained almost the same (1985: 22).

Like any other religious tradition, Islam adopted a number of elements from former religions, and by reinterpreting and appropriating new meanings to these traditions, made them its own. Customs themselves are void of religious identity until practitioners imbue meaning to their

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[19] The need for Muslim intellectuals to retrospectively work through issues of legitimizing these customs has not gone unnoticed (Alibašić 2007: 8).

performance. This approach helped the creation of a new Islamic identity in Bosnia, aided the contextualisation of Islam to Bosnian conditions and assured its successful longevity.[20] Besides locality and religious adaptation, the geopolitical dimension and its influence on identity have also been important mechanisms for shaping a Bosnian form of Islam.

The complex evolution of Bosnian Muslims from a religious community to one that is identified in an ethnic and national sense has been studied extensively (Bašić 2009). During the time of Yugoslavia and Tito's regime, a decision was made in 1961 to declare Muslims an ethnically separate group, which in 1974 became constitutionally formalized where being Muslim was a recognised nationality (Poulton 2000: 54). Kukavica argues that Bosnian Muslims are distinct in the sense that their religion and nationality are synonymous (2012:10).[21] Consequently, the identity of Bosnian Muslims became independent from beliefs and practices. Belonging to Islam was now established by ethnicity, which permitted a person to be an atheist, and yet remain a Muslim in a national and ethnic sense (Sarajlić 2010: 7 – 9).

One example of this politicization of religion can be observed at the annual pilgrimage to Ajvatovica in central Bosnia (Bringa & Henig 2017: 83-97). Although performed for religious reasons for over five hundred years, today this pilgrimage is not only spiritual in nature, but also a project to unify Muslims in their national identity and provide a venue for the rhetoric of Islamic victory over other groups. Rujanac explains, "The celebration of Ajvatovica over time shows that the construction of identity – national as well as religious – is a process of nationalization of religion and consecration of the nation" (2013: 133). In other words, Islam in Bosnia encompasses not only religion, but also ethnicity and national belonging. A multiplicity of factors have evidently shaped the Bosnian expression of Islam, but more than any other single factor it was Sufism that influenced the development, expansion and its implementation. Hence, I aim to provide a brief overview of Sufism in general and locate its specific manifestation in the Bosnian context.

2.4. An Overview of Sufism

Sufism is an important phenomenon that plays an eminent role in most Muslim cultures, able to touch lives and provide for the spiritual needs of both highly educated and ordinary

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[20] For examples of contextualisation studies in Islam historically and theologically see: (Lee 2015; Murata 1992).
[21] This dynamic of religion and nationality being inseparable has caused challenges and has been largely negative (Clayer & Bougarel 2013: 192 – 197), where spirituality is used for political and personal gain, resulting in Bosnian Muslims defending their identity through nationalistic and political debates (Maček 2011: 172 – 173).

Muslims (Biegman 2009: 8; Knysh 2000: 174).[22] Since the genesis of Islam, Sufism has been able to renew the inner meaning of Islam and adapt its teaching to varied contexts (Baldick 2012: 174 – 177). Sufism is fundamentally rooted in the the Qur'an and Islamic tradition (Taji-Farouki 2007: 8). Sufis assert that its origin goes back to the Prophet Muhammad (Salvatore 2016: 78 – 80). Its widespread influence suggests that the majority of Muslims have had some formal or informal encounter with its practices and teachings (Shepard 2014: 187). Furthermore, there is a resurgent trend of Sufism globally, where Sufis have taken an active role in the revival of religious activity and spiritual commitment (Foley 2008: 523). Heck suggests that Sufism had an influential impact on the construction of culture and religious expression of Islam during the establishment of Muslim societies (2007: 158). Depending on the socio-political circumstances, Sufis might have been ignored, oppressed or honoured by the ruling authorities (Anjum 2016: 95), but they typically received respect and admiration by ordinary Muslims for their religious commitment and moral standards (Gačanović 2014: 13).

Sufis have also had a tremendous impact in the West (Acim 2018: 66).[23] Sufism is not only attractive and influential, it is also shaped and renegotiated by Western values and culture (Milani & Possamai 2016). The historic ability of Sufism to adapt to localised contexts, has prompted Draper to name the phenomenon "European Sufism" (2002: 218). An in-depth analysis of social media, which reveals an enormous Sufi presence, has proven that some Sufi groups exhibit elements of postmodernism, New Age and non-Islamic trends (Piraino 2015). The peculiar non-insistence on a relationship to Islam by certain Sufi groups (Weismann 2014: 280), an emphasis on tolerance, love and peace has made Sufism exceedingly attractive to both disillusioned Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Küçük 2008: 293). Such groups are by no means the majority, but their existence under a Sufi umbrella reveals Sufism's inherent creativity in implementing contextual modifications (Awn 2013: 255).

The multiple manifestation of Sufism highlights the need for more in-depth, empirical investigations into the sources responsible for generating such diversity. Werbner suggests that Sufism's flexibility requires a particular approach and method of analysing these apparent variations, saying, "Broadly speaking, charting the differences and similarities between Sufi

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[22] Some scholars from the Orientalist tradition dismissed Sufism as a marginal folk Islamic phenomenon, arguing that Sufism was dying and in decline (Le Gall 2003: 88). This position has been dismantled in recent years by studies showing that Sufism was thriving, vibrant and permeating most Muslim societies around the world (Bruinessen 2009: 134 – 134; Howell & Bruinessen 2013: 6).
[23] Sedgwick concludes in his research that Sufism has had a long historic presence in the West, both borrowing philosophical ideas and lending their own (2016: 249-262). Other studies have demonstrated that Sufis have significantly impacted the cultural development of Islamic practices in America (Hermansen 2000; Hazen 2012).

Orders as embodied traditions requires attention *beyond* mystical-philosophical and ethical ideas, to *the ritual performances and religious organisational patterns* that shape Sufi Orders and cults in widely separated locations" (2014: 283). Her aim to go beyond theory to an investigation of living communities is the intended strategy of this research. However, this thesis aims to go beyond the vague notion of "charting the differences" and merely acknowledging the general existence of Sufism's creative adaptability. Rather, it seeks to discover interpretive justification for its occurrence.

Although interest in research on Sufism has gradually increased (Malik & Hinnells 2006), much work needs to be done (Bennett 2012: 1). The predominant emphasis of recent studies on Sufism engages with Sufi philosophy, theological tractates and mystical poetry, while largely ignoring experiential and organisational dimensions in the real-life realities of countless Sufi Muslims (Geaves 2005: 120). Rozehnal points out that both Islamicists and social scientists tend to interpret Sufism through a reductionist lens, which leads to gross oversight of its multifaceted nature (2007: 13). There is a need to study Sufism as a lived religion, practised by real human beings, and not solely through a philosophical and abstract approach that predominantly examines textual data. Salvatore writes, "The advantage of the orientation to piety of organised Sufism, compared to the scholarship of theologians and philosophers, consisted in the fact that Sufis anchored their spiritual claims within ritualized collective practices that facilitated building intersubjective connectedness…" (2009: 24). Sufism is not a thing to be examined, or an idea removed from actual reality. Instead, understanding Sufism requires going beyond philosophy and text to the engagement with its embodied form as it is expressed through real people in an actual place and time (Rozehnal 2007: 14). While an understanding of the foundational theological underpinnings of Sufism is necessary, researchers are also called to observe and participate alongside Sufi practitioners, who can provide a living interpretation of theoretical texts and ideas.

Sufis have for centuries shared the good news that there is a path that leads to God (Kukavica 2011: 137), and that it is possible to restore the spiritual link (Zelkina 2000: 98). In essence, Sufism seeks to find an alternate reality in a realm that transcends the material (Gilsenan 2000: 79). However, this does not negate the paramount importance of observing Shariʿah and supererogatory religious activities. It is solely a supplemental, and yet essential, component of a holistic picture of Islam. Nasr wrote, "In the Islamic tradition, it is primarily Sufism that answers this basic existential question of who we are and through this answer

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provides guidance for a life full of spiritual felicity, marked by illumination and leading ultimately to deliverance from the bondage of all limitation" (2007: 12). Sufism has for centuries successfully coexisted with traditional Islamic life and teaching, but always desired to attain more than what satisfied ordinary Muslims. Removing Sufism would remove Islam's spiritual component and thereby cripple the human soul (Mičijević 1998: 52). Its greatest contribution was to supplement Qur'anic Revelation with an inner dimension and provide an outlet for a vibrant religious experience (Habibis 1985: 21).

Sufis are essentially travellers, because in order to reach God, one must embark on a spiritual journey. Nicholson explained this as follows, "Mystics of every race and creed have described the progress of the spiritual life as a journey or pilgrimage. Other symbols have been used for the same purpose, but this one appears to be almost universal in its range" (2002: 21). More than any other conceptual framework, the "journey to God" comprises the essential theme and underlying theological blueprint of the Sufi cosmology (Kabbani 1995: 412).[24] Sufis fundamentally believe that God is knowable and that there are spiritual mechanisms that can lead someone to God (Trimingham 1998: 1). Since humanity is in a state of forgetfulness, the most important pilgrimage is one of remembrance (Geoffroy 2010: 8). This requires purification from sin, attainment of knowledge and submission of the carnal nature to the spiritual reality until the believer reaches God's presence, is annihilated in the Divine and subsequently serves him as if he is constantly in His presence (Knysh 2000: 301 – 303). In other words, "Indeed the life of a Sufi is one that seeks to be God-permeated... The ultimate objective of the Sufi is intimacy with God, even a mystical union in which the veil is lifted between God and His creation" (Geaves & Gabriel 2014: 21).

Contrary to the view that Sufis are inward focused and primarily involved with their own spirituality while neglecting involvement in social issues (Yukleyen 2010: 281), Sufis are supposed to witness to others through their compassion and generosity, regardless of one's religious affiliation or status in society (Heck 2007: 150, 156). Since Sufis strive toward awareness and seeing God in all things, they are motivated to serve God's creation, including plants, animals and human beings (Muedini 2010: 16). Sufis place a high value in their communal living on acts of service ranging from the mundane pouring of tea to ritual

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[24] The Sufi concept of attaining proximity employs the limited language of spatial reference, but it encompasses respectively the physical, rational and spiritual dimension (Rustom 2007). That is why any Sufi who wants to begin his pilgrimage, must incorporate outward actions with inward belief. The hope is that one day the seeker will attain annihilation of the material self in the ultimate spiritual reality.

performances.[25] Mičijević describes Sufis as individuals who are supposed to be warm, hospitable, obedient to their Shaikh, free from hypocrisy and willing to help anyone (1998: 53 – 54). The emphasis on serving combines both spiritual and physical domains. Heck explains, "It is this contribution of the mystical life, specifically in its communal form, that nurtures a deeper embodiment not only of conventional morality as defined by the religious heritage (that is, the outer) but also of the unconventional (hypernomian) morality disclosed by the true reality of divine presence (that is, the inner)" (2006: 272).

The misconception that Sufism due to its insistence on the inner, spiritual dimension must somehow neglect the physical, earthly realm omits the core Sufi understanding that the implicit duality between spiritual and worldly affairs is nonexistent. God encompasses all and is behind every phenomenon (Chittick 2005a: 34). Therefore, serving creation means serving God. Lings clarifies, "The doctrine which is based on that conclusion is termed 'Oneness of Being', for Reality is that which is, as opposed to that which is not; and if God alone is Real, God alone *is*, and there is no being but His Being" (1999: 64 – 65). Sufis attempt to view everything in creation as a manifestation of God in the world, which includes God's presence and agency in individual human beings (Muedini 2015: 20). A fuller understanding of this reality requires Sufis to progress to an advanced stage on their journey that imbues their actions with greater levels of purity.[26]

Obeying God with absolute sincerity is challenging, but if God is behind every existent action, then there cannot be any level of self-interest, pride and impure motivation (Heck 2006: 258 – 259). If God directs the affairs of this world (Gilsenan 2000: 81), then man is able to practise awareness of God's presence and look for His actions in all situations.[27] This lifestyle of continual contemplation and witnessing God everywhere is a characteristic Sufi discipline practised to various degrees of intensity by respective Sufi Orders. Outwardly, Sufis do not look different from ordinary Muslims when they perform religious obligations, but seeking to witness God's activity behind all performed actions makes their intention distinct. To achieve this high degree of awareness and considerable morality, Sufis must engage in the fight against

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[25] This concept defined as *hizmet* (service) will become fundamental in chapter six, when I develop its central role in the life of one of my research communities.

[26] To understand this important concept, it is necessary to realize the theological tension of achieving pure obedience without seeking rewards (Draz 2008). Unless deeds are performed with disinterest for oneself and only for the attainment of God's pleasure (Bell 1979: 152), they are useless (Heck 2006: 261).

[27] This concept defined as *tevhid* (God's oneness) will become fundamental in chapter six, when I elaborate on its central role in the life of one of my research communities.

their carnal, selfish nature. Attempting to do this alone can be dangerous (Stoddart 1985: 54),[28] and it is consequently imperative to find a qualified guide and place one's life into the hands of a teacher, a true, authentic Shaikh, who has overcome the battle with himself and is now able to instruct others to do the same (Ernst 1997: 124). Having reviewed the general framework of Sufism and considered its significance within Islam, I now endeavour to articulate some Bosnian particularities.

2.4.1. Sufism in Bosnia

The majority of Bosnian Muslims concede that Sufism is a distinguishing feature of Bosnian Islam (Raudvere 2009: 51; Kukavica 2012: 337 – 346). Some cherish Sufism as their national heritage and principal focal point of their spiritual expression and understanding (Raudvere & Gaši 2009: 163, 176). Although official membership and believers' self-identification of being directly connected to Sufism is relatively marginal (Cesari 2015: 460), Sufism permeates how believers perceive God and shapes the prevalent religious inclination of Bosnian Muslims (Biegman 2009: 16). While Fazlic may not acknowledge a dramatic increase in Sufi activities (2012: 159), it is a mistake to underestimate the impact and influence of Sufis, as they are members of the highest ranks of society and at the heart of Bosnian culture (Sarajlić 2010: 27). Those who are not part of or even ignorant about Sufism are still affected by it, since it permeates the local tradition (Hazen 2012: 86 – 88). It is one of the major spiritual voices contributing to the renewal of Islam and at the heart of Bosnian Muslim identity (Öktem 2011: 161; Norris 2006: 92). Sufism is alive and practised all over Bosnia (Hazen 2008: 92).[29] Although ordinary believers can at times be critical about Sufism (Norris 2006: 21), the Sufi presence in both popular and academic discussions is felt throughout the Balkans. There is a clear interest in Sufism and its growth is optimistic (Husić 2012: 211).[30] Today, Sufism is part of the fabric of Bosnian identity, religious revival, classical religiosity and the national character of Islam.

From the advent of Islam in Bosnia, Sufis participated both in the conquest and the spread of Islam and Islamic culture (Aščerić-Todd 2015: 57). They propagated Islam and

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[28] There is a popular Sufi saying in Bosnia that confirms this point, "He who has no Shaikh, Satan is his Shaikh."
[29] Determining the exact number of Sufis has been challenging in spite of persistent attempts, which included interviews with IC leadership, as well as Sufi Shaikhs and members of the TC. The most representative, and yet approximate percentage of active, self-identifying Sufis in Bosnia is 2%. With that said, it is misleading to measure the impact of Sufism by counting heads, since its influence goes beyond the proportionality of its numbers.
[30] Even non-practising Muslims enjoy public manifestations organised by Sufi groups (Raudvere 2011: 4).

contributed much to the way Islam is perceived and practised in the Balkans (Abiva 2005: 194). The successful Islamic expansion would not have been possible without Sufis, who have historically been Islam's missionaries par excellence, integrating the message into the language and culture of the people (Le Gall 2005: 28; Abedpour 2013: 287). They were integral in the formation of Bosnian Muslim society by giving it a certain tone and colour (Ćehajić 2000: 297). Raudvere notes, "During the long Ottoman era, Sufism in its various aspects coloured local piety and practice of everyday Islam at all levels of society" (2009: 53).[31] Bosnian Sufis are known for their tolerance and liberal inclusiveness, which does not imply an endorsement of heterodoxy, especially when considering the well-established sober nature of Sufi groups in Bosnia (Aščerić-Todd 2015: 25).

The impact of Sufism goes beyond its initial role of spreading Islam and incorporates the intellectual contribution, service, hospitality and practical aspects of Sufism, which clearly shaped the expression of Islam in Bosnia (Abedpour 2013: 274), and how Bosnian Muslims perceive their faith (Fatić 2004: 79). In spite of Sufism's widely acknowledged importance, due to political manoeuvring for power and pressure from the socialist state, the IC at one point confiscated Sufi held property and closed down all *tekijas* (Sufi prayer lodges) in Bosnia (Beglerović 2004: 211). This ban lasted from 1952 to 1989 when Sufism was officially restored and incorporated back into the IC (Henig 2014: 100). Fazlic falsely concluded that the ban was due to Sufi deviation from Islamic orthodoxy (2012: 175). It is doubtful that this is the real reason since Sufis have traditionally adhered to Shariʿah and there is no evidence of heteropraxy or antinomianism as is the case among some other Sufi currents (Watenpaugh 2005; Soileau 2014). Instead, the more likely reason is that there were complex political power dynamics, whose victim at the time became Sufi building objects. The closing down of *tekijas* and the retreat of Sufism from public life did not mean the end of Sufi activity (Numanagić 2013: 104 – 105). In fact, Sufi gatherings continued on a regular basis in private homes, while remaining out of the public limelight (Raudvere 2011: 5). As I will show in chapter four, this dynamic naturally shaped the focus of these Sufi practitioners on spiritual matters rather than societal engagement (Abdel Haleem 1989). In 1977 the Tariqa Centre (TC)[32] was founded to coordinate its work with the IC, print Sufi literature and organise special gatherings

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[31] The reverse is equally true, where local religion shaped the expression of Sufism. The permission for this exchange was intentional. Sufis embraced local culture by absorbing non-Islamic elements (Ćehajić 1986; Kukavica 2012: 310 – 311). Some authors mistakenly describe such action as heterodox (Abiva 2005: 202), overlooking the benefit which made conversion to Islam more acceptable for the indigenous population.

[32] Henceforth I will use the acronym TC when referring to the institutional, authoritative body on behalf of all official Sufi Orders in Bosnia and in the Diaspora.

(Hadžibajrić 1990). The TC has now been officially incorporated into the Constitution of the IC and is a fully functioning member and recognised essential feature of the public expression of Islam in Bosnia.[33] Besides submitting to the oversight of the IC, another function of the TC was to facilitate a better coordination and cooperation among the various Sufi Orders spread throughout the country. Raudvere writes:

> One purpose of the Tarikat Centre administration within the Islamic Community is evidently control and structure, but the organisation has also provided a stable platform for joint activities and manifestations between the orders that started to take form already during the Yugoslav period, and have thereby secured the more recent visibility of the Sufi legacy in Bosnian Islam (2011: 6).

As the degree of influence and visibility of Sufi Orders continuously increased, the TC now enjoys a growing acceptance by the traditional leadership, but also faces some challenges.

The establishment of the TC does not mean that all Sufi groups in Bosnia are official members. Several communities claim institutional independence, and are consequently considered by the IC as illegitimate.[34] This disaffiliation is criticized by the religious authorities who emphasise the importance of unity (Beglerović 2004: 155 – 159). Being unaffiliated, however, provides more liberty in matters of doctrinal interpretation and ritual performance (Raudvere 2011: 9). Some of these groups criticize the system, claiming to be the true guardians of Bosnian Sufism, and feeling that the TC has sold out.[35] The phenomenon of "false Shaikhs" has a historical precedent in Sufism (Nasr 2007: 109) and as the interest and public visibility of Sufism has been renewed in Bosnia, it evidently has also enabled the emergence of false, illegitimately approved Shaikhs (Henig 2014: 100), who are in charge of independent Sufi groups (Cesari 2015: 450). In spite of the challenges, Sufism remains influential and at the core of Islamic spirituality in Bosnia. The most prominent Sufi orientation in the country comes from the notable Naqshbandi tradition, and since my research project is located within that group, I aim to highlight the most prominent and relevant features of this Order.

2.5. The Naqshbandi Sufi Order

The Arabic word *tariqa* is often translated as Sufi Order, focusing more on the organisational feature of Sufism (Shepard 2014: 178). Instead, a better translation of the word

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[33] See Appendix G for a copy of the official document.
[34] For an official IC document regarding the names of Sufi groups that were part of the TC, see Appendix H.
[35] The leadership of the TC take pride in their legitimization process of Shaikhs, but my interviews with secondary informants revealed that the process is not as clear-cut and falsifications can and do occur (DAOI#5, 21, 22, 23).

is the metaphor of a path, which is closer to the principal Sufi teaching. Ernst gives the following helpful definition, "To the extent that Order implies a group of people living together under a common discipline, this term can be usefully employed to describe the various teaching ways (*tariqas*) or chain (*silsilas*) of masters and disciples typical of later Sufism" (1997: 121). Others have preferred to use the term "brotherhood" engaging in collective worship (Gilsenan 2000: 5; Kukavica 2011: 122), or even Sufi Orders in the sense of "spiritual energies" (Shepard 2014: 178). Although it is difficult and perhaps impossible, as Avanoğlu rightly pointed out (2012: 16 – 17), to come up with an exact definition of Sufi Orders, it is still important to construe some working terms. Bruinessen offers the following solution:

> There are number of ways of defining what a Sufi order is. Each order is, in principle, a distinctive spiritual discipline (the term *tariqa* literally means 'path'), and has its own repertoire of *dhikr*, prayers, litanies and spiritual techniques which may to some extent overlap with those of other orders… Most orders are named after a founding saint, and the distinctive prayers and techniques are commonly believed to have been handed down from the leader of the order along a chain of successors to the current teacher. (2009: 127)

Although Karamustafa does not provide explicit operational details, he rightly concluded that the Shaikh fundamentally comprises the axis of Sufi Orders, whose authority and charisma bound together the lives of his followers and shaped the particularities of the teaching and ritual performances that were characteristic for that Order (2007: 114). Even when the Orders became transnational, their remaining centre and centripetal force was both spiritually and materially the Shaikh (Werbner 2014: 288). Trimingham suggested, the relationship between the Shaikh and his followers may perhaps provide the best working definition and foundational structure when speaking about Sufi Orders (1998: 3).

Each Order usually carries the name of its founder, and it is the responsibility of all subsequent Shaikhs to honour their predecessor to whom they are spiritually linked and replicate their teaching and exemplary lifestyle. The name Naqshbandi is probably related to Bahā'uddīn's line of work, or a sobriquet, as it denotes carving, chiselling and embroidering.[36] Later generations of Sufis imbued the meaning of Naqshbandi with a special spiritual reference, describing someone who has permanently engraved the name of Allah onto the heart (Lizzio 2007: 21; Algar 1976: 137). The Naqshbandi inner emphasis on the heart versus an outward

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[36] There is evidence that suggests that the Order was initially started by Hamadhānī (d. 1140) and Ghudjawānī (d. 1220), and it was Bahā'uddīn who became the final architect of the Naqshbandi, giving it its final shape, while not being the founder *per se* (Trimingham 1998: 62; Atay 1994: 33; Zelkina 2000: 77 – 80).

focus is one of its distinguishing characteristics. Schimmel writes, "It is not the long periods of mortification but the spiritual purification, the education of the heart instead of the training of the lower soul, that are characteristic of the Naqshbandiyya method" (1975: 366). Engraving God's name is not merely a theoretical or spiritual exercise for the Naqshbandi, but one that requires the disciple to commit to a devotional life that keeps the demands of the Law.

The Naqshbandi Order has been one of the most widespread and vibrant of all Sufi Orders in Islam (Le Gall 2003: 87). Even today, their willingness to provide "new articulations of Sufi Islam crafted to meet contemporary needs" (Howell 2015: 288), has perpetuated their broad appeal. Naqshbandi Sufis can be found in almost every country where there are Sufis and they have arguably had the most far-reaching impact of any Order (Nasr 1997a: 162). Part of the reason for Naqshbandi success and widespread acceptance by the official leadership is its strict loyalty to Shariʿah, sobriety, modesty, support of the religious authorities and the restoration of universal Muslim values (Knysh 2000: 220 – 221). Naqshbandi believe that it is impossible to travel on the path to God if one is not resembling the example of the Prophet or first generations of faithful Muslims (Algar 1976: 140). Naqshbandi were often welcomed by the state as religious reformers of certain heterodox Sufi groups (Abu-Manneh 1982). Le Gall notes that the reformation of heterodox groups by Naqshbandi even took place in Bosnia (2003: 106). Their pursuit of attaining balance between the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of faith enabled them in many cases to perform their religious rituals inside mosques, giving them greater flexibility and mobility in spreading the Order. This preferential treatment and influence on the ruling class led certain Naqshbandi groups to consider themselves as spiritually superior to other Sufi Orders (Le Gall 2003: 104) and led to their vibrant engagement in public life (Dickson 2014: 415), as well as a prolific literary output.

Poetry and other writings have historically enabled Sufis to experience powerful emotional and ecstatic states. Some of the main literary topics among Sufi Orders in general and Naqshbandi in particular were the following:

> Common traits in literary creations of all dervish orders are the profound faith in the direct, intuitive cognition of the Absolute, the faith in the substantial unity with the Absolute Reality and the possibility for perception of that unity (*tawhid*). It was this literature that expressed elation and attainments of the mystics that removed all obstacles existing between the Absolute and phenomenal, trying to bridge the gap between the man and the God (Ćehajić 2000: 304).

It is evident that the desire for attaining proximity with God was present in the writings of the Naqshbandi, forming the necessary theoretical foundation for their practical application. In addition, the prolific literary output of Naqshbandi solidified their leadership role in Sufi circles and their influence in the Muslim world in general (Le Gall 2003: 119). Naqshbandi were also profound exponents of the teachings of Ibn ʿArabi[37] (Paul 1998: 10). His writings and ideas were generally incorporated into Naqshbandi doctrine and have had a significant impact in the Balkans (Le Gall 2003: 102 – 103). Salvatore even called Ibn ʿArabi "the patron saint of the Ottoman Empire" (2018: 169). Nevertheless, Naqshbandi support for this influential thinker was by no means unilaterally accepted.

Historically there have been vigorous debates against the writings of this famous Sufi thinker (Knysh 2000: 231). Broadly speaking, there are some Naqshbandi who considered akbarian theology antinomian, while others, especially in the Ottoman West where this research project is located, recognised and promoted his ideas (El-Rouayheb 2015). Baldick explains that at the core of Ibn ʿArabi's teaching lies the understanding that the only existent reality is God, whose divine essence is revealed through His beautiful names, but that He is neither limited by or identical with those names nor anything else in creation (2012: 82 – 85). Burckhardt adds, "Thus, all beings are God, if considered in their essential reality, but God is not these beings and this, not in the sense that His reality excludes them, but because in the face of His infinity their reality is nil" (2008: 18). The theological consequence of Ibn ʿArabi's thought resulted in breaking down traditional concepts of God's transcendence, causing internal debates lasting until today. Although tension still exists, it is impossible to understand this Order without seeing it deeply rooted in Ibn ʿArabi's theosophical contribution.[38]

There are eight, and later on eleven principles of the Naqshbandi Order, which frame the essential stages of the journey to God (Schimmel 1975: 364). All eleven principles can be encapsulated by the fundamental concepts of awareness and self-control (Netton 2000: 77 –

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[37] Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-ʿArabī (1164 – 1240), is one of Sufism's most influential writers and thinkers, whose Gnostic discussions have influenced and shaped all subsequent Sufi discourse. He is arguably the greatest Sufi theosophist in Islamic history, who is often referred to by his honorary title "Shaykh al-Akbar" (the greatest master). He is famous for his doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, which literally means the "Unity of Existence" or Unity of Being". His writings periodically encountered strong condemnation, but have been generally accepted, by most Sufi groups. Prominent studies of his thought include: (Hirtenstein 1999; al-Arabi 1980; Schimmel 1975; Affifi 1979; Murata & Chittick 1998)

[38] Naqshbandis generally practice a sober form of Islam, which led some scholars to believe that they would not support Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought, but his teachings were widely accepted in the Ottoman Empire, and specifically in Bosnia (El-Rouayheb 2015; Ahmed & Sonn 2010; Ćehajić 2000; Kuehn 2012). In fact, his thought is central for the Naqshbandi idea about God (Paul 1998: 10; Le Gall 2003: 100 – 103; Weismann 2007: 4).

79). The goal of these principles is the practice of a constant awareness of God (Kabbani 1995: 3). Once a Sufi attains such awareness, he will be successful in subduing the negative inclinations of the flesh and become an exemplary moral human being. For Naqshbandis, this did not denote asceticism and seclusion, but full presence in everyday life. Nasr writes, "This did not mean that a person could cut himself off from all contact with society and sit in a corner meditating and praying. It meant an attitude of mind which, while attending to all routine works of life, remained really engaged with God" (1997a: 171). Such deliberate remembrance, or a type of personal *dhikr*, can include one's vocation in the marketplace, obedience to Qur'anic law and other mundane activities. This permanent awareness instils a deep-seated love toward God which keeps Sufis perpetually conscious and attentive (Dahnhardt 1999: 122 – 123).

In addition to perfecting individual remembrance, Naqshbandis are also obliged to participate in collective, ritualized *dhikr* performances. Kabbani describes some of the particular features of the Naqshbandi *dhikr* as follows:

> This spiritual exercise may contain repetition of various of God's Holy Names. Some forms of dhikr involve practices designed to break the spell of mundane consciousness and propel the practitioner into a state of altered awareness. Such practices may include repetition of many thousands of holy phrases, sometimes connected with breathing exercises and often with physical movements (1995: 411).

Due to their demand for sobriety, Naqshbandi traditionally practised a subdued, even silent *dhikr* (Netton 2000: 62 – 63). Although this feature comprises one of the key distinguishing factors of the Naqshbandi Order, research has shown that some groups perform both silent and loud *dhikrs* (Paul 1998: 22 – 30). This hybridity and flexibility in the customization of *dhikr* performances has been discussed in Naqshbandi literature, causing considerable controversy (Schimmel 1975: 175).

Before a Naqshbandi Shaikh can assert his authority, he has to prove through a valid *silsila* his direct link to the prophet Muhammad. Baldick explains, "One important aspect of a brotherhood is its 'chain' (*silsila*), that is to say its pedigree of Masters going back to Muhammad. So essential a feature is this that to a large extent the brotherhood *is* the 'chain': a living expression of continuity down the generations" (2012: 75). The Shaikh's accurate *silsila* authenticates his status and imbues him with a special spiritual status. In the case of the Naqshbandi, several particularities emerge. First, Naqshbandi trace their lineage and main affiliation to Abu Bakr and not Ali (Shepard 2014: 187; Algar 1976: 128). This origin suggests the reason behind the prominent Naqshbandi attention on orthodoxy and sobriety, setting it

apart from most other Orders who predominantly trace their lineage back to Ali (Zelkina 2000: 77). Another unique element is that Naqshbandi do not bequeath spiritual succession based on heredity, which empowers them to quickly expand their network and disseminate authorization on a wider basis (Le Gall 2003: 119). It also fosters the possibility for choosing the most qualified person to become the next Shaikh in the chain of succession, enabling the strong continuation of the organisational task and leadership of the community. Finally, the founder of the Naqshbandi received spiritual authority from an already deceased Shaikh, going thereby outside the norms of the common initiation process (Weismann 2007: 12 – 13).

This distinctive genesis of the Naqshbandi Order is known as "*uwaysi* legitimization" (Weese 2006). It basically abrogates the need for physical contact with a living Shaikh, circumventing this otherwise established requirement by receiving spiritual validation through a transcendent source (Ernst 1997: 133). Kabbani describes this remarkable process as follows, "In this form of spiritual transmission, the spirits meet in the world of spirits which is beyond the material plane. Whoever takes knowledge through spirituality from a deceased master in the Naqshbandi Way is called both Uwaysi and Naqshbandi. That spiritual connection is as powerful and effective as the physical connection" (1995: 10). Although several Sufi Orders discount and criticize this form of authorization, Naqshbandi are strongly shaped by its precedent (Baldick 1993: 1 – 2). Attaining legitimization from the invisible world, even for Naqshbandis rarely replaces initiation by a living Shaikh (Le Gall 2003: 101). It remains a rare occasion, but its permission has opened up unique possibilities and has coloured the Naqshbandi Sufi way. In particular, it has made a heart-to-heart communication with the Shaikh possible, even when disciples are not in the presence of their master (Buehler 1998: 82 – 85).[39] Although the Naqshbandi have a confirmed beginning and development with distinct practical and theological emphases, it remains difficult to offer a definitive list of clearly defined and consistent characteristics due to the Order's historic flexibility and circumstantial adaptation (Paul 1998: 72 – 74; Sahin 2010: 53 – 54). This multifaceted complexity does not abrogate the broader contours, such as the *silsila*, the centrality of the Shaikh, the general format of the *dhikr* and pronounced sobriety, but it does challenge a simplistic, one-dimensional view. In light of this, I will now explore pertinent Naqshbandi particularities in the Bosnian context.

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[39] The concept of *rabita* (binding the heart to the Shaikh), appears in Naqshbandi literature as a vital pedagogical and theological concept (Paul 1998: 75). I will discuss it in further detail in chapter six.

2.5.1. The Naqshbandi Order in Bosnia

Among Sufi Orders in Bosnia today, the Naqshbandi Order is the most numerous, influential and known as the traditional "guardian of conventional Islam in Bosnia" (Abiva 2005: 195).[40] It has adapted to the mentality of the people who live in this region, influencing socio-political and cultural currents of the inhabitants of Bosnia (Hadžimejlić 2016: 30; Henig 2011: 225). The Naqshbandi have been approved by the IC and given authority to decide what "genuine Sufi teaching" should be for Bosnian Muslims (Henig 2012: 758). During Sufi events officially sponsored by the IC, such as the aforementioned Ajvatovica pilgrimage, the predominant place is given to Naqshbandis (Henig 2014: 146 – 147). The acceptance of Naqshbandi by the leadership has a historic precedent, where the first state-sponsored Sufis in Bosnia were almost exclusively the Naqshbandi who were often close to the religious and political authorities (Kukavica 2012: 367). Part of the reason for this affinity is the Naqshbandi strict moral code, adherence to orthodox views, Shariʿah observance and their intentional engagement to bring society closer to religion. These factors have helped in promoting the Naqshbandi and have authorized them to represent Bosnian Sufi norms (Le Gall 2005: 67 – 69; Ćehajić 2000: 300 – 306). Furthermore, membership is comprised from all layers of society, with a significant portion of highly educated and influential people (Ibranović 2007: 45 – 46).

Bosnian Naqshbandis have been influenced in their theology by the thought of Ibn ʿArabi and Rumi.[41] Although themes such as *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of being) do appear in the writings of Bosnian Naqshbandis, emphasis on Shariʿah, including both the external and internal dimension, sobriety and spiritual exercises predominantly characterize their religious understanding (Ćehajić 1986: 77 – 78; Le Gall 2005: 126). Their literary output has focused on the possibility for man to attain contact with God and topics such as love and intimacy with God (Ćehajić 2000: 303 – 304). In matters of *silsila* legitimization, Bosnian Naqshbandi trace their lineage back to the first *pir* (Sufi master) Husein baba Zukić (d. 1799) (Hadžimejlić 2009: 21). A Shaikh of several Sufi Orders, he believed that the Naqshbandi path was most appropriate for the Bosnian Muslim mentality (Bevrnja 1990: 16). Although he did not found the Naqshbandi Order as Algar suggested (1976: 147), it is through his influence that it became

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[40] Vukomanović and Fazlic record that 84% of *tekijas* in Bosnia belong to the Naqshbandi (2008: 138; 2012: 175).
[41] Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (1207 – 1273), is one of the best-known and widely circulated Persian poets and Sufi mystics, whose message has had a profound impact (Hirtenstein 1999; Chittick 1984). Dizdarević highlights the importance of Rumi recitation and interpretation as a common Bosnian practice (2013: 262 – 263).

the most important Order in the land. His authority and influence was so dominant that newly nominated governors of Bosnia were obliged to pay him homage (Weismann 2007: 75).

One of the reoccurring characteristic of Bosnian Naqshbandi is that they distinguish themselves by combining a loud and silent *dhikr* (Mičijević 1998: 44; Gačanović 2014: 34). This hybrid *dhikr*, which was introduced in Bosnia by Zukić in the early 19th century (Numanagić 2013: 77), has absorbed and combined elements of different Sufi Orders. This fusion clearly demonstrates the influence that outside factors can have on the transformation of ritual performances (Algar 1971: 190). Today in Bosnia the combination of loud and silent *dhikrs* is still practised, but there is a preference for the loud *dhikr* version (Ibranović 2007: 6 – 7). This flexibility in adapting the *dhikr* to a local context, points to the larger phenomenon that religious performances and interpretations are not static and can be shaped and refashioned. Weisman explains, "As befitting a living mystical tradition, none of the foundational principles and practices of the Naqshbandiyya were fixed and unequivocal" (2007: 30). In summary, Bosnian Naqshbandi exhibit broad similarities with the wider tradition, while embodying minor unique characteristics that have evolved due to local dynamics. They have creatively adapted to local circumstances, with the result of specific performative and theological distinctions. The important continuity that Bosnian Naqshbandi share, one that is particularly relevant to this research, is the common agreement regarding the essential role of the Shaikh. I conclude this review by a condensed introduction of this critical aspect within Sufism, upon which I continue to build in the following chapters.

2.6. The Role of the Shaikh

If Sufism is essentially a journey, then spiritual travel requires the careful tutelage of a spiritual master. Stjernholm suggests that the Sufi pursuit of establishing contact with God through the Shaikh is so central that it ought to comprise the fundamental area of study in Sufism (2014: 208). Rozehnal describes the need for a guide as follows, "Only an accomplished spiritual master can provide the wisdom, direction, and structure needed to propel the Sufi seeker (*salik*) toward self-transcendence and intimacy with the Divine Beloved. In the end, the *salik* needs a *shaykh*" (2007: 140). The analogy used is that of a patient who tries to cure himself without a doctor and inevitably fails. It is essential to find the right person to attain healing and self-understanding, which are necessary prerequisites to achieve progress (Geoffroy 2010: 142). Sufis believe that in the same way that every generation in human history needed guidance, so do people today. The idea developed that no advancement was possible without a

Shaikh. Completely relinquishing one's free will and submitting to the Shaikh became the prerequisite to attain higher states (Paul 1998: 59). Countless seekers desiring to attain spiritual perfection and experience the essential teaching of Islam have therefore gone on a quest to find a qualified leader who could help them attain their goal.

Knysh indicates that during the historical development and institutionalization of Sufism, before undivided loyalty was required from Sufi aspirants, the relationship between disciple and Shaikh was quite informal and mainly understood as an irregular relationship between teacher and student (2000: 172). Disciples were permitted to have more than one Shaikh and seek knowledge wherever they could find it. Trimingham writes, "They were, therefore, integrated by spirit and aim rather than by any formal organisation, and were, in fact, very loose organisations" (1998: 13). This unofficial commitment gradually became more structured (Awn 2013: 250), expanding the significance of Shaikhs, since they were increasingly perceived as extraordinary human beings due to their special proximity to God and the Prophet. As the perception of spiritual power transcended beyond the physical presence of the Shaikh to places and objects, his authority and role continued to evolve (Karamustafa 2007: 130). He was perceived as a chosen person by God, holy and different from other people, and therefore endowed with the divine right to require absolute obedience from his followers. Once a Sufi was initiated and submitted to the Shaikh he elected to follow, it became extremely dangerous to consider abandoning that Shaikh for another.[42]

Leaving the Shaikh meant the cessation of one's journey and the breach of the covenant made before God. Such an action would carry with it dire consequences. This unbreakable bond could result in the Shaikh's potential abuse of power and the exploitation of the life of his initiates. Anjum describes this historic development in the following words, "The earlier multiples-study-circle model, in which a disciple freely studied with many masters, gave way to the authoritarian model of the strict master-disciple relationship as the model of social belonging as the Sufi orders became ubiquitous throughout the Islamic lands" (2012: 80). As the contemporary representative of the Prophet (Mir-Kasimov 2013: 6), who modelled perfect guidance for his companions and the first generation of Muslims, the Shaikh's authority now continued to evolve further from teaching to directing (Ohlander 2014: 64). Whereas the teaching Shaikh's role was primarily concerned with exegetical matters and not with the

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[42] There are examples, however, as in the case of Sufism in South Asia, where aspirants could be initiated into various orders by different Shaikhs (Geaves 1994: 138).

everyday lives of his followers, the directing Shaikh's involvement became far more all-encompassing. His authority eventually extended to the minutest details related to the spiritual progress of his disciples (Ephrat 2008: 49).[43]

Buehler traced the development and historic progression from directing to mediating Shaikh, where the Shaikh became more than a guide to bring seekers to God; he was now the necessary means by which believers approached God (1998: 190 – 191). He was a bridge, an intermediary with "soteriological powers" (Ohlander 2008: 199), who stood between man and God. Sufis came to believe that God's special blessing and power primarily flowed through the Shaikh, enabling the traveller to advance on his journey. Progress on the path toward God became conditional upon the spiritual and even physical bond with one's spiritual master. It was no longer possible to attain contact with God alone, except in very rare circumstances, without the exclusive mediation of a qualified Shaikh (Buehler 1998: 130 – 133). Trusting the mediatory powers of a Shaikh who could skilfully lead those who were eager to know God became the principal pursuit for a novice Sufi. This master disciple interconnection developed into the institutional foundation of Sufi Orders (Ernst 1997: 123 – 124), and as a consequence resulted in a profound influence in the political realm (Salvatore 2018: 168).

A Shaikh might have a remarkable array of knowledge, skills and talents, but even the most extraordinary person, if left unrecognised is unable to exercise that role. Abilities are necessary, but ultimately the relationship is utterly dependent on follower recognition. As Dabashi pointed out, once followers believed in the validity of a transcendent source that genuinely legitimized a person, they were able to voluntarily accept his authority over their lives (1989: 35). Understanding this dynamic requires an awareness of the interpersonal dimension of negotiating charismatic validity and compliance to its claims. People essentially confirm authority and through that make a leader. Dawson was right to argue the importance of examining, "the observable social psychological processes that seem to prompt people to attribute charisma to a leader" (2006: 7). Neglecting to pay adequate attention to the role of followers will inevitably diminish the understanding of leadership authorization.

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[43] Although it is possible that such a historic progression never took place, and that from the beginning the difference between a teacher and guide was indistinguishable (Silvers-Alario 2003), the majority scholarly consensus suggests that such an evolutionary development did indeed take place.

In other words, once a Sufi confirms the Shaikh's authority, he is expected to submit to his demands and believe that solely the Shaikh has exclusive knowledge regarding the most effective method for his upbringing (Takim 2006: 3). Rozehnal expounds upon this, saying:

> On the basis of his intuitive knowledge and keen sensitivity to the disciple's character and temperament, he prescribes a variety of spiritual disciplines in order to spur higher states of consciousness… The remaking of the self therefore presupposes a total and complete surrender of personal will and an unwavering faith in the wisdom of the teaching *shaykh*" (2007: 152).

Submission goes beyond the domain of spiritual disciplines, and encompasses all areas of life. As the guardian of the lives of his followers, the Shaikh determines what disciples should wear, their diet, employment, social interactions and other minute details (Ohlander 2008: 202).

In the context of the Naqshbandi, this intensely close relationship based on submission and guidance became especially pronounced (Buehler 1998: 101). Guiding seekers on the path to God requires the Shaikh to mould followers into people who are worthy to come before their Maker. To achieve this on the individual level, the Shaikh's authority permits him to use various pedagogical tools under his disposal, such as *rabita* (binding the heart to the Shaikh), *adab* (proper etiquette), *bejat* (oath, initiation), *sohbet* (intimate companionship), *vird* (litany), the *dhikr* and others (Buehler 2016: 166). On an institutional level, a true Shaikh exhibits the power to shape and adapt the Sufi Order that he represents. Yavuz accurately noted that this function endows him with the remarkable ability to transform and personally reinterpret previous norms since the entire Sufi enterprise is essentially structured around him (1999: 133). He encompasses the Sufi Order, arguably more than sacred texts and Islamic tradition. Henig called it a "sheikh-centred network" comprised of the leader and the ritualized collective practices of the community (2014: 100).

Sufism has remained a formative influence in Islam perhaps due to the ability of Shaikhs to make continuous adjustments and adaptations. They embody the movement and are essential in shaping religious beliefs, actions and narratives, and the perpetuity of the Order is contingent upon their careful supervision. Pinto describes this fundamental flexibility, which permits the intentional contextualisation of Sufi communities by its leaders as follows, "This creative openness, operating within an orderly framework of succession and discipleship, has allowed Sufism to remain a major force in the shaping of Sunni religiosity in contemporary Syria." (2013a: 73). The impact of the Shaikh ranges from the individual to the actual, albeit restricted, reconstruction of Sufi ideals themselves. While from an outsider's perspective, the

Shaikh may appear to independently inaugurate change, for insiders he symbolically embodies perpetuity with Islam's sacred past. Any alteration initiated under his tutelage is viewed as divinely sanctioned, comprising a continuation of tradition and not its transformation (Fusfeld 1981: 282). The principal agent, therefore, who appears to be responsible for the formation, perpetuation and adaptation of Sufi religiosity by using creative inventiveness to reinterpret foundational principles and practices to changing circumstances, is the Shaikh. Consequently, this study engages in an empirical investigation of the mechanism and manner by which two specific Bosnian Sufi leaders implemented adaptation and shaped the lives of their followers.

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, the intention was to organise the general context of where this research was located. I outlined my reasoning for an ethnographic approach to the study of Islam as an effective strategy to investigate and understand its inherent diversity. Additionally, I provided an overview of salient distinctions pertaining to Islam in Bosnia, specifically focusing on the importance of Sufism in general and the Naqshbandi in particular. I also linked my localised context to wider studies on Sufism, highlighting some of the essential theological and performative points that specifically correlate to my study. The discussion ended with an exploration of the Shaikh's significance as a guide to those who desire to embark on a spiritual journey. I provided initial, tentative support for his exceptional authority and ability to shape the Sufi community under his leadership. Although his prominence is acknowledged in the literature, additional research regarding his manner of operating and precise role in the shaping of Sufism in a localised context, promises to contribute further important insights. The overall purpose of the present discussion was to establish a proper foundation upon which the remainder of this thesis will develop.

Having established the general background of the research context, the following chapter details my methodological commitment and strategic approach by which I gathered primary evidence, organised the material and examined its epistemic value.

3. CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the general background of this research in order to locate it in its appropriate context. In the current chapter, I intend to articulate the theoretical positionality and practical strategy that guided the project. In the first section, I provide justification for my philosophical commitment and the basis for choosing an ethnographic approach for conceptualizing and addressing the central research question. After ensuring adequate support for my methodological position, I then outline the process of selecting the appropriate research location and how I gained access. The objective is to document my data collecting methods, such as participant observation, field notes and interviews. Additionally, I aspire to examine the epistemic validity of sources and to evaluate if I have achieved satisfactory representativeness, reliability and quality of data. Since this is an empirical study of real people, I also find it imperative to account for my ethical commitment and self-reflexive practice by which I conclude the discussion. The overall purpose here is to present an overview for the rationale and manner in which this project was conducted and organised.

3.2. Methodological Position

Instead of following the customary process where methodological evaluations begin with an elaboration of one's epistemological justification for a particular research design, I begin this section with a self-reflexive approach of analysing the most important research tool for the purpose of this study – myself (Lukens-Bull 2007: 180). Due to my commitment to introspection, awareness and ownership of my thoughts and experiences, I have deliberately chosen to take responsibility and express my views using my own voice (Patton 2015: 70).[44] I consider myself a spiritual person, who from early childhood has been intensely drawn to transcendent questions, personally finding life's answers best explained by the Christian perspective. Love in general, and specifically God's love for humanity, has played an integral part in my worldview formation.

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[44] I agree with Berg that absolute objectivity is not possible (2012: 341), and that as the primary data gathering instrument I remain integral throughout the research process, both influencing and being influenced by my research environment. Consequently, I chose to use the ethnographic first person singular as the most appropriate writing strategy (Light 2010: 182).

In 2008, my family and I had the opportunity to move back to Bosnia, my home country, which I left twenty years earlier due to unfortunate circumstances. The demographics of my hometown Sarajevo changed drastically during those years due to the War of 1992 – 1995 and its resulting population migration, turning it into a city with a majority Muslim population. During my master's degree in Christian theology, I focused on comparative religions and although I read a considerable amount of theological literature on Islam and was theoretically astute to its doctrinal teachings, I was surprised to witness growing discrepancies during my actual discussions with living Muslims. Successfully completing a second master's degree in Islamic theology only added to my textual understanding of philosophy and theory, while leaving out the voices of living practitioners. Being rooted in theological texts about Islam turned out to be insufficient and even counterproductive to understand the dynamics I encountered (Marranci 2008: 29). My biased presupposition was that love in a theological sense comprised a peripheral topic within Muslim cosmologies. My prejudice was challenged, however, by my growing empirical understanding that a number of my Muslim friends seemed to view God and his affection toward them in remarkably similar ways to my own Christian understanding. This was puzzling and I was motivated to find out reasons why.[45]

As pointed out in the previous chapter, there are scholars who suggest that it is necessary to study Muslims rather than Islam (Mandaville 2003: 4; Dabashi 2012: 12). Leaman, for example, argues that, "it might look more sensible to investigate those ways of behaving as opposed to the official list of beliefs from which they emerge" (2014: 57). Kraft points out that belief is far more defined by practices than theological creeds (2013: 40). El-Aswad stresses that there is a definitive need for investigating the entire cosmology of Muslims, and not only written records (2012: 1 – 3). The sole examination of Islam as a dogmatic religious system with unchanging characteristics and rigid rituals becomes an arbitrary category, utterly reductionist and inadequate for understanding (Rasanayagam 2011: 34; Roberts & Yamane 2012: 22). Or as Gellner aptly stated that it was a "grievous mistake to argue back from what the texts say to what ordinary people think and believe" (1999: 38). Religion is essentially comprised of people, and in order to understand religion one must understand people:

> Religion and culture exist only in the people who practice and participate in them. Apart from people
> they are abstractions. Because the people commit themselves with varying degrees of conviction and

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[45] Holding a strong personal interest in a particular topic is useful when embarking on an extensive ethnographic research project, since, as Denscombe accurately noted, it provides the researcher with the energy and passion to complete his task (2010: 13 – 14).

consistency and with diverse interpretations, there is enormous diversity at the personal level. We can almost say that there are as many 'Islams' as there are Muslims (Shepard 2014: 3) .

These accounts helped me to understand my personal experience of the seeming dissonance between what I thought I understood from books and what I encountered in the real world.

This empirical dimension requires doctrinal interpretation in light of the application and understanding of believers themselves (Bowen 2012: 6). Moosa commented, "For, whatever Islam is, the closest we can come to what 'it' is or is not, is through its embodiment in concrete forms, practices, beliefs, traditions, values, prejudices, tastes, forms of power that emanate from human beings who profess and claim to be Muslim or profess belonging to a community that calls itself Muslim" (2011: 114). It is therefore imperative to examine Islam from the point of view of individuals, who practise the religion in their locality, and explore the meanings that practitioners themselves assign to those practices which inform and transform their everyday lives (Jeldtoft 2011: 1135). To understand how people perceive their actions and construct their belief systems in their context, requires a comprehensive empirical study that is firmly located within its natural setting (Geaves 1998: 28).

To study Muslims as human beings, it is important to go to those places where they are. Fieldwork provides an opportunity to study Islam in its local context and observe how locality shapes religious implementation. Kreinath affirms this point:

> Insights into these issues and answers to these questions can only be found by living among Muslims… By describing and analysing the discourses and practices of Muslims in the constraints of everyday life, the anthropology of Islam can address how Muslims live, allowing for valuable contributions to the understanding of practiced Islam in its complexity (2011: 8 – 9).

The methodological importance behind fieldwork cannot be overstated, and it is my position that one needs to go to Muslims in order to get answers about Islam (Geaves 2014: 241 – 274). With my epistemological framework that religions are living traditions needing to be studied from the bottom up, requiring the point of view of practitioners themselves, I have identified that qualitative research methodology offers the best structure for achieving this goal (Dupret et al. 2013; Travers 2001; Creswell 2008). Its theoretical position approaches the world in a genuine way through localised realities that interprets meanings of phenomena from the perspective of individuals who construct them (Denzin & Lincoln 2013: 6 – 7). In other words, it combines the study of practices in context, respect for independent human agency and their own understanding of reality. This is precisely why my metaphysical commitment and

theoretical position, driven by my objective to understand the viewpoint of those who comprise the core of the study, lies in the qualitative research tradition.[46]

This approach is by no means the only way to accomplish the research task, and criticisms have been levelled against the validity and reliability of qualitative research (Weinberg 2002: 15 – 16). The scientific study of human behaviour (Punch 2000: 6) has two broadly defined ontological and epistemological positions. The first is positivism, which emphasises deductive reasoning and the belief that objectivity, generalisations and the production of reliable data is not only possible, but necessary for a respectable research enterprise. The second is interpretivist, which prefers an inductive study of human beings in their natural settings. It describes and interprets their behaviour and experiences from their point of view, intentionally taking into account idiosyncratic, non-measurable and even contradictory accounts (Travers 2001: 27 – 32; Prus 2005: 9 – 13). The positivist model seeks to find predictive patterns, objective observation and measurable data. It challenges interpretivist research for being overly subjective, fictional and unable to verify the truth of its theoretical conclusions (Denzin & Lincoln 2013: 3 – 4). Other critiques include the "degree of *uncertainty* contained within interpretivist explanations" (Denscombe 2010: 123) and that the relatively small sample size that ethnographers usually study makes generalisability difficult to achieve (Moore 2010: 90).

Although some criticism regarding the lack of objectivity, scientific rigor and the difficulties of replicability are justified, I argue that the reality of human agency merits an in-depth representation of localised examples of how people make sense of their worlds. Documenting actual life experiences requires presence in natural settings, which necessitates giving up control of potentially unexpected variables, but the different types of data sets do not necessarily mean a lower quality in theoretical conclusions (Moore 2010: 90). This procedure in no way diminishes 'objective truth', but presents it through rigorous and multifaceted data collection as it is understood and expressed in context by the community under examination. This theoretical assumption provides a conceptual framework that can produce a meaningful explanatory theory. Particularly within ethnography, there are practical hermeneutical and data-gathering tools appropriate for this research. Salient features of an ethnographic inquiry include description, the point of view of the informants themselves and extensive fieldwork

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[46] Berry suggests that it is not the researcher who chooses a particular methodology due to its highest epistemic value, but that personal preference and natural inclination play an important role in methodology selection (2011).

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(Punch 2005; Punch 2013). It also studies human beings in their context, emphasising the complexity of religious heterogeneity (Marranci 2008: 64 – 65). It considers religion as too broad of a category, and instead chooses to look at the mundane, everyday experiences and detailed conceptualizations of the world (Malinowski 2007: 50 – 57). Consequently, ethnography offered the most strategic approach suitable for my research.

Sometimes ethnography as a methodology and ethnography as a method appear to be used interchangeably (Johnson 2006: 69). Some scholars strongly disagree with this practice, saying that, "Describing ethnography as a form of participant observation, a mere method, confuses method and methodology" (Jones 2010: 10). O'Reilly adds, "Ethnography is a methodology - a theory, or set of ideas – about research that rests on a number of fundamental criteria. Ethnography is iterative-inductive research; that is to say it evolves in design through the study" (2009: 3). Others have no problems assigning a double meaning to ethnography (Ybema et al. 2010: 347; Lillis 2008: 355). Although I agree with the need to distinguish between the theoretical approach to research and the actual collection technique, it is difficult to definitively separate methods from methodology, for their selection is often intimately linked with the philosophical underpinning of how knowledge is best generated and interpreted. Ultimately, the choice of methods is based on the methodology from which it came, hence, there is no need for drawing rigid boundaries (Brewer 2000: 18). In this study, I have employed ethnographic methods to generate data to accomplish my research objectives. I also chose ethnography as the methodological framework, which reflects my epistemic conviction that it is the most suitable way to study my topic. In this sense, this research agrees with Brewer in that it is ethnographic both methodologically and in its use of methods (2001: 100). In the following section, I will introduce how I entered the field and what methods I employed to achieve the highest degree of valid and reliable data.

3.3. Methods of Data Generation

I lived in the capital city of Sarajevo for six years before engaging in formal research related fieldwork. During that time, I frequented different Sufi groups in the city and around the country, attending special events, conversing and observing the dynamics of these groups. Once it became clear that my 'hobby' would turn into an extensive, rigorous and intentional research endeavour, I was relatively well informed regarding where I should go to immerse

myself further and collect the richest data sets possible.[47] I chose to conduct my fieldwork in the city of Sarajevo for several reasons. First, as Aščerić pointed out, studying Sufism in its urban environment is a logical and beneficial selection, due to Sufism's historic germination in the urban context and its role in the Islamization of the indigenous population (2015: 10).[48] Secondly, Sarajevo is historically, culturally and geographically important (Maček 2011). It is the place where Sufism started and developed in Bosnia and where there are presently the greatest number of Sufi communities in the country. Thirdly, there were several practical reasons for the choice of this research site. Sarajevo is centrally located, permitting ease of travel to other locations for data collection. The TC and IC headquarters are based there, both of which were important sources for this research. Furthermore, my informal pilot fieldwork helped me to establish quality relationships with Sufis throughout the city. Finally, the nature of research necessitated high levels of flexibility, where I needed to be able to respond quickly when one of my informants offered an interview or desired to spend time with me. Carrithers observed that, "the cognitive ethos of fieldwork requires a thorough commitment to the quintessentially unpredictable experience itself" (2005: 437). The fluctuating nature of research made living close to my research sites invaluable in meeting the unpredictable demands of data collection.

My initial choice of which Sufi group to study depended on a number of preliminary factors, which at the time of selection were relatively superficial, but evolved during the process of fieldwork (Punch 2005: 152 – 153). I chose two groups that I identified by the Sufi names of their respective leaders Faruki and Hulusi.[49] Both belonged to the Naqshbandi Order, where the former, older Shaikh appeared to represent a more 'traditional' Sufi expression, potentially reflective of the way Sufism looked in Bosnia's historic past, while the latter seemed more youthful, innovative and attractive to a wider variety of people. This initial contrast between the groups was going to help me achieve a sample large and diverse enough for a modest amount of generalisability on Sufism in Bosnia (O'Reilly 2009: 84). Other factors guiding my selection were that these groups needed to meet on a regular basis, be cohesive units that gathered in a particular physical location, which was both conducive to studying them

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[47] Although I did not keep written records during this time, I am relying on my memory to evaluate this initial phase. Such an approach has been endorsed as a valid strategy in social scientific research, notably due to the ground breaking work of sociologist M.N. Srinivas (2012).

[48] Salvatore called the city "the initial cradle of Sufism" (2018: 158).

[49] Both were addressed by their followers with a variety of names, honorary titles and nicknames. I intentionally chose their Sufi name, although less frequently in use, to emphasise their primary function as Sufi Shaikhs.

and producing a representative sample (Gobo 2008: 98 – 101). After ensuring that these factors were in place, I had to overcome the challenge of gaining official access to study these groups.

3.3.1. Gaining Access

To meet the needs of sound ethnographic research, I knew I had to engage in prolonged fieldwork, which would include protracted immersion, differing degrees of participant observation and multiple interviews (Lillis 2008: 362). This required me to explain my research and seek permission to maintain a long-term presence and participate at various events and religious gatherings (O'Reilly 2009: 9). For my research endeavour to succeed, permission needed to be granted from the authoritative leaders of these Sufi groups (Bernard 2011: 150). Their consent comprised the single most important factor in enabling me to succeed in my research and participate as an active observer in the life of the community (Whyte 2001: 162).

I began by approaching Hulusi through an intermediary, who relayed back to me that I needed to provide a written document explaining my research aims, procedures and expectations. After submitting my request, Hulusi informed me that I also needed official permission by both the IC and the TC, and that this was standard procedure for a project such as mine.[50] After carefully constructing my letter and meeting with IC and TC representatives, I received formal permission in writing.[51] Now that I was an official researcher who was welcomed into the community, Hulusi assigned to me a personal research assistant that could answer any questions, manage and oversee my interactions. This person was Midhat, who became my key informant throughout the duration of the research project (O'Reilly 2009: 133 – 134).[52] Having this level of assistance was beneficial as it provided easy and immediate access to information, but it also meant that some of my data collection was restricted and controlled. I was also invited to participate to the degree of my choice and attend all key events like any other member of the group. I thereby had informed consent, ensuring that my research met ethical considerations and professional conduct (Frost 2016: 162 – 168).

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[50] I later found out that this was not true. Another researcher, Zora Kostadinova, also engaged in an ethnographic study of Hulusi's community, for which only verbal approval was necessary. At the time of this writing, to my knowledge she has not yet completed her research, or published her writings.

[51] See Appendix I and J for a copy of the written permission.

[52] I identify all key informants in Appendix A. In Appendix C, I explain that I deliberately organised key informant interviews as part of my fieldwork referencing system.

Gaining access with Faruki's community was categorically different. I approached Shaikh Ismail[53] who I thought was the leader at the time, since he led all the meetings that I previously attended at the *tekija*. He was reluctant to give me permission, without explicit approval of Shaikh Faruki, whom I had not met yet. At the time, I did not understand the leadership dynamics, only later realising that Ismail was the figurehead, while Faruki was the actual leader. I did not know how to access Faruki, since he rarely frequented the *tekija* and no one would provide me with contact information. I was told that if I were meant to meet him, God would provide a way. After finding out that he sometimes visited a calligraphy studio, I walked by the shop several times until our paths eventually crossed. He gave me an opportunity to introduce myself and explain my research. After looking at me for almost a minute he said, "Yes, I give you permission. I can see on your face that you are a good person. God sent you." (FNF#1) This simple verbal consent endorsed my long-term presence at the *tekija*, but it also came with limitations. Faruki informed me that since I was not a Muslim, I was not allowed to participate in *dhikr* performances and prayer rituals. (FNF#5. 6, 123)[54] Once I established access with my research communities, I began my fieldwork, which lasted more than eighteen months.[55] In the following section, I will expound upon my use of participant observation, interviews and field notes for data collection and analysis.

3.3.2. Participant Observation

An ethnographic epistemological approach requires researchers to observe practices in their natural settings from the perspective of those being studied, typically over an extended period of time (Ybema et al. 2010: 348). This strategy was central to my project, so as to reveal nuances and complexities that would otherwise remain hidden (Mason 1996: 60 – 63). Moreover, one of the characteristics that sets ethnographic fieldwork apart is that besides prolonged time spent in the field, it also requires active participation. Fetterman explains, "Participant observation requires close, long-term contact with the people in the study…

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[53] Ismail is one of my two key informants for this community and I will say more about him in chapter four. The other key informant is Hazim. He is a well-known calligrapher and Faruki often sits in his shop. He is the grandson of one of Bosnia's most famous Shaikhs Husni Numanagić (1853 – 1931), remarkably knowledgeable about Sufism both theoretically and practically. Due to his calligraphy work throughout the country, he is intimately familiar with the contemporary expression of Sufism in Bosnia, which made him an invaluable informant for this project.

[54] This dynamic was challenging, as it solidified my *etic* identity in the community (Fetterman 2010: 20 – 22) and caused considerable personal embarrassment (Carrithers 2005: 437).

[55] I recorded and organised my fieldwork with careful field note entries in order to ensure that my descriptions and observations remain as clear, consistent and comprehensive as possible. Details of the exact content included in field notes, as well as my system of referencing are located in Appendix C.

Similarly, observation without participation in other people's lives may involve ethnographic methods, but it is not ethnography" (2010: 39). In order to observe and record first-hand the voices of people who otherwise would not be heard, and to experience a local community at the grassroots level (Lindisfarne 2008: 23), participant observation comprised one of the key methods. It produced a wealth of primary information that helped me to understand why certain actions and symbols produced meaning in the life of my participants (Gobo 2008: 5; Watt & Jones 2010: 110).

I regularly attended Faruki's weekly *dhikr* performance held on Thursdays and Sundays with about thirty participants, as well as Friday gatherings with a smaller group of about twelve that focused on translated portions of Ibn ʿArabi and group discussions of miscellaneous topics. During the *dhikr*, I remained seated outside the circle as an observer and not a participant. I nevertheless occasionally copied the movements, trying to enter into these religious experiences imaginatively, while retaining my personal convictions and objectivity (Carrithers 2005: 438). I learned the appropriate order of the Arabic liturgy, memorized portions from the Qur'an and became sufficiently familiar with the physicality of this important ritual to participate as much as I was allowed. Understanding rituals is crucial for ethnographers to make sense of their observations (Fetterman 2010: 29). Since Friday meetings were based on discussion and less on religious performance, I was a fully integrated member with the right to make comments and freely ask questions. Although these meetings were not intentionally set up as focus group discussions, which is useful in enhancing the validity of ethnographic research, the particular dynamic of these meetings with the added flexibility of asking follow-up questions resembled the type of data generated from focus groups. These meetings helped me to gather richer data and focus on particular topics that I could introduce for constructive insight, which increased the quality of my data analysis (Bernard 2011: 173 – 177).

Other participation included my attendance for two consecutive years of *mukabela* (Qur'an recitation) meetings during the month of Ramadan. They did not produce much usable data, but it did help me to assess community commitment, decrease suspicion and arrange some appointments for interviews with willing informants. I was invited two times to Faruki's home for dinner. I also attended a *mevlud* (birth of the Prophet) celebration at a private residence, where all members of the community were in attendance. (FNF#50) My access grew over time, and as Bernard rightly observed, directly proportional to the longevity and regularity of my presence within the life of the community, the level of trust also increased (2011: 266). People

began to express more openness toward me, and as time progressed my presence was no longer unusual, but rather a steady feature within the life of the community. When I was unable to attend a meeting, some members expressed to me that something was "missing" when I was not there. (FNF#81) Finally, some of the richest data sets came from the intimate setting at the calligraphy studio where Faruki and four or five of his followers sat for several hours drinking coffee, smoking and discussing an array of topics. This was another focus group opportunity, which I purposefully used to clarify any misunderstandings and confusions that arose during fieldwork (O'Reilly 2009: 80).[56]

My participant observation with Hulusi's community was significantly different. Midhat organised private sessions with a qualified Imam, so that I could learn how to properly perform the ritual prayer. Besides this practical instruction session, I also received a theoretical breakdown of elements that comprised the *dhikr* ritual so that I could follow along better. Once I completed my lessons, I regularly participated in Friday and Sunday night *dhikr* performances.[57] I maintained that participation as an observer was better suited for my data collection than complete participation (Watt & Jones 2010: 111). I therefore chose to kneel in the outermost circle during the *dhikr*. My preference was to lean against a wall, partially due to the physical strain of the activity, but also because it gave me a better vantage point to observe the entire room, the behaviour of the leader and a variety of bodily expressions by the participants. Circumstances were also conducive for me to occasionally 'let go' and briefly enter into an attempt to experience the religious act not only from the point of view of others, but also my own (Fontein 2014: 75). I was aware from the literature that it was not enough to only ask about experiences, but also learn by encountering these intense moments myself (O'Reilly 2009: 160). In order for the quality of data to increase, I needed to venture into levels of deeper understanding through personal experience (Patton 2015: 28).

Whereas Faruki generally maintained a similar rhythm of activities throughout the year, Hulusi's community engaged in multiple extracurricular yearly events. These key events helped me to understand some of the values and meanings held by the community (Fetterman

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[56] Permission to participate in this intimate gathering was seen as an honour by community members, which increased their trust and consequently the willingness of participants to talk and answer questions. Although I remained a respected outsider, this limitation was largely circumvented over time and did not hinder data collection, while it simultaneously enabled me to retain relative objectivity (Gomm 2008: 272 – 273).
[57] Throughout my participant observation, although difficult to achieve, I tried to bracket my assumptions and maintain *epoche* as my hermeneutical posture (Blum 2012: 1034).

2010: 99) and go beyond the surface and elicit data in a variety of settings.[58] Over the course of fieldwork, I was able to participate in nearly all of these events and develop a good understanding of the context, ritual rhythms and annual cycle. As was the case with Faruki, my prolonged presence and faithful attendance enhanced the quality of data by providing me with a greater familiarity and understanding of the various layers that comprised the religious life of my research community (O'Reilly 2009: 41 – 46). Sustained and active participation helped me to see things from their perspective and attain a glimpse of their experiences (Patton 2015: 56). What Carrithers calls "engaged learning", became the operating framework for my life in the field (2005: 437). Everything I saw, smelled and tasted became part of my data. Although my skills, intuition and discernment regarding the usefulness and applicability of the variety of data became more refined over time, I continued to amass a diverse body of information (Emerson 2001a: 299). While this provided some analytical challenges, it was ultimately a useful strategy that greatly enhanced my overall knowledge and awareness.

Participant observation furthermore provided me with the proper vocabulary of how to frame certain questions when conducting interviews. Although fluent in the local language, specialized jargon and Arabised phrases not commonly used by the majority population presented some challenges in the beginning. I purposefully created my own functional glossary for both contextual understanding and my ability to use this language during my interactions with participants in the field. My active involvement enabled me to point to certain moments during an event and ask clarification questions, which enhanced my understanding of the total picture. This made my data collection more systematic and intentional, since it was informed by direct observation and not merely my own abstract theoretical ideas. Paying attention to details from below was in line with my position that answers need to be sought from interlocutors themselves. Moreover, I often did not need to wait to schedule formal interviews, but was able to ask specific questions while in the field. I found the combination of participant observation and *ad hoc* informal interviews strategic for helping to increase the overall accuracy of my impressions and the reliability of data (Bernard 2011: 256 – 267).

My long-term presence enabled me to gain people's trust, which enabled them to act naturally around me (Bernard 2011: 266). Sharing experiences created a certain level of

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[58] A selection of these events include the annual *bejat* ceremony, which took place two hours outside Sarajevo by the river Buna. There was also the annual "Day of the *tekija*", which celebrated Hulusi's community and attracted religious and political dignitaries. There was the "Day of the Mosque", "*ašura*", "*mevlud*", "Islamic New Year celebration" and several others. See for example: (FNH#1, 18, 47, 52, 61, 81)

bonding, which connected me to the lives of my informants in a more intimate way, where we could refer back to something we experienced together (Pinto 2010: 466). In the beginning of my research, particularly with Hulusi's group, I noticed people across the room glancing at me with an inquisitive, distrustful look. As we were often sitting in the courtyard waiting for the next section of the evening's programme to begin, I tried to engage in informal conversation and found members quite resistant. When I did succeed in asking someone a question, the answers provided were often short, or directly quoting some element of Hulusi's teaching. I knew that the quality of this data was weak, as it did not authentically reflect the opinions and personal thoughts of my informants. By the time I was preparing to exit the field, informants showed little resistance to talking with me, and frequently invited me to sit with their group. As my credibility increased, so did the willingness of my informants to talk and provide more honest responses (Emerson 2001a: 300). My presence no longer had a significant impact on the natural occurrences that would transpire in a similar way with or without me there (Gomm 2008: 268 – 269), thereby increasing the validity of informant responses and behaviour. While the benefits of participant observation for data collection comprised one of the essential tools of my research, I also encountered some difficulties and limitations.

The different expectations of the two research sites and my level of participation, required emotional and physical resourcefulness that were often challenging to fulfil (Clarke 2013: 211). Whereas with Faruki I permanently remained barred from actively joining group activities, with Hulusi I was expected to participate, and was sometimes even called on the phone when I missed a meeting. (FNH#17) This significantly different level of participation was both emotionally and physically demanding. Since ethnographic methodology requires deep immersion, one of its key features is for the researcher to remain open and vulnerable, "What is required is genuine curiosity, sincere interest, and the courage to be 'vulnerable' to another…" (Madison 2012: 43). Vulnerability, affection and engagement (Marranci 2014: 96), is supported by the epistemic position that expects genuine involvement in people's lives, and is a standard feature of participant observation (Hume & Mulcock 2005: xxiv). I was not studying Islam as a religious system, but Muslims as human beings in all of their complexity. Both research communities welcomed me and treated me remarkably well throughout my fieldwork. Over time, I developed friendships with my informants. As I shared experiences, engaged with them, ate their food and tried to understand the world from their point of view, I was also personally affected. This helped me to develop an authentic "emotional empathy" (Marranci 2008: 27), which can assist an ethnographer in gaining an insider's understanding.

Their concerns about life and a genuine desire to know God left a deep impact on my view of the world. Carrithers explains, "that one must be able to follow, in imagination, others' reasonings, experiences, and intentions very far indeed and so may find themselves sometimes very far from one's home base" (2005: 445). Although developing empathy for my informants was beneficial because it helped me to genuinely desire to understand things from their perspective, I also needed to bracket my feelings in order to retain objectivity. Herzfeld observed that informants can become friends, which increases credibility of accurate data communication, but can cause potential emotional strain on the researcher who knows that his fieldwork will come to an end, and that most friendships are temporary (2000: 221). One of the challenges and limitations of this research project was to find the right measure between vulnerability, genuine empathy and scientific objectivity. Achieving the delicate balance between maintaining distance, which had the potential of diminishing my understanding, and overly involved participation, remained difficult throughout my fieldwork (Patton 2015: 57).

Another difficulty was the degree to which I was able to ascertain the experience of my informants (Emerson 2001a: 126). I was aware that my attempts of trying to replicate the emotions or spiritual states that my informants described were not completely genuine, since my intentions were not to become a true insider or to attain personal spiritual goals. Instead, I was trying to generate quality data for my research. Although being an outsider can help in maintaining objectivity and keeping the familiar strange (Gomm 2008: 273; Ryan et al. 2011), it can also diminish the accuracy of observation. I tried to overcome this limitation by carefully recording the accounts of my informants in detail, comparing sources against one another and combining an assortment of data to gain deeper insights. In addition to participant observation, primary and secondary interviews, I also consulted Faruki's books, relevant newspaper and journal articles, YouTube videos, poems by my informants, official documents and any other sources I could find.[59] In spite of my outsider status, by triangulating the various sources of data, I was able to maximize reliability and achieve a relatively accurate understanding of the phenomena I was observing. Besides prolonged participant observation, another effective and indispensable method for generating rich data sets was keeping comprehensive field notes.

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[59] Toward the end of my fieldwork, I earned enough trust with the leadership of the two communities that I was given permission to take photographs and short videos of sacred rituals and key events. See appendix M. The usefulness of photography and its benefits for ethnographic research has been discussed at length (Hughes 2012; Pauwels & Margolis 2011). I videotaped two *dhikr* performances in each community and took dozens of photographs. These included the field sites, ritual performances and informants, who expressed their appreciation for being part of the project. These were helpful in triggering fresh memories during the process of analysis.

3.3.3. Field Notes

In line with social scientific literature, I found field notes to be a central data recording and producing tool (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 175).[60] As an overt, official researcher, I was permitted to freely walk around at all times with a notebook in hand. There were no restrictions to write my observations down, even if I occasionally had to do that discreetly during ritual performances or key events. As my presence became a standard fixture, people stopped paying attention to the invasiveness of my notebook that was almost continuously in my hand. Over time, I developed the skill of writing without looking at my page, as well as training my memory to such a degree that certain key phrases jotted down in quick succession would later on during transcription trigger complex and detailed data I remembered from the field (Bernard 2011: 276; Fontein 2014: 86). I typically transcribed and organised field notes from the previous day within a twenty-four hour timeframe to maximize memory retention and freshness of data. My commitment to field notes also improved my ability to look for nuances, innuendos and body postures that sometimes spoke louder than words. These particularities helped to strengthen the reliability and accuracy of data production, since it enabled me to evaluate several varied layers. It likewise helped me to never relax, and remain actively engaged in my observation of minute details in the field.

I used the same notebook for different types of notes that went beyond mere observation (O'Reilly 2009: 70 – 76) and included public lectures, group discussions, but also rich conversations that I later categorized as informal interviews that happened continuously while in the field (Bernard 2011: 156). Some of the most salient insights that added unanticipated and invaluable dimensions to my overall understanding came from these spontaneous and informal interactions. In order to maintain consistency and clarity, all interviews conducted with key informants and both Shaikhs were also recorded in my field notes. Other types of notes that were helpful to remain astute in my reflexivity included emotional reflections, personal frustrations, fears and insecurities (Gobo 2008: 211). Making an explicit record of these feelings helped me to maintain objectivity and remain more aware during the protracted research project. On occasion, I designed strategic ideas on how to overcome logistical problems and limitations that were imposed upon me, as well as ideas that needed further exploration. The following table offers a summary of the variety of notes taken in the field:

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[60] As already mentioned, all field note dates and a detailed overview of location, context and the general content of what was recorded is presented in my field note referencing system in Appendix C.

Shaikh Hulusi and His Community	Shaikh Faruki and His Community
Lectures by Shaikh Hulusi	Ibn ʿArabi Readings and Discussion
Interviews with Key Informant Midhat	Interviews with Key Informants Hazim and Shaikh Ismail
Interviews with Shaikh Hulusi	Interviews with Shaikh Faruki
Informal Conversations with Dervishes	Informal Conversations with Dervishes
Observations and Personal Impressions	Observations and Personal Impressions
Personal fears, challenges, frustrations, ideas and questions requiring follow-up	Personal fears, challenges, frustrations, ideas and questions requiring follow-up

I used field notes critically in an iterative process of refining my interview questions and going after topics that warranted more in depth understanding. This was a valuable analytical tool for re-examining my research design and determining the best way forward. Since thick description is characteristic of sound ethnographic accounts (Geertz 2001: 55 – 75; Geertz 2005) and important in capturing the complexity of human behaviour by adding contextual nuances of meanings that lie behind these actions, meticulous field notes became central for providing rich data sets for analysis. As I systematically transcribed field notes and organised them according to related categories, I examined them for additional insights and as a tool for making thematic connections. Extensive field notes and participant observation, however, are not enough to gain a comprehensive picture, since the researcher remains the main tool for data collection and interpretation. It is consequently important to include the voices of the informants themselves (Skinner 2012). Since the point of view of others is methodologically central to this study, generating interview data became essential.[61]

3.3.4. Interviews

When conducting an ethnographic study, the researcher is dependent on the willingness of others to cooperate and provide data. Eliciting information from interviewees is a co-constructed event, for it depends on the active involvement of the participants since agency ultimately rests with them (Holstein & Gubrium 2002: 115 – 120). The type of interview I

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[61] For an example of preliminary questions that I continued to refine during my research, see Appendix D.

found best suited for my research was ethnographic in nature, where my strategy was to interview the same person several times and thereby obtain various layers of data and gain rapport (Gobo 2008: 196). An ethnographic interview consists of a number of friendly conversations that are open-ended and informal (Fontein 2014: 77 – 80). Providing the interviewee freedom to voluntarily answer from his viewpoint and explain the meanings behind certain practices is central to ethnographic methodology (Punch 2005: 168 – 169). Heyl explains the importance of investing time in uncovering what a person knows, including his particular experiences, while seeking to understand what this may mean to the informant (2001: 369 – 383). This approach helped me to develop cordial relationships with my informants,[62] learn about their background, and when appropriate, insert my specific questions. My choice not to solicit answers that would neatly fit my hypothesis was deliberate, because preconceived frameworks can weaken the representativeness of data, which is why I strategically permitted that interviews became an interactive collaboration that assigned agency to my informants (Madison 2012: 28; Mason 1996: 36).[63]

During the first meeting, I tried to demonstrate my sincere interest in understanding the world from their perspective and that I would like to conduct approximately three interviews. The purpose of the first conversation was to learn about the background of my informant, introduce my broader research interest and myself. The second interview was open-ended, but I prepared specific questions that I inserted during conversation. The third interview was designed as a semi-structured interview with a written list of specific questions, as well as clarification questions from our previous two conversations.[64] The time allocated for these interviews was usually extensive, lasting on average two hours. Although this type of interview structure is considered most effective for ethnographic data collection (Prus 2005: 16), as I continued to spend time in the field I found it less necessary to schedule three seperate appointments with the same interviewee. I was able to gain trust, rapport and details about someone's life outside a formal interview structure, which enabled me to start our appointment right away with specific questions. This saved valuable time, without diminishing data quality.

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[62] Herzfeld pointed out that conversations create intimacy, which is important for proper ethnography (2000: 221).

[63] Although ethically sound and epistemologically consistent, this approach can limit data generation, since control ultimately rests with informants. I nevertheless chose to leave this feature in my interviewing technique because I found that nuggets of important data sometimes hid within a long, unrelated monologue. Once I discovered a relevant piece of information, I probed further with follow-up questions, and in that way expanded my knowledge of the topic.

[64] In order to improve the quality of the data, I intentionally prepared and practised a variety of questioning styles and probing techniques for eliciting information (Madison 2012: 29 – 32). As time progressed, I was able to refine these skills, and several of my informants confirmed how pleasant it was to talk to me.

The strategy that I chose for referencing direct quotes from my official interviews was to use real names. The reason for this is that I was given full consent and none of my informants required anonymity (Denscombe 2010: 67).

As my research unfolded, I found interviews to be one of the most important data gathering tools, as it gave me direct first-person access to the opinions and experiences of my interviewees (Skinner 2012; Back 2007).[65] The role of interviews was ancillary in that they helped me to crosscheck and understand the overall data gained through observation. Although choosing an appropriate sample for interviews ought to be ideally purposive and not convenience based (Bryman 2008: 414), this is in reality often difficult to achieve.[66] Selecting my informants was not fully under my control and I was essentially dependent on their willingness to help (Patton 2015: 264). Nevertheless, since a representative, diverse and relevant sample lies at the heart of determining the reliability and accuracy of an ethnographic project, I designed strategies to achieve appropriate representativeness.

For instance, due to the particular dynamic with Faruki's community, it was comparatively more challenging to find informants to participate in interviews. I attempted to overcome this limitation by asking willing informants to talk to their reluctant friends about me and my research. This strategy helped me to gain trust and expand my sample of informants, but it did not solve all the challenges encountered in the field. In spite of achieving variety and quality of data in my interview sample with men, I was only able to interview one woman. I tried to find a solution to this problem in order to record the female point of view, but was ultimately unable to do so. This was less because of a failed strategy, but due to Faruki's belief that women were not supposed to come to the *tekija*, but rather receive instruction and spiritual training at home (FNF#114). With men, I was able to conduct nineteen informal and semi-structured interviews in a variety of public settings. Once I achieved a sufficient level of saturation and data sets became repetitive, I decided to refrain from pursuing further interviews.[67] Another type of interview was to take notice of the opinions of people during our

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[65] For a detailed schedule of my Interviews with primary informants, see Appendix A.

[66] For example in Faruki's case, I pursued two individuals during the duration of my fieldwork for an interview that never took place. They never explicitly declined, but kept evading our appointments and postponing our meetings, where in the end I learned that this was their "polite" way of refusing to talk.

[67] As is evident from the field notes schedule in Appendix C, my fieldwork time investment with Faruki's community was greater than with Hulusi. This was intentional, as I attempted to offset the quantitative imbalance between my larger interview sample size and easier access that I had with Hulusi's followers compared to less access and fewer interviews with Faruki's followers. By spending more time in the field and engaging in "focus group" style discussions, I was able to compensate for the variation in my interview sample.

'focus group' meetings, which exposed important aspects of the research that I would have otherwise missed if I only relied on individual interviews (Punch 2005: 171).

In the case of Hulusi's community, a different set of challenges needed addressing. To begin with, I was required to conduct all of my interviews on the premises of the *tekija*. I did not explicitly follow this somewhat ambiguous rule, claiming naïveté, for which I was reprimanded. The reason provided for this rule was that the spirit of a place supposedly influenced the quality of conversation. Conducting the interview in a loud café would colour the conversation in a negative way, and in order to protect the image of Sufism, all interviews needed to be in as pure a location as possible. Each interviewee I selected needed approval by Midhat before we could speak. My requests to conduct interviews with people that I considered a potentially good source of data were politely rejected, as my informants were deemed unfit to intelligently discuss these matters. These restrictions caused me concern over reliability, but I pursued strategies to minimize the impact on my study.

For instance, my most beneficial asset was the length of time spent in the field, since it diminished the ability of others to control who I talked to informally during community gatherings. Those informants that I believed had some valuable insight, but was not allowed to interview, I simply approached after prayer and began engaging in small talk during which I inserted my interview questions.[68] This strategy became useful in diversifying and purposely selecting my informant sample and thereby improving the representativeness of my study (Mason 1996: 90 – 93). Over time, I also befriended some key people who were readily available and willing to answer any specific questions. Furthermore, since this community actively involved female participation, I was also able to conduct fourteen interviews with women and thirty with men. I carefully tried to include all relevant criteria of participants and achieve a large and diverse sample (O'Reilly 2009: 196 – 198).

Although most informants appeared committed to telling the truth, I was aware of the limits of interview-based data collection. The setting of an interview with questions asked and answers expected can cause people to alter their natural responses (Fontein 2014: 85). This problem challenged the dependability and accuracy of data collection, and pointed out the difficulty of getting to the truth. I consequently tried to be attentive to the specific way people communicated their ideas and not just the content of their words (Mason 1996: 55). Observing

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[68] This type of interviewing in the form of informal conversations is a standard feature of ethnography and does not transgress the ethics regulations of Middlesex University with which I readily complied.

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body language, reactions when somebody entered the room during an interview and seemingly memorized, 'safe' responses, all comprised information regarding the veracity of collected data. As access increased over time, I was able to verify data with key informants to verify the accuracy of my findings (Bryman 2008: 377 – 378). My good rapport and the desire of my informants for me to succeed in an accurate representation of their life worlds made this possible. The cumulative effect of these strategies did not remove all possible elements of data distortion, but they did enhance the quality. In conjunction with my other data sources, cross-referencing and analysing similarities and dissimilarities in the answers provided, I was able to secure a satisfactory understanding on the major topics that made up my inquiry.

Upon completing primary interviews, I set out to retrieve second layer evidence from informants who were not directly connected to my research context, but could provide valuable data (Gold 2001: 293).[69] I determined the epistemic validity for their inclusion based on their knowledge and involvement in Sufism, familiarity with Faruki and Hulusi and recommendations from those I encountered in the field. While interviews with primary informants were ethnographic, interviews with secondary informants were more formal and semi-structured (Bernard 2011: 157 – 158). I chose a diverse and yet relevant sample, travelled throughout Bosnia and conducted thirty-eight interviews, during which I gained a multifaceted perspective (Creswell 2008: 217 – 218). This provided me with a broader picture and an overall better understanding of my own research. It also added critical and dissenting voices, which helped to layer the richness of my data and add to its complexity. I concluded my interview data collection at the point of saturation when enough data for theoretical analysis was achieved and themes began to repeat and overlap.

During interviews, I primarily used a notebook and rarely a recording device.[70] If I felt that my interviewee was uncomfortable, I closed my notebook until at some point during the interview I asked for permission to write some things down. I learned to keep eye contact, while writing simultaneously. This strategy was effective for maintaining a natural and open atmosphere, while enabling me to document the most salient elements of our conversation. After the interview, I immediately transcribed and organised the data under thematic codes of recurring subjects to ensure that details were still fresh in my mind (Hoek 2014: 108). As a

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[69] The interview schedule with a short biographical background description of all secondary informants and the rationale by which they were selected is explained in detail in Appendix B.

[70] My reasoning for this choice was due to my desire to conduct interviews as friendly conversations and my developing aptitude to take excellent notes.

native speaker, I simultaneously transcribed and translated the material with little difficulty.[71] Through reflection, contextualisation and interpretation, I was able to link multiple interview sources together into thematic patterns displaying a set of common similarities and theoretical structures. Comparing those to my ongoing secondary literature review was helpful in identifying an overall design and situating my research within a wider setting.

One of the key criticisms of ethnography is the lack of a theoretical framework which must be located within broader academic literature (Light 2010: 163). Hence, I attempted to avoid pure description and potential blind spots by comparing my findings to similar research. This helped to contextualise my emerging themes, which played a significant role in the gradual shift of my main research question. I found it extremely useful not to postpone data analysis until a later phase in the research journey, but instead engaged in a progressive and cumulative analytical strategy (O'Reilly 2009: 14 – 15). This evolving examination helped to shape subsequent research questions, highlighted areas needing more attention during participant observation and enhanced my own careful understanding of the data (Punch 2013: 200). Although I had a preconceived area of research interest, I was willing to readjust my focus and test my theorizing to see if evidence in the field indeed supported it.[72] Upon completing my interviews and fieldwork, I evaluated my themes and assigned codes. I learned how to use the NVivo software program as a tool for a more comprehensive analysis.[73] After loading all interview transcripts, observations and other textual data into the program, I realised that this process was not beneficial. Having engaged in manual coding for almost two years has trained me to identify themes and find similar texts more efficiently on printed paper, rather than using computer software. After several months of refining, labelling, indexing and careful further coding, I designed seven main themes, twenty-eight primary sub-codes and thirty-nine secondary sub-codes.[74] My thesis outline and the suitable order in which to present my findings developed directly from this data. After months of in-depth analysis, I noticed areas that warranted further data and exploration. I consequently chose to revisit my two research communities over the course of two weeks (FNH#80 – 82; FNF#124 – 127) to test my findings in the field and gather pertinent additional information to clarify my central questions.

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[71] I found that there was no need to first transcribe the original conversation in Bosnian, as it did not improve the quality. I therefore decided to transcribe the translated version of my interviews directly, crosschecking when necessary with relevant secondary sources for meta-analysis and linguistic consistency.

[72] Active listening that permits personal positions to be readjusted is an important feature of an ethnographic inquiry (Back 2007: 23). This willingness to go where evidence led eventually shifted my research inquiry.

[73] For useful sources on NVivo see: (Bazeley & Richards 2000; Bazeley & Jackson 2013).

[74] Details related to my coding strategy, the breakdown of codes and sub-codes are listed in Appendix E.

The aggregate result of a variety of primary and secondary interviews, participant observation and strategies for improving the quality of data, enabled the triangulation of sources to achieve sufficient validity and enhance the accuracy and epistemic value of my findings (Roberts & Yamane 2012: 38). The research procedure also included thick description, the collection of diverse primary data, field notes, terminological consistency, critical reflexivity and comparisons with other contexts (Fetterman 2010: 94 – 96). The growing accumulation of complexity and richness of descriptive data is not enough for comprehensive understanding, thus I balanced my empirical findings with ongoing critical analysis. This approach was intentional to increase the reliability of findings and provide an ethnographic blueprint that could be replicated by other researchers in the future. Another important area that warranted careful attention was the appropriate conduct in the field and the principled use of accumulated data.

3.3.5. Ethics

Throughout this research, I intentionally pursued highest ethical standards, which are crucial for any credible ethnographic study (Clough & Nutbrown 2012: 187). I carefully followed measures to make data collection as positive and nonthreatening as possible. My code of conduct during participant observation was highly sensitive to proper behaviour and respectful to the dietary requirements, clothing and site-specific terminology. I demonstrated courtesy and polite reverence toward the beliefs of others. Besides my desire to blend in and thereby decrease reactivity, I also tried to be ethically responsible to uphold the values of the people I studied (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 285). Although I made unintentional mistakes and occasionally embarrassed myself, by the end of my research my demeanour and presence within the communities was publicly hailed by both respective leaders as exemplary. Hulusi even invited me to become an honorary member.[75] This earned me further respect and trust from my informants. I was officially welcomed to return any time. My exit strategy from the field included buying a sacrificial lamb on behalf of Hulusi's health[76], and a cake for Faruki's followers. This was appreciated and helped solidify the overall positive impression that I left during fieldwork. During my final official day of field research, community members in both cases showed me great honour by escorting me with hugs and handshakes, while verbally

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[75] See Appendix K for a copy of my honorary membership card.
[76] See Appendix L.

declaring blessings and positive wishes over me. I hope that my conduct and reputation will enable other scholars to continue research among Bosnian Sufis in the future.

My epistemological and personal motivation for this research included a desire to give an honest account of Bosnian Muslims that would hopefully also benefit the community. I took extra care not to cause any harm or psychological distress to my informants and to faithfully represent their point of view (Knight 2002: 142 – 143). All interviews were conducted with official consent and explanation of my research goals and full freedom for participants to speak or withdraw consent at any time (Mason 1996: 58). Although my positionality as a researcher was intentionally overt, with explanations provided concerning my goals and progressive research findings, I still reserved the right, as is commonly practised in ethnographic research, to not fully disclose everything to my informants (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 265 – 266). This was not deceptive behaviour, but necessary to protect the consistency of natural responses and actions of my informants. Within my ethical boundaries, I also gave myself permission for exaggerated naïveté, probing for inconsistencies and disregarding rules that were ambiguous and inconsistent. Overall, my goal was to uphold my credibility as a scholar, produce reliable data and remain true to my personal ethical values.

3.3.6. Reflexivity

Quality ethnographic research requires a process of hermeneutic reflection, where relationships and experiences in the field, as well as the personal impact of extensive fieldwork on the researcher are continuously analysed (Shaw 2010). I began this chapter with a brief reflexive introduction of my background and motivation for research, and how my position as a researcher impacted the process (Gobo 2008: 50). I also provided pertinent examples of how I problematised my role in the study, challenges that came up and strategies to overcome them. As I matured throughout the research process, reflexivity and introspection became the heart of my ethnographic epistemology. Faced with my own subjectivity, I had to admit that I was not only trying to discover objective truth (Light 2010: 173), but that I had several conscious and subconscious layers of personal agendas, fears and insecurities. Time spent with a variety of informants, sharing food, learning from their perspectives and experiencing emotional empathy for their joys and struggles led me to develop a personal preference for certain individuals and aversion toward others. This clouded my thinking. My supervisors pointed out that I was sometimes engaging in hagiography, instead of ethnography. Since a favourable inclination, or fascination with a particular charismatic person is a natural part of ethnographic

fieldwork (Emerson 2001a: 128), extra care was necessary in order to maximize self-awareness and objectivity due to the real danger that my fieldwork could become overly reactive and selective.

To ensure the reliability of my research findings I had to recognise my personal bias (Riis 2009: 239). Ethnographic methods such as extended time in the field, loose theoretical commitments, and a wide variety of observational data to improve validity were all useful (Emerson 2001a: 301), but to further strengthen the dependability of my research process, I had to be honest and begin treating myself as a research subject (Heyl 2001: 377 – 378). This iterative, self-reflexive process was beneficial in shaping me into the kind of researcher who was increasingly able to collect more thoughtfully selected data and engage in an improved critical analysis (Patton 2015: 73). This does not mean that I eliminated all mistakes, since it is difficult to achieve absolute detachment and objectivity (O'Reilly 2009: 105), and although my shortcomings were many, I consistently sought to remain aware of my research journey and driving motivation so as to produce a more credible outcome (Nesbitt 2009: 971).

When I began my research, my motivation was based on general curiosity, a desire to contribute to the academic discourse on Islam as a lived religious tradition and my own passion for spiritual topics. I recognised that my personal beliefs, experiences, culture and background influenced my perception of the world (Jones 2010: 8). I found it difficult to truly listen to the accounts of my informants from their perspective and not read my own experiences into those of others. I had to repeatedly readjust and critique my personal assumptions, which resulted in more self-awareness both for the purpose of my research and life in general. Even though I speak like a Bosnian and have a Bosnian passport, I spent most of my life in the West and have been shaped by its norms and values. My background made me a cultural insider, as well as an outsider. Not sharing the same religious worldview additionally solidified my outsider status. Being an outsider was familiar territory to me, since my personal circumstances dictated that I spent the majority of my life simultaneously within the liminal dimension of both inclusion and exclusion, which provided me with a practical advantage during my research. This manifested itself in a relative calmness when faced with attempts of conversion, or rejection by some informants during the early part of research. It also helped me to maintain a balanced perspective during the rigors of long-term fieldwork.

My initial pilot fieldwork helped me to become relatively culturally competent. I understood commonly used religious expressions, values and societal structures. This

expedited my learning curve and acceptance within the community. My personal devotional practices and explicit commitment to belief in God were attractive to those that I encountered in the field, which helped me to establish closer relationships (Emerson 2001a: 128). Unlike Lukens-Bull, who argued that conducting studies among Muslim communities are best if the researcher is a Muslim himself (2007: 190), I have found that my Christian commitment did not diminish trust, or the responsiveness of my informants. Instead, I was treated with impressive hospitality and kindness. Being a non-Muslim prompted the leaders of both communities to offer introductory lessons regarding matters of faith and what it was like to be a Sufi. This would probably not have been the case if I were a Muslim and expected to know these basics. The benefits of my liminality are difficult to measure, but I believe they were profitable. In retrospect, this research had a profound effect on me as a person. Besides gaining useful life skills of practising awareness and observation, I also benefited from a deeper understanding of spiritual and theological dimensions in my own faith that I could not have gleaned were it not for this project. Building relationships and understanding the world from a different perspective had a profound impact. This project was as much scientific as it was personal (Emerson 2001a: 131). I believe that some of the relationships I gained during this time will last a lifetime. My successful exit strategy enabled me to return anytime, and perhaps conduct further research. Although my experience in the field was at times extremely challenging, it was also deeply gratifying.

3.4. Conclusion

In order to realise a specific research objective, it is imperative to establish a solid methodological foundation and the most appropriate strategic framework for data collection, analysis and interpretation. This approach ensures the project's reliability and probability of a favourable outcome. The intention of this discussion was to demonstrate the process by which this thesis designed strategies to overcome particular obstacles and the manner by which it deliberately pursued a variety of methods that would generate diverse data sets. By triangulating primary sources, seeking layers of evidence and evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, the aim was to arrive at a valid picture of reality. This chapter also examined the rationale for choosing ethnography as the underlying philosophical framework, while consistently aiming to engage in a self-reflexive estimation that aspired to diminish bias and increase both objectivity and ethical adherence.

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Having elaborated on the theory and methods I employed and contextualised to my study, the following chapter begins the development of original material. It sets out to present a detailed description of the two sites that I investigated, the community members and their respective leaders. The analysis of primary organisational and biographical data, aims to identify key similarities and dissimilarities. By locating my research within its natural setting, I endeavour to go beyond description, and begin systematically identifying important elements that reveal the Shaikh's agency behind the empirical contrast. In this way, I intend to commence with the accumulation of relevant evidence that addresses my central research question.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: THE CONTEXT OF THE TWO RESEARCH SITES

4.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter outlined the essential methodological underpinning for an ethnographic orientation, and provided an account of the strategic process that I followed in gathering relevant data for this research. The purpose of the present chapter is to systematically arrange this primary material as it relates to the actual setting of the two research sites. My objective is to present a general perspective of each community and specifics about the leaders. Consequently, I outline the physical context and organisational character, introduce an overview of ritual practices and highlight distinct differences. After establishing salient features of the macro background, I then provide a brief biographical sketch of each Shaikh. As mentioned earlier, the Shaikh's critical role regarding the spiritual development of his followers causes a shared loyalty to his function and permits his authority in shaping the contours of the community both in an individual and collective sense. This is important, for in the present chapter I present initial evidence that each Shaikh did not emerge from a vacuum, perpetuating an inherited, rigid traditional system, but uniquely reconstructed it according to his own background, education, personal preference, experience and divine directive. Areas ranging from architecture, recruitment, ritual performances and specific emphasis in theological interpretation were profoundly dependent on his personal selection. While the two groups were theoretically analogous, the choices of each leader demonstrated significant dissimilarities, pointing to Naqshbandi Sufism's inherent flexibility within a Bosnian context and the Shaikh's innate ability to implement those adaptations.

4.2. Locus – Faruki's *Tekija*

The location for the Shaikh's guidance is not limited to time or place. Bosnian Sufis have traditionally viewed the *tekija*[77] as a place for spiritual study and an educational establishment, where they rehearse various religious exercises and receive instruction about God, proper etiquette and how to live in the world (Hadžibajrić 1990: 17). This is why the word "*tekija*" means more than a physical building. It represents a lifestyle, and the discipline of spiritual practices, which solidify a Sufi identity. Shaikh Faruki's *tekija* is located on the outermost edge of the city of Sarajevo, away from the noise and excitement of the downtown

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[77] There are minor differences between *tekija*, *hanika* and *zawija* (Newby 2002: 204, 217), but within my context, any building designated for the purpose of Sufi gatherings and *dhikr* performances was identified as a *tekija*.

area.[78] It is easy to miss, were it not for the little plaque that says in Arabic and Bosnian, "Sufi Centre". It was built four years ago exclusively through private donations. The selection of the site was purposive, because Faruki wanted to stay outside the limelight. The "Sufi Centre" was neither officially registered with the IC, nor was it a member of the TC, and was instead listed as a private residence. This provided it with an independent status, relatively detached from bureaucratic limitations and institutional oversight.

Prior to meeting in this building, Faruki's followers gathered for decades in cafés and private homes. He deliberately chose not to call his new meeting place "*tekija*", although in conversation it was frequently referred to as such. His reasoning was telling:

> My Shaikh told me that *tekijas* have lost their purpose in their institutional sense. That is true. They are supposed to be centres of knowledge and research. So a long time ago the desire was birthed within me to have something like that, and I knew I was not going to call it a *tekija* in order to honour my Shaikh, but give it some other name. This is how the idea got started. Even my Shaikh did not have a *tekija*. We were meeting in his apartment. (FNF#27)

This quote revealed two factors. First, Faruki perpetually referred back to his own Shaikh, a well-known Bosnian spiritual giant Halid Salihagić (d. 1993), quoting him extensively during his everyday speech.[79] Whenever Faruki mentioned his Shaikh, he exhibited considerable affection and respect, demonstrating to the listener that it was essential to obey and imitate one's Shaikh. Secondly, it also disclosed that Faruki himself did not obtain his Sufi training in the confines of a *tekija* building, which helped to explain why he minimized its importance, saying, "What is imperative is to have a good teacher. This is more important than the location."[80] (FNF#96)

On another occasion he explained, "The *tekija* exists when the Shaikh is present. The Shaikh is the one that raises you. He does not need a *tekija* to raise you. Did Jesus have a *tekija*? And he was a true Shaikh. Where we are sitting right now is the *tekija*." (FNF#111) Not having the opportunity to experience a *tekija* lifestyle during his formative period, has influenced

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[78] There were additionally two other groups connected to him in Goražde and Tešanj (smaller towns, approximately two hours outside Sarajevo), which gathered occasionally, but the main meeting place for the majority of his dervishes was this newly erected complex in 2014.

[79] Faruki has recently published a book with one hundred of his Shaikh's sayings, accompanied with his personal commentary (Ibrišević 2015b). For further references on Halid Salihagić, see for example: (Bevrnja 2016; Ibrišević 2015a; Valjevac 2013; Ibrišević 2015b; Valjevac 2012; Salkić 2014).

[80] As is evident from my field notes chart in Appendix C, much of my fieldwork and data-gathering occurred in the calligraphy studio that Faruki often frequented and not in the *tekija*.

Faruki's view toward official structures. My observation was confirmed by Muamer who, while not one of Faruki's dervishes, knew the Shaikh well.[81] He gave this useful illustration:

> Faruki is not a dervish. He is a Sufi. A dervish must have a Shaikh and a *tekija*. Faruki does not have a *tekija*. Faruki never attended a *tekija*. He has never had the opportunity to see how the lifestyle of a *tekija* is supposed to function. *Tekijas* have their own rules. From the time that you enter to the time that you leave. Everything needs to be practised, from the way that you talk, the way that you greet people, bring them tea and so on. This way of life also helps you outside the *tekija*. (DAOI#24)[82]

This does not mean that Faruki relegated the *tekija* as obsolete. When a potential seeker kept visiting the meetings, but behaved in an inappropriate way, Faruki said about him that, "He needs to learn manners a little bit, a little more than a little bit. But that is okay, since this house is dedicated to providing a good upbringing." (FNF#21) Faruki saw value in providing a formal place dedicated to learning the Sufi path, but he prioritized the pre-eminence of such learning to happen in the common, everyday world.

Downplaying the importance of the physical location of the *tekija*, revealed a deeper dimension of Faruki's underlying conviction and pedagogical emphasis that God was present everywhere. His attitude towards the importance of the building as the location for spiritual instruction was amply demonstrated when he said, "Tell me, where is the place that there is no God. It is necessary to take these things outside the *tekija* into one's home, one's business and everywhere else. I see God in everything!" (FNF#111) Since awareness of God and seeing Him in the world are essential on the Sufi path, Faruki elaborated that God occasionally spoke through specific signs about the "Sufi Centre". He told me that he was thinking about removing the plaque due to fear of persecution by some radical groups, when in that exact moment he received a phone call, "Then God sent me a message in the form of a person who told me that this is the greatest Sufi Centre." (FNF#56) He was convinced that God informed him to keep the plaque. On another occasion a disciple's wife had a dream in which the Sufi Centre was called "*bejtul makdis*" (Jerusalem). Faruki explained, "I was glad because the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem is the place from which everyone travelled to heaven." (FNF#103)[83] Attentiveness to dreams and signs in the form of advertisements on the side of a bus or unannounced visitors

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[81] As mentioned in chapter three, background information on all secondary informants is located in Appendix B.
[82] The *tekija* ban from 1952 to 1989, which I discussed in chapter two, explains why Faruki never had the opportunity for formation in such an institution.
[83] Isra and Mi'raj based on the verse in the Qur'an 17:1, describe Muhammad's ascension from what is traditionally believed to have been Jerusalem all the way to an encounter with God (Colby 2009). This "Night Journey" was elaborated by Sufis and became the foundational prototype of spiritual journeying (Nasr 2009: 31).

was inherently important to Faruki and his dervishes.[84] (FNF#4, 76) Members were remarkably watchful regarding anything that might be communication or instruction from God. I was later to find out that this conviction was situated within a theological framework, which I discuss in chapter six, modelled by the Shaikh and intentionally practised by the disciples.

One of the most striking features of the *tekija* was its atmosphere and calligraphic beauty. Dervishes were wearing normal clothing, with no outward signs of uniformity. Conversations inside the *tekija* were held in a whisper. Body movements were slow and contemplative. There was a physical posture of humility, where members crossed their arms in front of the stomach while sitting or kneeling. Several minutes of silence might pass before conversations or instructions continued. The silence in combination with most of the dervishes chain-smoking, created a rather introspective ambience. Hazim, Faruki's dervish and one of the most celebrated calligraphers in the country, was commissioned to decorate the entire interior of the *tekija* with verses from the Qur'an, Sufi sayings and famous quotations from the hadith, all handpicked by Faruki himself. The calligraphic prominence indicated that Faruki considered the written word extremely important. For instance, I repeatedly noticed how well versed he was in a variety of theological literature, and especially in his prolific knowledge of the Qur'an. He easily quoted large portions from memory, and without exception, secondary informants confirmed his superior knowledge. (DAOI#4, 5, 21, 23).

Another apparent feature of Faruki's *tekija* was its formal seclusion, where a large metal fence and eight-foot walls guarded the *tekija* from easy access, and except for Ramadan, it was only open to the public during ritual performances on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays. To my knowledge, except for the occasional private audience with the Shaikh, there were no other formal extracurricular activities held at the *tekija*. The following quote may suggest why Faruki chose to remain more secluded, "There have always been quasi-Shaikhs who have publicly appeared in order to increase their influence in society. They presented themselves as false spiritual authorities. Their desire was to gain something in this world. But real teachers were always somewhere on the margins. This has been so from time immemorial." (FNF#116) Although the compound was inhabited by Faruki, members of his family and a few of his followers, one of the interesting features of the "Sufi Centre" was the presence of a house next to the *tekija* that Faruki gave to a poor single mother and her three daughters to occupy. He paid all their bills, and some of the women met there occasionally to practise proper Qur'an

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[84] The importance of dreams for Sufis has been extensively discussed by Edgar and Henig (2010).

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recitation. Faruki was quite happy with the arrangement, "The time is not right to build huge *tekijas*, but to feed the poor." (FNF#113) On another occasion he told the following story, "One time a very rich man offered me money to build a *tekija*. I told him to first build a house for a poor person and then to come back to me. I am not for sale." (FNF#108)

4.2.1. Organisational Dimension

The organisational aspect of the *tekija*, its maintenance and finances were rather informal. I asked one dervish about this and he responded, "There is no strict organisation. Everyone does what he is good at. If there is a need, you jump in and help. Some of it is common sense. If you are the youngest person in the room, you will get up and make coffee, or empty ashtrays." (DAF#11) This informal attitude by members and the seemingly mysterious way of everything functioning on its own was continuously confirmed throughout my fieldwork. I never heard, for instance, a public announcement regarding a financial or practical need. One time when coal was delivered, several dervishes without asking simply picked up a shovel and carried the coal where it needed to go. (FNF#57) When I continued to probe about finances and methods of recruitment, Ismail responded:

> Everything is pretty informal. Nobody is keeping track of members. There are no membership dues, or similar things. We try to follow what has been traditional in this part of the world. And the model with Naqshbandi has always been that whoever is sent to you by God, you accept that person. If God does not send you someone, you do not try to recruit them yourself. (FNF#40)

This quote was telling in several ways. First, it emphasised God's agency in drawing people to Sufism and that everything happens because of His decree. This posture was one of the distinguishing features repeatedly accentuated. The centrality of practising awareness of God's involvement in all of life's affairs was a permanent theological principle that I will return to throughout this thesis.

Secondly, the above quote reflected the belief of Faruki and his followers that they were keeping the traditional Bosnian Naqshbandi way, which according to their understanding never included active recruitment.[85] Faruki explained the importance of upholding tradition as follows, "Tradition is important. Look at the Jews how they kept their tradition for thousands of years. Even as a small nation, they were able to survive for all these years." (FNF#63)

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[85] Although Faruki held to this position, studies on the Naqshbandi suggests that this is not necessarily the case and that disciples can indeed be actively recruited (Piraino 2015; Habibis 1985; Milani & Possamai 2016).

Although the concept of tradition is intrinsically fluid and subjective, since it is difficult to determine its boundaries and explain its adaptation over time, it comprised an important focal point for Faruki. Tradition from his perspective included the general elements that comprise Islam in its Bosnian context, but more importantly, he was asserting his attempt to preserve the example of the generations of Shaikhs that went before him, saying, "We are supposed to protect our tradition. I want to do things the way my Shaikh did, and his Shaikh before him. I believe our past Shaikhs more than I believe myself." (FNF#84) In other words, replicating the way of previous generations, while resisting contextualisation and modernization of specific practices comprised one of the central narratives of this community. Faruki felt responsible to preserve the past, seeing a dangerous trend trying to undermine its continuity, "I am afraid of these innovations. We are trying to protect our dear tradition like the pupil of our eye. I will not let somebody change it!" (FNF#113)

Regarding official membership, Faruki was intentionally slow and reluctant to accept new members claiming that:

> Not everyone is meant to be a dervish. It is like getting a doctor's evaluation for acceptance to the Army. Based on the physical conditions some people are accepted and others are not. The same rule applies to becoming a dervish, since we are members of a spiritual army. It is important to encourage certain people to stick to Shariʿah and to remain on earth. The Sufi path is not for them. (FNF#115)[86]

Listening to his teachings it became clear over time that Faruki believed he needed to wait for God to give him instruction and discernment as to who was meant to become a dervish. (FNF#101) There were even accounts, where he denied certain individuals by offering them to become his dervish under the condition that he slaps them in the face twice in the morning and twice in the evening. (FNF#96) Another story he told went as follows:

> A person by the name of Adam came and asked me three times if he can be my dervish and I told him no. Then Fudo told me that I should not reject him, so I said that I would accept him under one condition. He needed to give me enough money so I could buy a Mercedes. That is when he realised, that I knew what his false God was and that it needed to be destroyed before he could be my dervish. (FNF#96)

These actions led some secondary informants to believe that Faruki did not have any dervishes, "I do not see Faruki as a Shaikh who is raising up dervishes. He is enlightening people around

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[86] The reluctance of Shaikhs to accept followers has occurred historically in Sufism (Felek 2012). During the course of my fieldwork, I witnessed only about four or five new faces that were discerning if Faruki's community was where they wanted to settle. I was not able to determine if any of them officially became Faruki's dervishes, but since his process of initiation usually required a long-term trial period, this is highly unlikely.

him, but not developing dervishes." (DAOI#21) Muamer explained, "Faruki is not a Shaikh in the classic sense that he is raising up people and making them into dervishes… My Shaikh would sit with his dervishes every single day after morning prayers, eat breakfast and spend time with them. With Faruki there is no chance of that." (DAOI#24) Even his long-term dervish Nusret confirmed that the Shaikh never visited him or met his family in twenty years, and that he was more interested in attaining knowledge then familiarizing himself with mundane details about the lives of his followers. (DAF#18) Faruki's pedagogical approach was not overly intimate, but that he failed to produce dervishes is an inaccurate conclusion. He trained his followers to be independent and responsible for their own implementation of his teachings, while remaining available to answer questions or give advice in matters ranging from everyday issues to advanced theological concepts. Most importantly, his followers considered themselves his dervishes.

The total number of regular attendees at any given time was about thirty-five. Women never mixed with men, or attended ritual performances. I inquired about this dynamic and how it was possible for women to travel on the Sufi path. Faruki responded, "Every husband ought to be the Shaikh of his wife. When he comes home from the *tekija*, his wife ought to ask him how things went, and he should teach her." (FNF#114) I pursued strategies to overcome this limitation by asking dervishes for permission to interview their wives, but I quickly realised that this was inappropriate. I asked Ismail how to solve the problem, "I do not think that you can. In the *tekija* there are mainly men. Women only come during special occasions. However, a woman can be a dervish and travel very far." (FNF#40)[87] I never fully understood the deeper rationale why Faruki chose that women could not attend the *tekija*. It did not seem probable that his justification could be sufficiently explained by the husband and wife dynamic. Convenience, practical or theological considerations and culture could also be potential reasons, but ultimately this area remained unanswered.[88]

One of the perpetual challenges and sources of frustration was determining an exact number of official members. When I asked the Shaikh why he did not know precisely how many dervishes followed him, he paused for a moment and responded, "I sometimes even forget their names. I do not keep anything in writing. I have no record like some people. I am

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[87] This situation made it impossible to gather data from women, with the exception of one case. (DAF#20) This interview was only made possible, because Faruki himself called Remza on the phone and asked her to meet.
[88] Although women theoretically have freedom to participate in religious ceremonies in Sufism, research shows that in practice their involvement is relatively restricted (Eccel 1988; Bop 2005; Abbas 2010).

telling you the truth. I know it sounds strange, and it sounds strange to me too." (FNF#96) I was not able to find concrete evidence regarding the reluctance for giving exact figures, but it was clear that Faruki consistently highlighted God's agency in all things, which included knowledge of who was a dervish. Once he said, "We can count all we want, but only Allah knows." (FNF#122) I have seen this ambivalence toward claiming that someone was a dervish from long-term members themselves, when, for example, Mehmed said to me, "I am not sure if I am a Sufi, but I would really like to be one." (DAF#16) It was remarkable that this statement came from a person, who for two decades devoted his life to Faruki and was clearly dedicated to the Sufi path.

I asked Faruki to clarify why his dervishes often do not claim to be Sufis, to which he responded, "Being a dervish is between you and God. Also, to them being a dervish is something really big. If he says that he is, then he is bragging. If you are not hollow inside, you do not need any external confirmation. I always joke about these wannabes suggesting they should put a minaret on top of their head, so that everyone can see that they are something special." (FNF#40) Although both Faruki and his followers hesitated to provide a clear response as to who may or may not be a dervish when asked directly, it appeared that this was more an exercise of appropriate etiquette and humble positionality, rather than an actual belief system. As our conversations continued, judgments on who was a "true or false" dervish predominated. In other words, in respect to God, nobody was competent enough to know ultimate reality and it was necessary to maintain modest scepticism, but holding a personal opinion about these matters was commonly practised. My best estimate based on interview data and observation is that Faruki had about twelve initiated followers, and about sixty awaiting initiation. Because Faruki believed that thirty to fifty was the most appropriate age for someone to become a dervish (FNF#101, 112), the predominant age range of most dervishes was likewise reflective of those numbers.

In spite of the lack of clear membership records, the seeming spontaneity regarding organisational elements and the basic functioning of the *tekija*, the underlying theme remained that the Shaikh decided every minute detail, and made all the decisions. For instance, Faruki was actively involved in the architectural design of the *tekija*, chose the subject matter and location for every calligraphic design, oversaw the content and order of *ilahija* (spiritual songs) that were put together in a book used by *tekija* members during ritual performances and he also assigned various jobs to particular people, which they faithfully executed. Guests that wished

to visit needed his permission. Faruki either made or delegated almost all decisions, and when someone was in doubt, he asked the Shaikh. Ismail explained that, "He simply knows through inspiration and what others tell him who ought to do what in the *tekija*. Even though he is not there all the time, he stays current with the progress of the dervishes. And then he decides whom he will entrust a certain task." (FNF#56)

During meetings that he attended, I observed his intimate knowledge of the personal lives of each member as he proceeded to give them public advice on how to solve a specific problem.[89] Then he looked at me and said, "I am worried for them and I know everything about them that I need to know. I see them. I see how much Allah has permitted me to see and how much I need to see." (FNF#22) After his official teaching was over, he commanded someone with a good voice to sing an *ilahija*.[90] He directed another dervish to recite the Qur'an and for someone to light incense. His presence was large, with everyone intensely looking at him and awaiting his instruction. This remarkable authority, religious expertise and attention to detail appeared to leave a deep impression on his followers. Moreover, his selection regarding the means of spiritual travel was not merely based on normative rules and regulations handed down by previous Shaikhs, but was influenced by his personal background and life experience that shaped his character and leadership style. This is significant, because it continues to highlight the importance of individual agency for the relative independent implementation of religious normatives. In order to understand Faruki's particular approach to leadership, theological preferences and pedagogical methods, I will now introduce relevant biographical data and highlight its implications.

4.2.2. Faruki's Background

Faruki was born in 1941 in a small village in central Bosnia (Ibrišević 2015a: 7).[91] His father and grandmother were dervishes. Although formally he only had a high school diploma, Faruki was self-taught, an expert in Arabic and Islamic sciences. He translated a number of

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[89] This may appear paradoxical to my earlier point that Faruki was more interested in acquiring knowledge and not details of the personal lives of his followers. Although this was generally true, but because dervishes often asked for advice about life, the Shaikh consequently became familiar with intimate personal details.

[90] *Ilahije* are sung in Arabic, Turkish and Bosnian, are typical and popular with Bosnian Sufis, revealing a shared Ottoman past (Schimmel 1975: 330; Krokus 2014: 97). For an example of a Bosnian *ilahija* see Appendix O.

[91] The biographical account of Faruki is a strategic combination of written primary (Ibrišević 2015b; Ibrišević 2016b; Ibrišević 2015a; Ibrišević 2012; Ibrišević 2016a) and secondary sources (Valjevac 2013; Valjevac 2012; Numanagić 2013), as well as oral narratives (interviews with primary and secondary informants). I have intentionally cross-referenced a variety of sources, in order to maximize validity and accuracy of data.

books, including four volumes from a selection of Ibn ʿArabi's *Meccan Revelations*.[92] He also authored five books, with wide readership and distribution throughout Bosnia. His scholarly contribution, however, has been largely ignored by the official academic community in Bosnia. I inquired about this phenomenon and received the following response:

> Some of the tension between the establishment and people like Faruki is noticeable. It really surprises me. I do not know why this is so. Maybe it has to do with influence and power. Faruki is definitely not an insider and I can tell you from personal experience that I have never heard anyone here at the faculty talk about him. (DAOI#1)

The silent treatment he received from the academic leadership did not prevent the sale of his books in every major bookshop in the country, but it displayed an obvious disconnect between him and the official leadership.

After completing his formal religious education, Faruki became an Imam as a young man and was an official IC employee for many years. He was a widower with three adult children and several grandchildren. My data analysis of secondary interviews, which included comments by dissenters (DAOI#6, 7, 8) and those who were not personally fond of him (DAOI#28), showed a categorical acknowledgment of his exceptional knowledge.[93] Muharem, for example, a retired minister of education for the IC, who has extensively researched and written about Sufism, said, "He is very knowledgeable, both theoretically and practically. He is a very well educated and knowledgeable person. If I have faith in someone to talk about Sufism today, it would be Faruki." (DAOI#22) Faruki's learning was not merely theoretical. Asim, whose late father was long-term friends with Faruki, recalled, "He is a special and unusual phenomenon, who was completely different from everyone else. Not only did he have great knowledge, but he was also speaking about faith from within. His words were alive, promoting a living faith that is relevant here and now." (DAOI#1) From these accounts and my own observation, I concluded that Faruki's main strength was his exceptional learning. This incidentally influenced his teaching emphasis, preferred choice regarding spiritual travel and exhortation of others.[94]

Faruki told me during one of our meetings about his journey into Sufism:

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[92] The impressive *al-futūḥāt al-makkiyya* is the most famous work by the Andalusian mystic.

[93] See Appendix E for analysis and coding, and B for the secondary interview schedule.

[94] His belief that the pursuit of knowledge was indispensable for the attainment of God's nearness will be explored more specifically in chapter six. What I am suggesting is that Faruki's natural abilities and talents are influencing his theological emphasis and pedagogical methods, and consequently the lives and priorities of his dervishes.

> I felt like I was in a labyrinth. I did not have a solution and I knew this was the only way out. I desperately wanted to become a Sufi. My soul simply could not get satisfied. I knew this was going to help me. I read many books but you also need a professor, a teacher. Several Shaikhs offered themselves to me to be my teachers, but I knew they were not for me." (FNF#27)

His Sufi upbringing and initiation into becoming a Shaikh was primarily due to his own Shaikh Halid Salihagić. Shaikh Halid's reputation in Sufi circles was remarkable. Some considered him the greatest Sufi of the last century (Bevrnja 2016: 155 – 157). Throughout my interactions with Sufis around the country, his name was mentioned with admiration and honour. (DAOI#4, 5, 6, 20) Sufis who told me that they "sat" with Shaikh Halid and listened to his teachings considered it a great honour. (DAOI#9, 33) Their body gestures and way of speaking indicated to me that he left a deep impression on them. Hazim explained that although many claimed to have been Halid's disciples, he only had two dervishes, "There are many people that visited him, but as far as I know he only had two dervishes – my father and Faruki. These things are very serious and they have to be confirmed spiritually. There is an invisible command from God to the Shaikh to know who his dervish is." (FNF#86)[95]

Faruki's love for his Shaikh was noticeable, and sayings by his deceased Shaikh were constantly on his lips.[96] He once told the following story:

> I remember one time there was so much snow in the city that all the transportation systems stopped working. I was worried about my Shaikh, so I walked for several hours through the snow up a mountain and knocked on his door. He opened the door and asked me why I was there, and I told him that I was worried about him. He told me I was a true *ašik* (lover), and I was so happy about that. (FNF#105)

Faruki's devotion to his Shaikh was important, because it modelled to his followers the absolute need to love one's leader and obey his decrees. It also highlighted the need to preserve traditional teachings of the past and always unconditionally follow the Shaikh in all matters of faith and practice. Shaikh Halid furthermore influenced Faruki regarding Ibn ʿArabi, whose thought comprised a significant theological focal point of the community.[97]

Faruki studied Ibn ʿArabi his entire life, saying that, "We are in fact followers of Ibn ʿArabi… All real Sufis resemble Ibn ʿArabi. If they do not there is something wrong with their

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[95] Determining who exactly was Halid's dervish was difficult to assess conclusively due the subjectivity regarding Sufi initiation. It was evident, however, that Faruki's life was greatly influenced by this renowned Shaikh.

[96] I already mentioned the book he dedicated to his Shaikh (Ibrišević 2015b). Additional evidence included my observation and conversations with dervishes who confirmed Faruki's love for his Shaikh. (FNF#82, 116, 128)

[97] Throughout my interactions with dervishes, they often prefaced their statement with the phrase, "Ibn ʿArabi says." (FNF#3, 91; DAF#8) This clearly highlighted the importance of this medieval thinker for the community.

Sufism." (FNF#26, 63). The reason Faruki considers himself a follower of Ibn ʿArabi was due to his own Shaikh's orientation. When I asked about the importance of Ibn ʿArabi, he said:

> He sees God in everything, but my Shaikh told me once that he would drink Ibn ʿArabi with one gulp from a little cup. Why did he say that? I do not know. Perhaps he wanted to make sure that I do not start worshiping Ibn ʿArabi. My Shaikh was a living Ibn ʿArabi. Sometimes he would correct Ibn ʿArabi, saying it is like this and not like that. He had the greatest influence on me regarding Ibn ʿArabi, otherwise I would not be able to read or understand him at all. For that, you need a living Shaikh. You cannot learn medicine on the Internet. (FNF#83)

During an email exchange with Shaikh Ismail, he confirmed the importance of Ibn ʿArabi in the formation of Faruki's theological understanding as follows:

> The study of Ibn ʿArabi had undoubtedly a great influence on Faruki. Most of all, his Shaikh Halid valued and knew exceptionally well the teachings of Ibn ʿArabi. He encouraged Faruki, as his dervish, to study Arabic and to read Arabic literature, especially the works of Ibn ʿArabi. This influence of Ibn ʿArabi on Shaikh Faruki can be seen in that he often refers to Ibn ʿArabi when it comes to answering questions. He greatly values Ibn ʿArabi and encourages others to study his works and his interpretation of religion. The fact that this much effort has been invested in the translation of the Futūḥāt and that further translation is encouraged, speaks in and of itself. (FNF#128)

Faruki insisted that it was impossible to understand Ibn ʿArabi's teaching without the interpretation of a qualified teacher. Dervishes ought to read him, but always come to the Shaikh to clarify their own understanding. This approach reaffirmed his authority and ensured theological cohesion for the community. Secondary informants confirmed Faruki's reputation as an Ibn ʿArabi expert. A Shaikh from central Bosnia said, "I know that he focuses more on gaining knowledge. How often the dervishes get together and what they do I do not know. The fact that he is focusing on Ibn ʿArabi shows how much he emphasises gnosis. As far as that is concerned, he is Bosnia's champion." (DAOI#20) Ibn ʿArabi translations were regularly taking place every Friday at the *tekija*. While Faruki was rarely present at these meetings, he meticulously examined the script and provided suggestions and corrections to Ismail, who was continuing to translate the Futūḥāt and leading the activities at the *tekija*.

4.2.3. Clarifying Ismail's Role

To understand the functioning of the *tekija*, it is necessary to introduce details on Shaikh Ismail, a key informant and Faruki's likely successor. Although he did not have the level of authority, charisma or influence as Faruki, Ismail was an important figure in the structure of

the community.[98] Ismail was highly educated and an expert in Arabic, working as a professional translator for the IC. He frequently contributed articles to religious magazines in Bosnia. He said once, "God helped me to learn Arabic. Allah led me in that direction. It is important that you go where you will be able to contribute the most both for yourself and for others. If God is guiding you then you must go, if He is not then don't." (FNF#29) It is primarily due to his extensive professional experience and work in publishing that enabled Faruki to complete the four-volume Futūḥāt translation. They collaborated closely on this project, when at one point Ismail gave a profound interpretation of a Qur'anic passage, occasioning Faruki to declare him a Shaikh publicly.

Ismail never expected this to happen. He walked into the *tekija* a simple dervish, and went home a Shaikh. He recounted the event as follows, "Faruki one day announced to everyone that he is declaring me a Shaikh. I also got that in writing. I was confused. I did not feel called into that. I did not feel ready and I did not know how to thank him. I realised that the best way to thank him is to work. To do that which he entrusted me and to do it well." (FNF#40) Even though he carried the title of Shaikh, he considered himself a mere member of the *tekija* and not its figurehead. In the beginning of my research, whenever I asked him for permission to borrow a book or to participate in an activity at the *tekija*, he always mentioned that I needed to petition Faruki, who was the ultimate authority. I did not understand this dynamic at first, since I thought that as Shaikh he had authority to make decisions. Only later did I realise that there were gradations between Shaikhs ranging from greater to lesser, with an implicit hierarchical structure in place that clearly determined who was in charge.[99]

Shaikh Ismail shared his perspective regarding his role in the lives of dervishes as follows, "I view them as my friends in the *tekija*, but also beyond the *tekija*. They are my brothers. I am not their spiritual teacher. I have been saved from that burden. I consider them his dervishes. They follow him, not me." (FNF#40) Ismail actually preferred not to have to carry the title of Shaikh, saying, "For me that is an obligation. It is a burden; it would be a lot easier if I were not a Shaikh. The longer I have been a Shaikh and the longer I have spent time with Faruki, the less I consider myself a Shaikh. I can see how much one needs to know, how

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[98] Ismail's dervish name given to him by Faruki was "Nuri". He received that name because of a dream where he was reciting the Qur'an and two lights were shining across his shoulder illuminating the essential meaning of the text. He believed that one light was Allah, the other Muhammad. After explaining the dream to Faruki, he bestowed upon him his new Sufi name. (FNF#123)

[99] This realization came to me both from literature (Buehler 1998; Bashir 2011), which I will explain in more detail in chapter five, and Faruki's teachings (FNF#55, 108)

much one needs to do and so on. It is much easier to be a dervish." (FNF#87) In spite of Ismail's reluctance, he faithfully led all ritual performances at the *tekija* and provided teaching and instruction during those meetings. Although his leadership style was different from Faruki, the content was exceptionally similar. One of his former employers who knew Ismail for a long time told me that, "Ismail is thinking with Faruki's head." (DAOI#23) Faruki publicly praised Ismail for his character and knowledge, even initiating a ceremony where all *tekija* members lined up, and proceeded one by one to kiss Ismail's hand. The old Shaikh demonstrably did likewise, and gave the following instruction, "They will kiss your hand because you are the Shaikh. But this is all in honour of our Prophet Muhammad; we have nothing to do with that." (FNF#41) This procession was intended to confirm Ismail's authenticity as a Shaikh who should be trusted and followed.

Witnessing this evolving process of succession, revealed several contradictions and complexities I did not expect. First, during my interviews with Faruki's dervishes, I noticed that some either reluctantly recognised Ismail as their next Shaikh once Faruki passed away, or outright expressed their doubts that they will ever follow him. (DAF#15) For example, one dervish responded to my question of who would become his Shaikh saying, "I do not know. I am not sure who could be my Shaikh. Maybe Ismail could be. He is a learned man, but he is a very different type of person. With him you need to dig and dig until you get some information, whereas with Faruki, you just touch him and he takes off." (DAF#12) This apprehension in no way diminished the respect for Ismail, but it accentuated the problem of succession, since it seemed clear that Ismail should be followed. Not only did some dervishes express their doubts, Ismail himself questioned if he would actually become Faruki's heir. (FNF#12) This apparent ambiguity became especially confusing in light of the following explicit statement by Faruki:

> Yes, he ought to be the next Shaikh… If he cannot be a Shaikh, then who can? One dervish told me that he dreamt the Prophet, but he was in the image of Ismail. These are serious things. As soon as I heard that, I knew he ought to be a Shaikh. A living Shaikh confirmed Ismail as Shaikh. What more do you need? If a Shaikh tells you to go find a statue to be your Shaikh, or to go to a church and find a Friar to be your Shaikh, you must listen to him." (FNF#93)

In spite of this clear instruction, there was still an overall uncertainty in reference to the continuation of leadership at the *tekija*.

The comparative insight between Faruki and Ismail demonstrated that although they were both Shaikhs, their authority varied significantly. The following explanation regarding the gradation of Shaikhs by Shaikh Luan proved insightful:

> If a Shaikh can no longer lead you, he should be honest and send you on to the next one. We are currently more like clown Shaikhs. We have become actors. Let us be honest here. There is a lot of acting here. There are some Shaikhs that are doing their best and others are just acting. There are Shaikhs who are only qualified to lead a *dhikr*, and they pretend to be great teachers. (DAOI#14)

Another young Shaikh commented on the different levels of Shaikhs, "I believe that you do not need to be a Shaikh of the entire path, it is enough if somebody can take you five or six kilometres further." (DAOI#23) When I probed with yet another Shaikh from central Bosnia regarding Shaikhs who call themselves by that title, but exhibit few of the expected qualifications, he replied, "You could be a Shaikh of the *dhikr*. Even you could do that. In about a month, you can learn how to perform the *dhikr* and then become the Shaikh of that. In the beginning, even if you do not know Arabic, you can be a Shaikh. Because currently we do not have lions, so even foxes can be lions." (DAOI#19) These cases embody the intrinsic flexibility of the concept of Shaikh and the abilities he ought to exhibit.

In the case of Ismail and Faruki, this flexible, subjective nature of evaluating the rank of a Shaikh was further substantiated by one of Faruki's dervishes, who told me that, "I perceive Ismail as a true Shaikh, but he is less than Faruki in my eyes." (DAF#7) In his humility, Ismail acknowledged his inferiority, saying, "I do not see myself even close to being on the level of Shaikh Faruki, but I also do not feel the burden of having to be like him." (FNF#40) These statements illustrated the inherent broadness of the term Shaikh. During my observation of their interaction, Faruki spoke to Ismail like a young student, asking him difficult questions and publicly criticizing his responses. (FNF#85, 97) He balanced his patronizing behaviour with much praise, but it became clear over time that their power relation reflected a definitive authority structure and hierarchical differentiation. Faruki was positively the main mechanism for instruction, community formation and shaping the life worlds of his followers. He was the dynamic nexus around which everything revolved.

Having introduced the Sufi Centre, its activities, organisational elements, background information on Faruki and Ismail, I will now present the context of my second research setting centred around Shaikh Hulusi, which displayed characteristics and performative dynamics that demonstrated substantial differences. The contrast was both explicit and implicit, displaying

the wide range of variation permitted within the Naqshbandi Sufi tradition and implemented by its respective leader.

4.3. Locus – Hulusi's *Tekija*

"*Tekija Mejtaš*" was the name of the main *tekija* building where Hulusi's dervishes gathered. It was located in the centre of Sarajevo. Adjacent to it was a five hundred-year-old mosque, frequented by dervishes and non-dervishes for the obligatory five daily prayers. The courtyard displayed a beautiful garden with over a dozen types of roses, an elegantly designed fountain and a set of custom designed, handcrafted chairs, the biggest of which was solely reserved for and often occupied by Shaikh Hulusi himself, who was rarely absent from the *tekija*. After entering, it was customary to stand by the door with the right toe on top of the left toe, the left-hand across one's belly, the right hand on the heart, all accompanied by a humble bow in the anticipation of being acknowledged by the Shaikh and invited to enter. The nature of this choreographed greeting was explained to me as a symbolic act, which represented submission to the Shaikh, separation of the spiritual from the carnal world and the pre-eminence of the heart as the locus of knowledge and revelation.[100] (DAH#1) Once Hulusi granted permission to enter, the dervish was obliged to greet the Shaikh by kneeling before him and kissing his hand three times and placing it on his forehead the same number of times.[101]

Symbolism, allegories, figurative forms of speech and emblematic objects were characteristic of Hulusi and his community. Although Hulusi said during his lecture that, "The form is important, but the essence is much more important" (FNH#37), in practise the form played a prominent role. The fountain in the courtyard served as a good illustration of this. Its beauty and meaning was introduced with pride early on in my research. (FNH#4) The Shaikh decided on all the details of the design and commissioned its construction in 2004, which was also the year that his community began meeting there. It was comprised of a round marble globe sitting on top of a square base. When the water was running, the globe gyrated. On the four sides of the square were located the well-known and oft-repeated ceremonial sayings in a variety of ritual performances inscribed in Arabic: *la ilahe* (no God), *el hamdu lillah* (thanks be to God), *subhanallah* (praise be to God) and *allahu akbar* (Allah is the greatest). Midhat explained to me that the square represented Shariʿah, while the globe symbolized Sufism, and

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[100] This necessary interplay between *dunyā* (the material world) and *dīn* (religion) or *ākhira* (next world), where immanence requires transcendence and vice versa, has been appropriately discussed by Akutsu (2013).
[101] This process included both the outside of the hand and the inner palm. I was told that this was representative of the Shaikh's outer and inner being, both of which ought to be loved, pursued and respected. (DAH#18)

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the five larger pillars and twelve smaller ones, exemplified the pillars of Islam and the recognised Sufi Orders. He put it in the following words, "The square is the foundation upon which Sufism rests. You need to understand that the Shariʿah can exist without Sufism, whereas Sufism cannot exist without Shariʿah." (FNH#36)

The importance of the physical premises of the *tekija* and the multiple visual aids behind which were hidden spiritual lessons continuously permeated my fieldwork experience. As I mentioned in chapter three, the extraordinary role of the location became apparent by the requirement for interviews to be conducted within the *tekija* compound. Due to the difference between the sacred and profane, I needed to be physically located on holy ground. (FNH#6) Midhat explained, "You are deceived if you think that it is possible for a conversation to be the same in the world as it would be in the beautiful environment of the *tekija*… Any atmosphere outside the *tekija* is insufficient, and cannot therefore produce appropriate results." (FNH#29) I questioned him further, since Sufis ought to be aware of God's presence wherever they are, "Yes, they should. They are striving to achieve that. But in the meantime, they are lacking the proper vocabulary and cannot adequately describe these themes we are talking about." (FNH#29) One senior dervish who was hierarchically lower than Midhat disagreed, "That which we carry in our hearts, we also have to be on the outside. I do not agree with Midhat. I can talk about God anywhere; I do not need to be in the *tekija*." (DAH#12) This statement corroborated my own understanding, but a few weeks later the same dervish informed me that he talked with Midhat and changed his mind. He now believed that, "This is a place where you find something that is not out there. It is a different state. We are totally relaxed and out there that is not the case." (DAH#13)

I probed this matter also with Hulusi who gave the following surprising response, "Sufis ought not reveal who they are and what they are outside. When I take a walk through town, I never wear my Sufi clothing." (FNH#27) I continued to investigate this seeming paradox of why spiritual truths and religious experiences that transcend material boundaries needed to be contained within physical confines of a particular locale. During this process, a picture began to emerge that revealed an underlying tension between form and essence, as well as the inner and outer dimensions that Hulusi intentionally tried to reconcile on behalf of his community. I will explore the resulting implication in chapters six and seven, but the following statement by Midhat demonstrated the polarity well, "There is one state at the end of a *dhikr* performance and another one if you have not participated… The energy that you receive gives your soul a

specific type of glow. It automatically shapes your thoughts and directs your heart." (FNH#29) In other words, according to Hulusi and the *tekija* leadership, spiritual states and physical premises were important, since they shaped the type and quality of data I would receive.

The atmosphere of the *tekija* was remarkably lively and animated. There was a general sense of a festive atmosphere, where conversations tended to be about soccer, cars, getting a haircut and so on. (FNH#37) The prevalence of nonreligious topics was noticeable. For example, before one of the *dhikr* performances, three dervishes were seated on the Shaikh's left side, while four were seated on his right. He did not enter the room yet, and those present made joking comments how the collective physical weight of the rather heavyset dervishes "balanced out" the numerical advantage of the other, skinnier group. (FNH#49) This light and friendly interaction between members contributed to an overall relaxed atmosphere, which simultaneously presented a stark contrast to the more sombre and serious nature of the religious ritual itself. The *tekija* was open twenty-four hours a day, offering hospitality to a variety of guests regardless of their background. Ritual performances included a Naqshbandi *dhikr* on Fridays and Sundays, a Chishti *dhikr* on Wednesdays and a Halveti *dhikr* on Monday nights. The yearly calendar was marked with multiple special events attracting large crowds, as well as political and religious dignitaries. Women comprised about one third of the membership, and they were fully integrated into the community. One female dervish described her experience as follows, "I really like the people here. They are really nice and intelligent. I feel a sense of community. Everyone is oriented towards progress. In addition, there is this oriental, traditional atmosphere here. You can feel the old spirit of Bosnia." (DAH#36) Part of the reason for this informal atmosphere was the predominant demographic of young people. Aida, a long-term, active member that led the weekly women's meeting, explained, "I think twenty to thirty-five is the most representative age group. Most of them are students. I think it is easier to work with students." (DAH#28) I recorded from personal observation that about sixty percent of the attendees were between the ages of eighteen and thirty. (FNH#21) Another dervish confirmed, "It is true that there are a lot of young people here. It all depends on the mission of the Shaikh… It is through the young people that the Shaikh also reaches their parents. Once they come and see where their children are spending their time, they are thrilled." (DAH#6)

Recruitment was primarily done by members themselves, but acceptance always depended on the approval of the Shaikh. During the course of my fieldwork, I never witnessed or heard that anyone was turned down to become a dervish. In fact, it appeared that Hulusi was

notably quick to accept aspirants into his fold. A professor at the Islamic University commended Hulusi for his efforts of saving the youth from the street, from doing drugs and bad influences. (DAOI#3) Others, however, were more critical. One Shaikh commented about the state of Sufism, saying:

> Sufism today is all messed up. People are just playing around. There are many false copies. A Shaikh never looks for a disciple. Allah has to send him, and you have to accept him. In Sufism, there have always only been a few people. Now Sufism is becoming more trendy. Now people are invited to come, there are cameras and so on. Sufis in the past did not permit things to be this way. (DAOI#10)

The polar contrast between disdain and approval regarding Hulusi was characteristic of my interactions with secondary informants. These opposing views exhibited the range of opinions present in Bosnia about Sufism in general and what authentic Sufism ought to look like. Due to its importance, size and attractiveness, however, the younger population was not the only demographic at Hulusi's *tekija*.

In a critical article about Hulusi, Hasić described the *tekija* as a controversial place where Bosnian politicians were commonly seen, making decisions about who should be hired and fired at the highest political levels, as well as a place where one had to be in order to progress in today's business and political milieu (2010: 25). To what degree this analysis was accurate or biased was difficult to determine, but the presence of this demographic was undeniable. I will expound upon the role of Hulusi's *tekija* in society in chapter seven, but from my observation, it is true that some of the most important religious and political leaders in the country asked for a private audience with the Shaikh and regularly attended the more important religious ceremonies. (FNH#1, 14, 81) While social engagement and political involvement and influence are standard features of the Sufi enterpirse (Dickson & Sharify-Funk 2017: 258), Hulusi also welcomed the less fortunate of society. One of his dervishes wrote to me the following email:

> I think *Tekija Mejtaš* is open for anyone. I have seen in the *tekija* gypsies, drug addicts, even those who belong to the gay population. According to my opinion, the Shaikh sees in every person something good. This is characteristic of noble people. He sees people how they ought to be or how God created them to be, as sinless beings, clean, untainted souls…It is a characteristic of real Shaikhs that people from various profiles and professions follow them. You will find this to be true at *Tekija Mejtaš*. You have those who are barbers, politicians and doctors. (FNH#83)

An article in National Geographic about dervishes in Bosnia confirmed the variety of backgrounds that comprised the members of Hulusi's *tekija* (Skorup & Rostuhar 2009). Throughout my interactions, people expressed their amazement at the calibre of dervishes who willingly submitted themselves to Hulusi's leadership. For example, one prominent academic commented, "I am totally amazed that one of Hulusi's dervishes is the former director of the University of Sarajevo. He is definitely a very popular personality."[102] (DAOI#2)

Women were also an active part of the life of the community and could become dervishes, with all the responsibilities and privileges that this entailed. They were not, however, able to attain promotions, or lead the *dhikr* in the same way as men. Their interaction with the Shaikh was also more limited. For example, they only had four formal meetings as a *džemat* (community) per year, whereas the men had almost unlimited, daily access. I asked one female dervish if she felt disadvantaged by this lack of proximity to the Shaikh, upon which she responded, "We are not disadvantaged at all. A man cannot become a Shaikh before he is forty years old, but a woman can become a Shaikh in forty days. We are a lot more sensitive. For us it is enough to see the face of the Shaikh from afar. Men sometimes have a hard heart and that is why they need the Shaikh more." (DAH#37) Throughout my interactions with women, it appeared that they considered themselves as equals. In spite of minor limitations, they certainly made up an integral part of the complex framework of the community as a whole. I have consequently chosen to interweave female voices throughout the thesis as corresponding to male informants.[103]

4.3.1. Organisational Dimension

One of the most impressive aspects of Hulusi's community was the remarkable organisation, discipline and variety of *tekija* activities. I found out that there were five groups with about fifteen volunteers that took shifts overseeing the programme of activities at the *tekija*, helping during special events by cooking, cleaning and being on call.[104] Each group had

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[102] More examples ranging from Richard Gere to the mayor of the capital of Croatia could be enumerated on the long list of people who visited Hulusi, but the objective here is to highlight the demographic variety of those who frequented the *tekija*.

[103] Due to the scope of this study, I reluctantly made the decision not to distinguish interviews with women under a separate section. This choice was based on the fact that women's voices were sufficiently similar to male informants and the impossibility to produce an adequately comparable sample with Faruki's community. Consequently due to the scope and potential imbalance in my own investigation, in chapter eight I suggest that this particular area warrants further research.

[104] I attempted to participate in the rotation of people on call, in order to gain a better insider perspective as to how things function, but my offer was politely refused due to my status as a "guest".

a leader, who then gave a report to the main leader in charge of all the groups. (FNH#13) A young dervish casually offered the following useful description of the *tekija*, "The *tekija* is like a country. You have the president, the vice president, various functionaries and the people." (FNH#28) I keenly observed the life of the *tekija* from a variety of vantage points over a long period, and was repeatedly amazed at the level of efficiency. Hulusi's extensive training and expertise in management and his extraordinary organisational skills were vividly demonstrated through the impeccable functioning of his *tekija*. Other informants confirmed the exceptional administrative skill displayed by Hulusi. The main Imam of Sarajevo, for example, told me the following details about Hulusi regarding his cooperation with the IC, "Every year he provides us with a detailed report of all of his activities. He is flawless when it comes to organisation. At every event that I attended which he organised, you get a detailed programme planned out to the minute. That is simply amazing. He has always been like that." (DAOI#24) In spite of the meticulous attention to detail and managerial excellence, a contradictory narrative and interpretive complexity emerged.

When I inquired about the administration of the *tekija*, Midhat told me that everything ran by itself. He explained that:

> There is no list. We all know each other. During our weekly meeting we present our needs and then whoever is able, volunteers to help… Not even I know the technical side of how things operate. Things just function on their own. When your relationship with God is in harmony, then God causes harmony between you and other people. God's satisfaction releases mercy." (FNH# 29)

Another primary informant and active member of the tekija corroborated this narrative, saying, "Once the foundation is built right, everything else kind of functions on its own. I feel more at home here than I do at my own house. There I only go to sleep." (DAH#13) A female dervish explained, "It is simple. Whenever there is an event, the women basically know that their job is to bake something and to clean the *tekija*. You essentially use anyone that is here and offers to help. Obviously, only if someone is able to." (DAH#28) The general narrative consistently described the organisation of the *tekija* as miraculously easy. These accounts, however, somewhat contradicted my other interactions and observations.

For example, not only was there an actual list, there was also a specially designed green book with the title "The Schedule for Being on Call and Cleaning in the Naqshbandi *Tekija Mejtaš*". Names, dates and responsibilities were meticulously noted and regularly reviewed. I heard people referring to this book affectionately as the book of *sevap* (divine reward).

(FNH#40) Furthermore, Midhat made this public announcement, "Let not the green book remain empty. It is important that you show your membership commitment through your service. And if God wills, everything that you do here, you will find in the next world." (FNH#53) I was not able to ascertain a clear reason regarding the seeming reluctance to disclose the mundane elements of this highly structured community, but it appeared that the underlying reason was that if things "function on their own" then consequently it was God, devoid of human power, who through His participation affirmed the entire enterprise. (FNH#29) The degree of divine endorsements depended in a sense on the denigration of individual human action. In other words, divine satisfaction resulted in supernatural support. The restraint of giving clear administrative evidence became especially apparent as I attempted to gather accurate membership numbers.

When I asked Hulusi to give me an approximate number of followers, he responded, "The problem is that no one has exact numbers. If you asked me right now, I swear to you I would not know exactly how many dervishes I have. I do not keep any records. I have never kept any records, but I know that I have over one thousand. But the exact number I do not know." (FNH#71) By this point, I spent approximately a year with his community and I found it puzzling that a person who was such a scrupulous perfectionist would be unaware as to how many individuals have solemnly sworn themselves to submit to his authority. I have repeatedly observed that each newly initiated dervish received a distinctly designed diploma with a gold seal inside a special envelope and other carefully chosen items. (FNH#1, 63) There were membership dues, signup sheets and phone number registries. In spite of these factors, the Shaikh claimed that he did not know how many dervishes he had. I asked a famous Bosnian Shaikh about this conundrum. He responded as follows:

> Each Shaikh knows how many dervishes he has, but he is not required to share that with the TC. You only have to report how many *dhikrs* you are performing. Hulusi should know how many he has. It also depends from which angle he said what he said. There are all kinds of different people that come for different reasons. It is better that they are in the *tekija* than sitting in some bar somewhere. The Shaikh is trying to save people from others and from themselves. (DAOI#18)

This comment helped to explain the somewhat ambiguous definition of a dervish and the exact moment that someone becomes one.

The difficulty of counting and determining concrete numbers became clear during an interview with another Shaikh, who said:

I believe that we have confused the way we use these numbers. In order to become a dervish, it does not matter how educated you are, what job you have, how rich you are, or who your parents are. These are not requirements to become a dervish. Someone can attend the *dhikr* for forty years and is not a dervish… That is God's decision. (DAOI#11)

It is possible that Hulusi was either intentionally vague in making the claim that he had authoritative knowledge of the exact moment when somebody qualified as a dervish, or he was spiritually careful by delegating that type of objective knowledge to God and His agency. It is also feasible that it was the Shaikh's responsibility to keep these numbers secret, "The Shaikh is not supposed to reveal the secret of his dervishes. Only he knows how many dervishes he has." (DAH#29) Regardless of the reason, retrieving exact membership numbers remained difficult. My personal estimation is that Hulusi had approximately twelve hundred initiated followers, which is the greatest number of followers of any Bosnian Shaikh.[105] When it comes to the number of *halkas* (groups) that belonged to Hulusi who regularly performed the *dhikr*, he was more concrete, saying, "I know how many I have exactly. I have twenty-three *halkas*. They are in America, in Denmark, Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro." (FNH#71) He also recommended that I visit one of his groups in Herzegovina, and one on the northernmost edge of Bosnia, in order to be able to grasp "the vast span" of where all of his dervishes were meeting. (FNH#71) I was never able to accomplish his suggestion due to logistical restraints, but it did reveal that he was more willing to be explicit about the number of groups, than he was about individual members. These numbers and locations of groups essentially highlighted Hulusi's widespread influence and appeal.

Other pertinent features I observed include the Shaikh's requirement for everyone on the premises of the *tekija* to wear a red Fez. Hulusi explained his reasoning for this in a magazine interview, saying that the Fez is a century-old Bosnian tradition and that he wanted to protect it from being forgotten (Hadžimejlić 2004: 9). It also served as an external symbol of unity, giving the appearance that all dervishes were connected as one. (FNH#12) Another common article of clothing worn by initiated Sufis was the green *hajdarija* (vest). The lack of this visible insignia plainly indicated that someone was either visiting, or still discerning his willingness to commit to the Sufi path. In addition to the distinct attire, one of the most distinguishing features of Hulusi's community was its outstanding breadth of activities. A

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[105] The figure is an estimation derived from my interaction with IC and TC leadership, other Shaikhs (DAOI#15, 19) and informal conversations with ordinary Muslims, as well as participation in two *bejat* ceremonies that all of Hulusi's dervishes were required to attend.

newspaper article on Hulusi's *tekija* listed a number of its annual activities, its prolific publishing efforts, a *tekija* choir called *Ašik*, the scholarship programme for students, the active participation of women, Arabic and Qur'an recitation courses and religious education for children (Smajlović 2011: 25). This impressive list highlighted the effective functioning, organisation and dynamism that was taking place under Hulusi's leadership.

I will provide additional detail on special events and their significance in chapter seven, but the commitment to uphold, and go beyond the prescribed Islamic duties was noticeable. Midhat summarized this as follows:

> We have a community, which accomplishes certain tasks. We fulfil all the requirements of Shariʿah, including all of the activities required by the IC. There is not a single one that we miss. Regarding every *mubarek* (blessed/special) night, we put forth maximum engagement and effort. We have two imams, who also offer religious classes for young children here at the mosque. We also perform the five daily prayers… It is very important on the Sufi path to never neglect Shariʿah law. These are our duties with which our Lord has honoured us." (FNH#28)

One regular member corroborated the importance of observance as follows, "The *tekija* is for those people who want more. If the ritual prayer and going to the mosque is not enough for you, and you wish to have more, then Sufism is for you. However, you cannot have the *tariqa* without the Shariʿah." (DAH#26) Tekija members often used the phrase, "No tariqa without Shariʿah." (DAH#10) The Shaikh likewise used it during his public lectures (FNH#74), displaying its central importance to the life of the community.[106]

Since the need was great for a high level of organisation, a "*tekija* council" met on a weekly basis, or more often if necessary. Its membership was comprised of approximately fifteen senior dervishes, who executed all the logistical demands necessitated by the number of special occasions and the planning of regular events. Although this meeting was closed to non-members, I was given special permission to attend and observe first-hand how well organised everything was behind the scenes. There was also a weekly women's meeting, whose purpose was to provide theological education, a place for fellowship, planning and organising the various activities such as cooking and cleaning and similar responsibilities delegated to the female members of the *tekija*. The leader of this group told me, "The intention of these meetings is to get to know each other, to socialize and to learn new things." (DAH#30) All discussions

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[106] Shariʿah here includes its role as the perfect expression of the divine will of God, its interpretation by the science of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) by the Bosnian *ulemma* and the appropriate implemenatation of the *sunna* (the practice of the prophet Muhammad) (Rippin 2012: 88 – 102).

that took place during these meetings were then relayed back to the Shaikh who carefully scrutinized everything, especially the organisational aspects of those conversations, and then provided detailed instructions regarding what needed to be done. He remained in total control of both the micro and macro level. His managerial skills were impeccable.

The *tekija* was financed through membership dues and voluntary donations. During an announcement, Midhat communicated to the crowd the following:

> The first and most important obligation are your membership dues. Most of you here are members of this community, and may I say eminent community, and you therefore have membership obligations. There are a lot of expenses and it is understandable that you are late with your dues and that you do not give as much as you can…Let us be dedicated to this house. For this is our house. Even if one flower is broken, it is our flower that is broken." (FNH#64)

Collective ownership and responsibility toward the *tekija* was a recurring theme. During formal and informal conversations, dervishes referred to the *tekija* as "my home", or my "second home". (DAH#3, 35) Hulusi repeatedly reinforced this notion during his lectures, saying, "You have to understand that when you enter the *tekija*, you are entering your home. If you see something needs to be done, do not wait for someone else to do it. If you are not learning, if you are not fulfilling your duties and are negligent, do not pull others with you." (FNH#35) In addition to finances provided by the members themselves, Hulusi had connections with foreign sponsors, in particular Turkish dignitaries, who donated generously.[107] In summary, Hulusi's community was a multifaceted, highly coordinated and well-functioning organisation that was carefully monitored in its minutest detail by the skilful leadership of the Shaikh. He embodied the central nexus and energizing force, and provided vision on behalf of the people under his leadership. The importance of his role is difficult to overstate. In order to understand his leadership style and theological choices, I will now provide a brief biographical introduction on Shaikh Hulusi.

4.3.2. Hulusi's Background

Hulusi was born in 1953 in the small Bosnian town of Stolac in Herzegovina. While sitting alone with him, he told me that he did not want to be the centre of attention and that my research should not be about him. He nevertheless gave me the following biographical account:

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[107] I will elaborate on the significance of this transnational connection in chapter seven.

I had a dream, a vision of a man with a white beard and a light that was shining out of his forehead. Shortly thereafter, my friend invited me to come meet the famed Shaikh Salihagić, who ended up looking exactly like the man in my dream. When he saw me he immediately gave me the name Hulusi, which was the same name as his. What an honour. On that day, my life was completely changed and I knew that the Sufi path was for me. Afterwards I became his disciple and followed him everywhere. He gave me permission to lead the *dhikr* performance. Shaikh Salihagić even visited me once in Stolac and attended one of my *dhikrs*. (FNH#10)

Although a personal biographical narration is not reliable by itself, it does provide a useful framework. As I cross-checked my data with other written sources on Hulusi (Džidžović 2010; Brzina 2004; Biegman 2009; Raudvere 2011), relevant oral accounts from secondary informants and personal observation, the following details completed the picture. Hulusi claimed that he was passionate about faith from early childhood and dedicated to performing his religious duties. He wanted to go to the Madrassa, but his father did not give him permission to do so. He moved to Belgrade, Serbia where he lived for five years, spending his time at the mosque in religious devotions. He graduated with a Master's degree in management studies, winning the "November Prize" as student of the year. He was married without children, but got a divorce, which his dervish Nedžad explained happened because, "It is difficult to maintain a marriage and be a Shaikh. Look at Hulusi. He is someone that does more for the *tekija* than anyone else you have ever met in your life. He is more physically present inside that building than all of us combined. There is simply no time for marriage."[108] (DAH#10)

Upon his return to Bosnia, he became the director of human resources for the Zenica[109] Steelwork industry, which at the time had 54,000 employees. He worked there until the start of the war. My next-door neighbour happened to be a distinguished general during the war and was Shaikh Hulusi's captain for a time. He claimed that he knew him well and told me that Hulusi was an educated man, a good warrior, precise and meticulous, but that he was not religious before the war. That happened sometime during the war. He did not understand why Hulusi chose to become a Shaikh as his profession. (FNH#10) During my interview with one of the authorities on Sufism in Bosnia, my informant also expressed his surprise at Hulusi's rapid rise to become a prominent religious leader, saying, "He is an instant Shaikh, who travelled the path by taking a shortcut. People wonder if he was ever a dervish to another Shaikh. Hulusi does not even know how to read Arabic...He is a great organiser, but that is not

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[108] Although celibacy is practiced as an ascetic principle, it is usually not a standard feature of the Sufi path (Watenpaugh 2005: 554).
[109] Fourth largest city in Bosnia, located an hour by car east of Sarajevo.

required in Sufism. True Shaikhs must have completed the journey." (DAOI#29) Speaking with Hulusi's Madrassa trained dervish regarding the Shaikh's religious training, I mentioned that theoretically he was more educated than his Shaikh, to which he responded as follows:

> My Shaikh encourages everyone to pursue higher education. True knowledge is something that is given to us by Allah. Hulusi is better than I am, and spiritually stronger. He has wisdom and knowledge that Allah gave him. What you and I know because of our university education is only information. Hulusi has experienced these things. He understands faith; he does not only know it. Part of the problem is that people are jealous. (DAH#21)

The lack of Hulusi's formal religious education was evident, and he himself admitted his shortcomings regarding his knowledge of Arabic. (FNH#8) This, however, was not seen as an obstacle by his followers, since they believed that his knowledge superseded the confines of institutionalized schooling.

Hulusi exhibited his most remarkable talents predominantly in other areas. As the war in Bosnia unfolded, Hulusi worked his way up through the ranks and became commander of the famous Seventh Muslim Brigade (Bougarel 2018: 205). Many considered him a war hero and a man of acclaimed charisma and authority. His presence evidently commanded the room, but he balanced his domineering qualities with kindness, generosity and lighthearted humour. Biegman rightfully called him "an impressive man of action and a very eloquent preacher…" (2009: 76). Whenever he was in the *tekija*, he was continually on his cell phone, making and answering phone calls, giving instructions to different people, while simultaneously having an audience with a variety of people ranging from poor single mothers to influential politicians. One of his long-term dervishes gave the following helpful description of the Shaikh:

> The Shaikh has a lot of energy. He helps anyone he can, gives advice and has a lot of knowledge. He is a good organiser. Even before becoming a Shaikh, whatever he did he was always the best. He was a factory director and a general in the Army. This is why he is able to give advice regarding life. He can help you find a job, since he has many connections. You know, many politicians come here. He gives money to humanitarian causes. He has completely given himself, both body and soul to help everyone. (DAH#35)

His work ethic, energy, memory and organisational skills were impressive. Two older dervishes said, "There is absolutely no one who could ever replace the Shaikh. It is impossible to do what he does. He takes care of over a thousand people and thinks of everything on their behalf. He is their father and cares for everyone's burdens. No, there is nobody even close." (FNH#17)

His natural and acquired skills were visible in his leadership, which included administrative excellence and devotional discipline. A secondary informant lauded him for his positive contribution to society saying:

> Hulusi is a very good organiser. I am able to accept a Shaikh that has a positive influence on society. I do not condemn the activities of these new Shaikhs. If nothing else, they have helped these young people get off the street. Maybe they saved a few marriages and helped some people. In this, I see a positive role for them in our society. Some of their theological interpretations could be criticized, but overall their social involvement is positive. (DAOI#30)

Hulusi's technical mastery of managing the institutional dimension of a Sufi community was evident, but for the purpose of this study, it is critical to identify what shaped Hulusi into the religious leader that he became. This is important since Sufi masters are inheritors of a long-standing tradition (Green 2012: 8), who are supposed to exhibit qualities and behaviour patterns that were transmitted to them by former spiritual masters (Ephrat 2008: 99).

Throughout his discourse, writings and interviews, Hulusi uniformly identified Salihagić as his Shaikh and the person who "raised him". (FNH#10) Although this might be the case from Hulusi's perspective, evidence suggested that he did not spend a significant amount of time with Salihagić. A well-respected, long-term Sufi who knew Salihagić for decades told me the following, "He claims that Salihagić was his teacher, but that is a lie. By God, I swear to you that this is a lie. He might have seen him a couple of times. He only started visiting him in 1990 or 1991. And he might have met him two or three times." (DAOI#5) The sentiment of this statement is notably antagonistic, and therefore not wholly trustworthy. Negative opinions and frequent criticisms characterized my interactions with secondary informants regarding Hulusi. Some of these sources consequently need to be treated with suspicion, but the overall message that Hulusi had a limited formative timeframe with Salihagić can be trusted. A seasoned dervish who was also present in the nineties corroborated, "I have never in my life seen him with Salihagić. I did not even hear about him much less see him. In addition, people that were around Salihagić never saw him. I know that for a fact." (DAOI#6) Another eyewitness said:

> He did not meet Halid until 1988. I remember seeing him in the *tekija*. Hulusi claims that Halid is his teacher and Shaikh, but he never spent much time with him. Look, he might have seen him ten, fifteen or at the most twenty times. You cannot say that this is your teacher, if you spent so little time with someone. He is tying himself to Halid, because he was a well-known and great Sufi. (DAOI#10)

Evidence from multiple other conversations[110] and the fact that Shaikh Salihagić passed away in 1993, confirm that Hulusi's contact with him was limited.

The absence of a long-term relationship did not necessitate the abolition of some form of apprenticeship, but there is a genuine difference between the type of formation that can occur over several decades, as was the case with Faruki, versus a few meetings. This formative period might help to explain some of the dissimilarities between Hulusi and Faruki. In addition to Salihagić, Hulusi also had other teachers. He received his *hilafet* (inauguration/diploma) to become Shaikh of the Naqshbandi order from Mesud Hadžimejlić (1937 – 2009).[111] Afterward a Shaikh from Turkey, Džafir Tajjar, promoted him as Shaikh of the Chishti, Qadiri and Halveti order. Hulusi's efforts of collecting legitimization from multiple sources were criticized by a fellow Shaikh as follows, "There are those Shaikhs who did not live for a very long time with their Shaikh and love did not get birthed in their hearts. That is why they are still seeking confirmation elsewhere. If you are a true Shaikh and you received something from your Shaikh, you should not have the need to look anywhere else." (DAOI#2) Mesud's own son and current Shaikh commented in a similar manner, "That should have been enough, but he went looking for more." (DAOI#18)

These sources of spiritual instruction undoubtedly shaped Hulusi and his subsequent choices of how he appropriated the historical legacy of past Sufi Masters and adapted traditional Bosnian Sufism to the contemporary demands and challenges. Raudvere, who for years researched Sufism in Bosnia, made the following keen observation about Hulusi's community and his implementation and reinterpretation of historical Sufi features in the context of the modern world:

> The meeting place in central Sarajevo is a restored historical *tekija* from the 16th century, rebuilt after the war to host a large community that has grown thanks to an apparently appealing discourse mediating between tradition and renewal. The group can offer well-attended intense prayers combined with activities that promote engagement in social matters. The main role of the *šejh* is to be a spiritual leader and a trusted guide in social and moral matters. The meeting place carries symbolic importance and connects the contemporary themes in preaching and practice to historical legacy (2011: 8 – 9).

Raudvere's remarkable insight was corroborated by my experience of witnessing the way Hulusi applied spiritual and historical legitimization to justify his present adaptation.

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[110] Without exception, this was a uniform data set from secondary informants. (DAOI#5, 6, 10, 21, 24, 28, 33) Others who knew him before the war also stated that his interest in Sufism began around that time. (FNH#33, 52)
[111] For more details see: (Hadžimejlić 2015).

(FNH#47) His personal background, skills, talents and religious formation were part of the manner in which he chose to guide his followers and implement Naqshbandi Sufism in the present context. As Shaikh, he had the authority to decide on important issues and appropriate modifications that shaped his community, revealing the breadth and adaptability of the Naqshbandi tradition in contemporary Bosnia.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter intended to provide the background of the two research communities, establish the necessary foundational context and introduce key individuals that formed the core of the study. Location, architecture, ritual performances, recruitment, administrative and organisational structures, as well as the biographical framework of the two Shaikhs all served to illustrate how Naqshbandi Sufi leaders in Bosnia appropriate religious traditions and practices in divergent ways. I highlighted salient differences between the two Shaikhs as individuals, suggesting that the distinctions of each community are in large part due to their own personality and individual choices. For instance, Faruki's disinterest in form and location, coupled with an emphasis on the attainment of knowledge helped to clarify the community's seclusion and focus on learning, while Hulusi's long-term involvement in political life and administrative skills, were manifested in a pronounced organisational life and outward orientation. This chapter aimed to present introductory evidence regarding the centrality of the Shaikh in determining the formative contours of the community under his leadership.

In the following chapter, I seek to develop the general historical and theoretical context from which the Shaikh's office emerged, and then link the discussion to Faruki and Hulusi. I identify specific reasons that validate the Shaikh's exceptional authority, while recognising critical voices and contrary accounts. The sequence of this chapter is deliberate, since it explicates the basis for the role of the Shaikh in Sufism and in my research context in specific. This evaluation is important as it establishes and explains the background that enables the Shaikh to make individual choices regarding his methods of guidance and theological interpretation, which are the subjects investigated in later chapters.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: THE CENTRALITY OF THE SHAIKH

5.1. Introduction

The foregoing chapter outlined the particular context where my fieldwork took place and introduced the main actors. I pointed out the significance of the Shaikh's authority, which enabled him to influence the community under his leadership and shape it according to his personal prerogative. I discussed salient elements of similarities and dissimilarities in each group, indicating that Hulusi and Faruki were respectively responsible for their inauguration. This chapter continues to build on the idea of the centrality of the Shaikh. I first outline the broad theoretical and historical framework for the development of the Shaikh's office, provide an overview of legitimizing factors that endorse his authority and link the analysis to my specific context. Additionally, I explore critical voices against the institution of the Shaikh, and examine the significance of his responsibility in shaping and adapting the normative framework of a Naqshbandi Sufi tradition under his domain. This chapter relies on comparing and contrasting primary fieldwork data, evaluating interviews with outsiders as well as an analytic engagement with relevant secondary literature that discusses the function of the Shaikh. Its objective is to locate the Shaikh's importance in Sufism, demonstrate my rationale for intentionally selecting the Shaikh as the principal focus of this research, and assess the resulting implications for the overall inquiry.

5.2. The Necessity for a Shaikh

If Sufis journey to attain proximity with God (Nicholson 2002: 21), then acquiring God's presence depends upon submission to the guidance of a qualified Shaikh (Netton 2000: 73; Kukavica 2011: 120).[112] Outside a rare number of people, few can attain the desired goal without a Shaikh. During my research, I found a range of explanations regarding the role of the Shaikh. Some interlocutors had a tendency to employ mystical and symbolic language, while others reverted to simpler descriptions. Asking Faruki about the Shaikh's role, he replied:

> A Shaikh is both a teacher and a guide who walks with you through life. He tells you how to walk, sit
> and act towards your wife and children. He gives you heavenly tasks and helps you in every segment of
> your life. The Shaikh is your elder. It is like an army, where one knows exactly who is in charge of ten,

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[112] The common saying among Bosnian Naqshbandis and Hulusi in particular, "*prvo drug, pa put*" (first a companion, then the path), represents this notion well. (FNH#61)

one hundred, a thousand people all the way to the general. There is nothing mystical about this. Those people, who do not have knowledge, mystify things. However, this is a natural religion. (FNF#105)

Faruki hereby emphasised that the journey to God was reasonable, requiring discipline, structure and obedience to an authority figure. To him, it was important to present Sufi doctrine as logical and natural, and avoid its mystification.

Occasionally he also modelled what he taught. For instance, during a Friday meeting Faruki purposefully sat down in the place of the *hizmećar* (youngest dervish who does menial chores) in order to make the following point, "Look where I am sitting, look at my humility. People always push me to sit up high, but I really feel more comfortable down here. This is a natural faith. There is no need to pretend and play games. Just live your life naturally." (FNF#97) In spite of this unambiguous narrative, Faruki was not always consistent, periodically using metaphysical and symbolic language that was difficult to decipher. Hazim confirmed this, saying, "Faruki lifts the conversation to such a high level that it is difficult to follow him and understand everything he says. I remember listening to other Shaikhs who did not talk the way he does. Even after ten years, I still have a hard time following his teaching." (FNF#30) For instance, during another occasion Faruki explained the function of the Shaikh in the following words:

> The Shaikh is the central figure. He is like the galaxy. When they split the atom, there was an incredible power that was released. The Shaikh is like that atom. The sun is the centre of the solar system, but it is not the only centre. It also spins around other planets who represent the centre from the perspective of the sun. The geocentric system is accurate from the position of the eye, but from the position of reason, the sun is the centre. There where there is a subject, there is a centre. Allah is not the centre, because he is not a subject. (FNF#114)

In spite of such symbolic language, Faruki generally described the Shaikh's role as a normal, logical and hierarchical structure for the benefit of spiritual progress.

Ismail's description was remarkably similar, "The Shaikh is the one that commands and forbids. He rewards and punishes. Dervishes are students that are seeking knowledge from their teacher. We are a group with a common job, and there is someone who gets to command so that the job can be accomplished successfully." (FNF#78) Although the Shaikh was merely a spiritual authority figure who led his followers on the path to God, his role remained essential. The following quote by Faruki's female dervishes underlined this fact, "The Shaikh is the central figure on your spiritual path. You absolutely have to have a Shaikh. It is the most

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important thing." (DAF#20) This language attesting to the ordinary nature of the Shaikh's activity was also employed by a secondary informant who said, "The Shaikh is only there to make sure you fulfil your obligations. It is like joining any other organisation that has its own rules of operation." (DAOI#37)[113] In other words, one way to interpret the Shaikh's role is by demystifying his office and rationalizing his actions.

In comparison to Faruki, Hulusi tended to mystify the function of the Shaikh, cloaking his descriptions in rather esoteric language that ascribed a greater, supernatural function to this office. For instance, during one of his teachings he said:

> The Shaikh has already gone through the training of his *nefs* (self) and has cleansed it from all possible desires… The Shaikh is the one who raises you through his own morality. He brings light to your internal being by his mere presence. He preoccupies you when you are in his presence, while protecting you while you are in his absence. The Shaikh does not call you to his own gate, but opens the gate toward Him. The Shaikh is not the one who gives a speech, but the one whose states are birthed within you. The Shaikh rescues you from your prison of desires, and leads you to your Lord. The Shaikh keeps cleansing the mirror of your heart until the light of your Lord is reflected in it. He goes with you all the way until he brings you to Him and says, 'Here you are; here is your Lord.' (FNH#32)

Here, Hulusi claimed that he already attained perfection and completed the journey himself. The large white onyx stone that was often hanging around his neck served as a symbolic representation of the purity of his soul, according to one of his dervishes. (FNH#17) He also denounced making an idol out of the Shaikh, which apparently was a rebuttal to somebody's comment, or a correction of an erroneous belief. Finally, Hulusi ascribed supernatural powers to himself. He affirmed his ability to change the moral nature and spiritual positionality of his followers through his mere presence, and even provide protection in his absence.[114]

An illustration of this omnipresent feature of Hulusi was that upon entering the room in which the Shaikh usually sat, dervishes customarily bowed in the direction of the Shaikh's chair, even in his absence. Upon inquiring the meaning behind this practice, one dervish explained, "Some people ask if the Shaikh is here. With his spirit, he is always here. The Shaikh is always here." (DAH#20) I found that rather curious, since if the Shaikh was present spiritually, then that would make the need to bow in the direction of a particular physical

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[113] Data from secondary interviews generally revealed a restraint in describing the Shaikh through overt mystical terminology, but rather as reasonable and self-evident. (DAOI#5, 16, 18)

[114] When interviewed for a magazine, Hulusi confirmed that it was the Shaikh who cleansed the "lamp of the heart" in order for it to shine brighter (Hadžimejlić 2004: 9), as well as the one who removed the negative things in human hearts, while developing that which makes them truly human (Smajlović 2011: 24).

location superfluous. When I inquired further, the same dervish responded, "That chair is just a reminder and symbol for the Shaikh's constant presence." (DAH#20) After analysing Hulusi's public teachings, I discovered that the aforementioned belief comprised a tenet of his instruction, "You should behave in such a way as if you are always in the company of the Shaikh, even when he is not physically present. Know the Shaikh is always here." (FNH#35) This attribute of the Shaikh's spiritual omnipresence is in line with secondary literature on the Naqshbandi. Although the Shaikh is paramount among all Sufi Orders, the Naqshbandi in particular developed an elaborate system around this person (Schimmel 1975: 237), which not only permitted the prominence of his influence when he was physically there, but also by his spiritual being in absentia (Haar 1992: 311 – 312). It is interesting to note that while Faruki and Hulusi were both Naqshbandi Shaikhs, this feature was essentially absent in Faruki's teaching and fully supported by Hulusi. In other words, each Shaikh contextualised the appropriation and interpretation of Naqshbandi doctrine differently.

In addition to his spiritual presence, the physical proximity of the Shaikh comprised an essential part of the journey and was one of the means by which travellers progressed. The following comment by another Shaikh provided germane insight, "The Shaikh can shape you until you physically start looking like the Shaikh. To the degree that you are spiritually connected to him and physically close to his presence, you will be transformed." (DAOI#19) The importance of Hulusi's presence was particularly relevant in the area of knowledge transmission from heart-to-heart, which Hulusi's dervish explained as follows, "Questions have to be born from the heart, since from the mind they cannot be born. When I am looking at the Shaikh, every question of my heart always receive an answer. The mere presence of the pure soul of the Shaikh enables our souls to drink in that beverage." (DAH#13) Belief in mystical, hidden forms of knowledge transmission broadened in the eyes of Hulusi's followers his supernatural, transcendent powers, which Samir, a long-term dervish, summed up well:

> Following the Shaikh can become rather extreme. I have seen people who wear the same type of clothes that he does, they cut their beards to match his and their behaviour is almost the same… The Shaikh is the measurement for everything, including your progress. I firmly believe that he is God's representative and that he has a strong connection with God. To the degree that I am connected to the Shaikh, I have progressed in coming close to God. I cannot go directly to God. You simply cannot and you cannot. I can only do that through the Shaikh. He has the keys. He is the door. The only way to reach God is through him. (DAH#3)

The fundamental need for a Shaikh was a common belief by both communities, but in Hulusi's case, the role was permeated with a greater degree of supernatural and mystical qualities.

The necessity for a divinely ordained person was skilfully described by another Shaikh as follows, "You cannot continue on the path without a teacher. Allah is asking people to follow a human being. A human being is the implementation of religion. That is why Mohammed is the living Qur'an. Otherwise, the angel Gabriel could have just handed us the book and that would have been it. Every person needs a Shaikh." (DAOI#22) When I asked Midhat if a non-Sufi will ever reach the goal without a Shaikh, he explained, "You need him, because you cannot do it alone. The Shaikh is the Prophet's representative in our time. He is showing his followers how to live. Those who have sworn allegiance to the Shaikh have sworn allegiance to Allah." (FNH#62) At the core of the Sufi understanding for the demand of a Shaikh, lies the prophetic ideal. A Shaikh must ultimately resemble the Prophet and become his living manifestation and earthly representative (Mičijević 1998: 48).

Since God is unknowable, and even divine revelation needed a human being for its transmission and demonstration of its implementation, Sufis consequently believe that every individual required guidance by a more perfect human being. Valjevac, a long-term, well-educated Sufi and Islamic professor, illustrated this:

> The role of the Shaikh is to be a teacher, not only theoretically, but also practically. Even when an angel came to visit the Prophet, he would appear to him in human form. Why? Even he needed a teacher. Not God, but a human being. We all need to be able to ask somebody a specific question. God's concept is that revelation always comes with teaching and interpretation by a human being. This does not pertain only to spiritual things. In all things human beings need a teacher who can show us how to live. (DAOI#30)

Faruki added another layer to my understanding when he explained that, "God is abstract, while I am real… It is much easier for you to communicate with God through a Shaikh. Allah never sent a book without a Prophet, a living human being. You need a living person, someone you can touch." (FNF#86) The divine blueprint required that earthly living and spiritual wayfaring incorporated a hierarchical system, where seekers submitted to one particular person if they hoped to succeed. This individual was the Shaikh. The augmentation and codification of his role and the increase of his power and authority grew over time. Eventually he was considered infallible and a living archetype of the Prophet himself (Pinto 1995: 4 – 5). Ismail positively confirmed this, saying, "The Shaikh is replacing the role of the Prophet." (FNF#55) Having

established the theoretical necessity for the role of the Shaikh, I will now examine the historical and evolutionary process of its development.

5.3. Historic Evolution of the Role of the Shaikh

There was a historic shift in the office of the Shaikh (Ohlander 2008: 188), or as one secondary informant put it, "The way people perceive the Shaikh has greatly changed from what it used to be in the past." (DAOI#29) Traces of this development were evident in the nuanced difference in which Faruki and Hulusi related to their followers. For instance, upon inquiring as to the responsibility of the dervish once the Shaikh passed away, Ismail said, "You are required to find a new Shaikh. This is true even when the new Shaikh is weaker than the old Shaikh." (FNF#40) Faruki believed that the connection with a deceased Shaikh continued, but allowed a dervish to switch allegiance to a new Shaikh, "You have permission to change your Shaikh if you have reached his level." (FNF#7) This loose bond with one's Shaikh was a more serious affair in Hulusi's case. Midhat explained:

> You can only have one Shaikh. You cannot change your own father. If he passes away, he still remains your spiritual father. Is there anyone that has two physical fathers? No, that is why you can only give your oath to one Shaikh. Even when he passes away, he continues to be your teacher. Your spiritual connection to him can never be severed. Only material death has occurred…Your Shaikh is always alive and will always remain your Shaikh. (FNH#62)

This quote demonstrated a comparatively stronger bond between Shaikh and dervish, providing an example of a divergent spectrum of understanding regarding the Shaikh's function.

Secondary informants also displayed a diverse interpretive range, where Luan, for instance, engaged in regular conversations with his deceased Shaikh, "My Shaikh comes and visits me every Wednesday at the same time. He gives me instruction as to what I should be doing." (DAOI#14) Other informants, however, were unsympathetic toward this line of thinking, saying, "These people might criticize Christians for making Jesus into God, but they are doing the same thing. One person told me that his Shaikh knows the exact moment when each of his dervishes turns onto his side while sleeping at night. They make things up, in order to ensure for themselves that their teacher is able to do things that no one else in the whole world can." (DAOI#4) The perception of the historic function of the Shaikh was multifaceted and not consistent across all categories. Although for Hulusi the relationship between Shaikh

and dervish revealed a greater degree of exclusivity than for Faruki, when it came to the subject of mediation, it was Faruki's interpretation that was more extreme.

As the Shaikh's influence grew over time, his authority became all-encompassing (Karamustafa 2007: 117, 134), eventually culminating in the final stage of the formative process. He now functioned as an intermediary between man and God (Melchert 2014: 17). It essentially became his mission to intercede on behalf of his followers and lead the Muslim community to God (Fusfeld 1981: 71). Takim expressed this as follows:

> The multitudinous powers of the holy man enable him to make the remote, transcendent God relevant to the particular needs of the people. The mediatory function of the holy man makes him a focus of hopes and an agent of cure. These curative powers earn him social recognition and enhance his authority... Salvific efficacy of the holy man lies in his being seen as a medium of divine-human interaction. Due to his spiritual connection, the holy man offers the profane world a sacred encounter (2006: 39).

This transformation from teacher to intercessor was considered controversial by generations of Muslims (Hermansen 2008: 318), and yet his role as the link between the heavenly and earthly realm became firmly established. Heck explains, "It was his image that formed the link to the prophet and to God, and devotion to him, love for him, concentration on his image in prayer became part of the process of salvation. In short, the Sufi initiate was to identify not so much with God as with his Shaikh, who would bring him to God" (2007: 157). Although the theological narrative permitted the Shaikh to function as "the medium by which God becomes present" (Pinto 1995: 11), Hulusi distanced himself from directly appropriating such terminology, while Faruki readily embraced it.

One of Hulusi's followers carefully avoided the claim of intercessory powers by the Shaikh, saying, "God forbid! There is no such thing as a mediator in Islam. All that someone can be is an example for me to follow." (DAH#26) Although this reflected a rejection of mediation, Hulusi's response regarding the mediating role of the Shaikh implied otherwise:

> Let us say you are in love with a beautiful blonde, so I take you on a journey to meet her. The journey will cost a lot, the sun will beat down upon us, but I know the way, I know the right medicine and I know the dangers of the road. If you hold on to the hand of your Shaikh tightly, you will get there. You must know that her father will not let you have her, but because he knows me and I am vouching for you, he will. This is the only way for you to get her. (FNH#7)

Hulusi did not explicitly use the word "mediator", but his allegorical depiction suggested an intercessory role. Another dervish corroborated my assumption, saying, "The only way to

establish a connection to one's Lord is through his representatives. The Shaikh is the representative of the Prophet. It is impossible to enter without the Shaikh. Travelling toward God is only possible through him." (DAH#1) The Shaikh's mediatory role was additionally evidenced by his follower's explanation that in kissing his hand, "We are kissing God himself." (DAH#25) Due to his close connection with the Islamic leadership, Hulusi was careful in using mediatory language in order to avoid the following type of criticism, "There is no mediator between man and God. Rather, the relation is only between the slave and his Lord. I think some Catholic influence has gotten into Sufism." (DAOI#2) Even though Hulusi insinuated his role, remaining safely within the bounds of more orthodox terminology appeared to be his preferred strategy. As an outsider, Faruki enjoyed greater liberty.

In spite of the potential danger of disapproval, Faruki was more explicit and unapologetic in his choice of vocabulary, saying, "God always speaks to humanity through a mediator. If God needs a mediator, then who are you to say that there is no such thing. That is a necessary situation. He established mediation between Him and people through other people." (FNF#86) Hazim commented on the criticism by the Islamic leadership regarding the concept of the Shaikh's mediation as follows, "They say that there is no mediator, but you are unable to do anything without them mediating it.… When you get sick, you go to a doctor, when you need a firefighter or a police officer, you do not say you have a connection to the absolute God, you call them. But when you want to go to God, then you pretend like you do not need anyone's help." (FNF#86)

According to Faruki, the Shaikh unequivocally mediated a person's journey to God, but he did not absolve sin, or save directly. Rather, his primary responsibility was to disseminate knowledge, "Only God can save you, but I am your mediator. Let me tell you how that is possible. God is the one who saves, but you do not know how to appropriate that salvation. You need a Shaikh." (FNF#90) In other words, Faruki equivocated mediation with religious instruction and upbringing, which would ultimately lead to the attainment of knowledge. This interpretation has its general roots in Sufi theology, where knowledge is alluded to as the link that connects mankind and God (Abrahamov 2003: 60), helping him to progress on the path of proximity (Chittick 2013: 230). Nearness to God is understood to be conditional upon knowledge (Chittick 1989: 151), and since according to Ibn ʿArabi the world is God's self-manifestation, knowledge enables the Sufi to see God in all things (Shah-Kazemi 2002: 179 – 181). It is probably within this theological background, and especially through the Akbarian

lens where the Shaikh becomes the "locus of the self-manifestation of God" (Pinto 1995: 204), that Faruki formulated his view. In spite of this nuanced interpretation of mediation, his overt use of mediatory language was in stark contrast to Hulusi. Another vivid example of the evolved understanding of the Shaikh and its different application by the two respective leaders was the use of parental imagery to describe a deeper spiritual reality.

As the function of the Shaikh evolved, in addition to intercession and spiritual direction, he became, in a sense, the progenitor and creator of the life of his disciples. The powerful bond between disciple and master formed the nucleus of emerging Sufi communities (Lizzio 2007: 6). Chaudhry suggests that one of the main responsibilities of the Shaikh was to, "give back to fallen man his primordial being" (2012: 48). The disciple is thereby born again through the agency of the Shaikh. Hulusi described the idea of rebirth in the following words, "For a traveller to be successful, the most reliable and most accurate path is to participate in the teaching of his Shaikh. In the same way that without a father and mother, a child cannot come into this world, in the same way the birth of a traveller is not possible without a Shaikh." (FNF#37) One of his followers corroborated this view, saying, "For physical birth you need a mother and a father. For spiritual birth all you need is a father, you do not need a mother. You only need one parent. This is what the covenant with the Shaikh is; it is a spiritual birth." (DAH#2) Hulusi stressed this idea that he was the spiritual father by preferring to be addressed as "*baba*" (father), while frequently referring to his followers as "son" and "daughter".[115] During the *bejat* ceremony, for instance, after a dervish publicly declared his acceptance of the Shaikh as his spiritual guide, Hulusi solemnly responded, "I also accept you, my son, to be my spiritual *evlad* (child)." (FNH#63) This comprised the official moment when dervishes were spiritually reborn and adopted into the community under Hulusi's guidance.

This type of paternal language was less evident in the case of Faruki. I only recorded one instance when a younger dervish referred to him as "*baba*", saying, "We call him Shaikh *baba*. That is because we have a father by blood, and a father through the heart. And it is the heart that will come before God." (DAF#3) Faruki did not portray the role of the Shaikh as someone who "gives spiritual birth", but used the term in the sense of his responsibility for maturing his followers. Dahnhardt is helpful here, "The importance of the Shaikh for the

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[115] Observing his interactions with his dervishes, I noticed that he regularly showed them pronounced fatherly affection. He would sometimes place the head of a disciple on his shoulder, or chest while addressing them with "my son". (FNF#40) This helped to both solidify the Shaikh's bond with his dervishes and explain the love that dervishes apparently felt for Hulusi.

spiritual rebirth and growth of his protégé continuing during the following period of apprenticeship and spiritual emancipation (*tarbiyat*), is invariably stressed by all Sufi orders" (1999: 140). In light of this, Faruki prioritized the importance of upbringing, while diminishing that of spiritual birth. Instead, he used parental imagery as follows, "I am like a father, a brother and mother. I can play all these different roles if I need to." (FNF#69) While the use of this maternal imagery was also noted by other authors (Haar 1992: 319; Geoffroy 2010: 148), in Faruki's discourse it was void of mystification and primarily had a utilitarian purpose. The following quote concisely summarized his understanding, "A Shaikh is called *baba*, because like a father he serves his children more than they serve him." (FNF#51) Unlike Hulusi who prioritized a metaphysical rebirth and spiritual leadership expressed through paternal terminology, Faruki employed such vocabulary more focused on its functional impetus and avoided its use as a title.

Having discussed the theoretical necessity for the Shaikh and the progressive evolution of the institutionalization of the office, I highlighted salient differences between Faruki and Hulusi in the way they appropriated Naqshbandi Sufism to their context. I showed that Faruki tended to demystify the role, urging a common sense and rather natural approach, while simultaneously embracing potentially controversial mediatory language. Hulusi was reluctant to claim mediation, but was prone to spiritualizing his role, taking on paternal titles and ascribing overt mystical powers to his function. Neither Shaikh went outside Naqshbandi boundaries, but it was evident that they independently determined which aspects to keep and implement. This authority to choose ultimately depends upon the legitimacy of an authentic Shaikh, which I will explore in the following section.

5.4. Legitimization of the Shaikh

It is difficult to prove the authenticity of a Shaikh. Authentication is both subjective and contains negotiable objective requirements. For instance, Rozehnal suggests that Shaikhs need to be infallible, "Only a perfected spiritual master (*shaykh-i mukammil*) who has traversed the terrain himself can steer disciple through the twists and turns of this path. Effaced of individual ego, the *shaykh* serves as the embodiment of *shari'a*, the living reflection of the Prophet, and, ultimately, the key to unlock the mysteries of God" (2007: 142). Although this account sets out clear expectations, in practice their attainment would be difficult to verify. Other more demonstrable qualifications are mentioned by Kabbani, such as expertise in matters of religion, strict self-discipline and other practical and spiritual abilities, but most significantly the Shaikh

must be connected directly to the Prophet and thereby able to establish contact with God (1995: 25 – 30). Even here, a degree of subjectivity remains. This evident tension between objective and subjective certainty is further highlighted and developed by Faruki and Hulusi.

I asked both of them how to identify a true Shaikh. Faruki explained, "Without God you will not find a true Shaikh. That is God's wisdom." (FNF#56) As I inquired further, he offered the following advice, "Pray to God to help you. There are all kinds of possibilities and paths to find a Shaikh. If you eat salty food before going to sleep, you will dream about water. If you truly needed the Prophet, you would dream him." (FNF#93) Ismail expanded this notion of "finding a true Shaikh" by suggesting that progress on the path to God can be achieved even in the company of false Shaikhs, "Even if someone finds a false Shaikh, God will help him because of his sincerity. He will give that Shaikh wisdom to say the right thing to the dervish, because of the dervish himself." (FNF#55) It is essentially up to God to show a sincere seeker whom he should follow. If he genuinely desired to find such a person, he would. In the meantime, God will enable him to receive guidance even through flawed teachers. The following often-quoted phrase encapsulated this point, "For a sincere slave, even a rock can be his Shaikh." (FNF#7; FNH#74)

Hulusi never answered my question directly, or provided a definitive strategy on how to find a Shaikh, but during his public lectures he repeated the following axiom, "He who seeks will find; and he will find that which he sought." (FNH#41, 50) Similar to Faruki, he believed that a sincere seeker would find a true Shaikh, but he needed spiritual support. Hulusi generally tended to spiritualize his responses, obscuring them with mystical language. This required the listener to go beyond reason and understand things with the heart. (FNH#80) Hulusi's use of obscure language suggested that he was operating on a higher epistemic plane for which reason was not enough. One example of this was his explanation of the process of how someone became a Shaikh:

> The Shaikh follows along with the spiritual progress of his disciple. He recognises their state, and gives his disciples certain tasks. You will never understand this, I must tell you. That is something you have to live, before you can understand. The Shaikh does not decide these things on his own. These things are revealed to him spiritually, if somebody is ready or not. That is something that cannot be understood by reason, but only by the heart. Once the Shaikh feels the time is right, that is when a Shaikh declares that somebody else has become a Shaikh. (FNH#44)

The guideline for the Shaikh's qualification required divine endorsement and confirmation by another competent spiritual master. Appropriate credentials, skills and abilities were still important, but not excessively emphasised. In contrast, Faruki, while not abandoning the supernatural dimension, demanded tangible and demonstrable signs that qualified a leader. He provided the following list of necessary characteristics:

> A real Shaikh has to nurture you. He has to be knowledgeable. Someone who does not know cannot lead you. He has to be connected to a teacher all the way back to the Prophet. He has to be generous, patient and honest. A liar cannot lead people. A believer should feel comfortable in his presence, while an unbeliever should feel uncomfortable. He has to have strong trust in God. He should not be a pushy person. Most of all he must be godly. He is not supposed to be prideful, but must maintain his dignity. He has to be righteous, helpful and take pity on the poor." (FNF#56)

This list, however, was representative of attributes that are valuable for any believer, and are not necessarily authoritative proofs for the genuineness of a true Shaikh. Consequently, absolute certainty remains elusive. Nevertheless, since Sufism rests on the legitimacy of its leaders, proper endorsement remains essential.

The broad range of characteristics required from a genuine Shaikh are both objective and subjective in nature, and can be classified in different ways. Since the office of the Shaikh particularly necessitates for its authentication a pure connection to past Masters, steadfast mooring in Qur'anic adherence and divine approval, I have intentionally decided to organise the following review according to those categories. While engaging with relevant literature, I will examine how Hulusi and Faruki fulfilled their own legitimization in the eyes of their followers according to traditional, legal and transcendent requirements.

5.4.1. Historic Legitimization

Geaves points out that Sufis consider themselves as "champions of tradition", thereby asserting that their religious practices and theological affirmations are firmly rooted within an Islamic framework (2005: 135). Knysh stated that the role of the Shaikh was not to dismantle tradition, but to offer an innovative reformulation of its essential teaching (2000: 233). A Shaikh's veracity is ultimately dependent on his spiritual link to the Prophet. Dabashi explains:

> Through the textual intermediary of the Qur'an, the prophetic traditions, and the historical, theological, and exegetical sources, the drama of a single man, guided and moved by an inner conviction provided by an omnipotent God, establishing a world religion, has been re-enacted in Islamic history to the point of its collective internalization by masses of Muslims (1989: 155).

Consequently, the authority of the Shaikh is profoundly dependent on the past to endorse his present function and any attempt to break with history would invalidate the Shaikh and remove the sanctioned source from which he draws his approval. He is deeply connected to Islam's sacred history and inherits the unquestionable, divinely approved authority that comes with this assignment (Ephrat 2008: 101). His spiritual affiliation to the Prophet through a considered authentic *silsila*, which is ratified by a written *idžaza* (permission), gives the Shaikh historic legitimization that is thoroughly established within Islamic tradition.

The *silsila* is important for the Sufi consciousness, because it serves as a link to past generations of faithful Muslims, guaranteeing spiritual blessings (Fusfeld 1981: 79 – 80). In an excellent summary Geoffroy writes, "The Sufi master is therefore before all else an 'heir' who, according to his own qualities, makes the spiritual inheritance which he has received bear fruit for the benefit of his disciples, but also for all humanity" (2010: 153). The spiritual blessing can even extend beyond the Order itself. If the Shaikh has multiple affiliations with other Orders, then additional channels for divine blessings become accessible (Fusfeld 1981: 130). This is precisely why possessing a legitimate *silsila* became so important, but its authenticity was often questionable (Weese 2006). Geaves confirmed that "these chains need to be treated with caution with regard to their reliability", since a number of Shaikhs were guilty of manipulation and making false claims pertaining to the authenticity of their *silsila* lineage (2005: 123). Consequently, the primary test of the genuineness of the Shaikh's link to the Prophet was less based on written proof, but the "refinement of the soul and the purification of the heart, itself bears witness to the historical authenticity of the chain. Historicity is thus seen as subject to the test of experienced reality, not vice versa" (Algar 1976: 126 – 127). Ultimately, *silsila* verification depends on the subjective beliefs of followers. Their belief in the Shaikh's factual qualification authenticates his claim.

Reliable authorization linking the Shaikh back to the Prophet was also necessary in the Bosnian context, as was evident from the administrative requirement by the TC to produce trustworthy evidence, "Every Shaikh ought to have a genuine written *idžaza*. That is our tradition… The TC has to check and see if that person who claims to be a Shaikh received either a written or a trustworthy oral permission to be a Shaikh." (DAOI#18). This institutionalized oversight and official validating procedure by the TC has, however, been criticized, "The TC is like a parliament. For example, when we vote for the main Shaikh, thirty of us have to raise our hand. That is not how it is supposed to go. Allah Himself has to confirm

this role, through either a dream, or a sign. We should not be voting. The TC is like a political party." (DAOI#10) In other words, supervision of documents and accountability to institutional control has its value, but records can be falsified and mistakes made, ultimately requiring divine confirmation.

Both Faruki and Hulusi claimed a valid written *idžaza* authenticating their status and that their authority rested on the accomplishments of previous generations.[116] (FNF#74, FNH#7) Hulusi placed great value in these written records, pursuing validation from more than one Shaikh and continuing to amass further credentials presumably with, as one dervish suggested, the goal of eventually becoming Shaikh of all twelve Sufi Orders:

> I heard that our Shaikh is going to receive permission to become the Shaikh of all twelve Orders. I had a sense that would happen. To me that is logical. He is so open toward all people and he is bringing to life so many things in Bosnia that he would be the perfect person to represent all Sufi Orders. Especially because there are all these different people that come here, and perhaps certain Sufi Orders are more appropriate for them. (DAH#31)

Furthermore, for Hulusi the *silsila* not only endorsed his role as Shaikh, he also used it as a recitation exercise, aiding the spiritual advancement of his disciples. He explained, "I think I am the only Shaikh who gives the *silsila*… I am handing him the *rabita* from the Prophet all the way to him. I am connecting the two of them. However, this connection also goes through the Shaikh. He can do nothing without the Shaikh. He always has to call upon the Shaikh. If he does not, then he automatically cancels the *silsila*." (FNH#44) By reciting their Shaikh's *silsila*, Hulusi's dervishes could attain spiritual progress, which solidified his authority over their lives.

In contrast, Faruki tended to discredit the importance of written records and emphasised that confirmation of a true Shaikh was not a matter of certificates, but depended on his display of superior knowledge and proper actions. He said that, "Your actions, your knowledge and how you live life perfectly display if you have a *silsila*. You can wave the *silsila* as much as you want; if you are lacking these things, it is worthless. The *silsila* is important, but if the essence is missing and if the Prophet did not affirm someone, it has no value." (FNF#101) Hazim confirmed, saying, "A Shaikh can be a real Shaikh, even without a written *silsila*… What good is a diploma if it does not reflect reality?" (FNH#86) Both the importance of written

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[116] Neither one of them gave me permission to see their documents. Both Shaikhs told me that it was a private matter, not for public consumption. In the case of Faruki, that is relatively understandable, but Hulusi has publicly disclosed these documents (Skorup & Rostuhar 2009). Nevertheless, Hazim, who is an expert in this field, told me that he saw both Hulusi's and Faruki's *idžaza* and that they were authentic. (FNF#86)

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proof and the prominence of actual displays of authority as discussed in the literature became evident in the localised example of my research context. Hulusi emphasized the former, while Faruki highlighted the importance of the latter. In addition to traditional legitimization, Shaikhs solidified their endorsement by teaching Islamic law and protecting its norms and practices.

5.4.2. Legal Legitimization

Contrary to some accounts, Sufism is not "an antinomian force by which the dictates of the law are supplanted by the passions of the heart as moral guide but rather a hypernomian force for surpassing, without abandoning, legal rulings for the sake of a loving kindness toward all creatures" (Heck 2006: 256). Instead, devotion to the law and the example of the Prophet are distinguishing features of most Sufi Orders (Green 2012: 228). Sufism starts with the law, but attempts to go further. Supererogatory acts of devotion and intricately designed rituals that have evolved and transformed over centuries, supplement and expand the demands of the law. Hulusi consistently defended Shariʿah as the necessary bedrock of Sufism, saying, "For us as Naqshbandi, our foundational belief is based upon keeping Shariʿah and following the Sunnah of the Prophet." (FNH#37) In addition to the prescribed obligations, Hulusi's community performed other activities that went beyond regular norms. Even unsympathetic informants viewed this level of commitment with admiration:

> Bosnian Naqshbandi always emphasised the importance of Shariʿah …The main thing for a Bosnian dervish is that he is committed to protecting religious traditions and regulations. For example, one needs to find an honourable wife, regularly give alms to the poor, arrange year-long preparations for the Hajj, fast regularly and respect those who are learned. There are many things that a dervish will practise that a regular Muslim will not. The fact that these things have been preserved is thanks to Bosnian Sufis. That is why I fought for the preservation of Sufism in this country. (DAOI#22)

Although the aforementioned quote does not delineate any clear contours of Shariʿah, it does reveal that Sufis are perceived as morally upright and obedient to Islamic norms. Rigorous loyalty to a rather broad interpretation of the law consequently validated the positive contribution of Sufism and legitimized the authority of the Shaikh. In the case of Faruki and Hulusi, differences emerged regarding how they implemented these prescriptive axioms.

Although Faruki and his followers upheld Shariʿah, its role was subservient to a higher goal. I asked the Shaikh why some dervishes postponed their ritual prayers and instead sat and listened to his teaching. Faruki responded, "One must read these things a little deeper. What does God want to say? What is His message to us? This conversation is more important than

your *namaz* (ritual prayer)." (FNF#47) When the Shaikh was not around, I asked Hazim to explain what he meant, since skipping ritual prayers was contrary to Islamic law:

> The Shaikh assesses what is necessary at a given time. They are capable of reading God's signs. Even when it seems they are contradicting the Shariʿah, they never are. There is a famous story of my great-grandfather forbidding his dervish to do the Hajj. He knew that he would come back prideful, which would have a bad effect on his spiritual growth. (FNF#62)

The appearance of derogating legal requirements can be difficult to understand. Ismail explained, "These are difficult tests. One time a dervish wanted to follow Faruki. He asked him if he would still follow him if he saw him drinking in the street. He said that he could not, and Faruki sent him away. These things can be very confusing." (FNF#87) According to Faruki, a Shaikh may need to suspend a particular law provisionally for the greater pursuit of the ultimate goal, "If something is bringing you close to God, everything is permitted to you. And if something is separating you from God, then even ritual prayer is forbidden." (FNF#83) The logic behind this statement was that everything was merely auxiliary to attaining proximity to God, which could include sacred law. Ultimately, the Shaikh, "cannot be judged even if his behavior and words contradict the injunctions of the law" (Pinto 1995: 106).

This potentially heterodox attitude was in stark contrast to Hulusi, who clearly asserted that true Shaikhs were never permitted to abrogate any aspect of Shariʿah:

> The Shaikh must be obeyed only to the degree that he requires his dervish to behave according to religious norms. He can never forbid him to perform the *namaz*. There are some Shaikhs that do that, but they have gone astray. Sometimes a Shaikh can tell you not to attend the Hajj, because there might be something more important at that moment. He might tell you not to perform the ritual prayer, or fast because of your health. But a real Shaikh will never break Shariʿah law. (FNH#58)

When I posited the same question regarding the Shaikh's ability to suspend Shariʿah temporarily to one of Hulusi's followers, he responded in a similar manner, "No, that is a lie. The Shariʿah is the law and is set in stone. People saying that the Shaikh can change these things, those are only fairy tales. A real Shaikh will never make you sin." (DAH#4)

Some of the leadership in the IC expressed similar concerns, "My brother tells me that if his Shaikh told him to drink beer or to kill somebody, that he would do it. That is unbelievable. The essence of Islam is submission only to God, not to a Shaikh." (DAOI#26) The contrast between this account, by a member of the official Islamic leadership, and the following assertion by Faruki, was striking, "The Shaikh has the right to forbid something, or

to demand something. He can order you to drink beer, to pray or not to pray and other things." (FNF#122) Although such statements may demonstrate an antinomian danger with Faruki's pedagogical methods, he saw it as the appropriate way of travelling toward God. Ismail explained, "Law is necessary, but so is the one who interprets the law. The Shaikh is the living Shariʿah. But behind the veil of the Shaikh, it is truly God who leads." (FNF#112) The potential departure from established orthodoxy due to the extent of the Shaikh's authority has historically been a real danger, but Sufis have generally succeeded in defending their position (Karamustafa 2007: 177). Faruki and Hulusi serve as an additional example of how Shaikhs independently choose how to interpret and apply written legal requirements. In spite of this tension, historic and legal legitimization comprised two important sources of authenticating the credibility of the Shaikh. Additionally, his validation depended on the transcendent or supernatural realm.

5.4.3. Transcendent Legitimization

A Shaikh's approval ultimately rests on divine inauguration. God endows him with extraordinary spiritual power and the capability to perform supernatural acts. The Shaikh is supposed to transmit divine blessings and provide spiritual nourishment to his disciples for strength to continue on the path (Ephrat 2008: 38). Shaikhs have also been described as reflections of God and bearers of spiritual messages that are inaccessible to regular human beings (Kriger & Seng 2005: 778 – 779). One way the Shaikh demonstrates his extraordinary qualities is through his miraculous abilities and knowledge of secrets that lie beyond ordinary believers, since, "Different people might have the same disease, but they need a different prescription. Only the Shaikh knows what to prescribe." (DAH#21) This special knowledge encompasses both spiritual truths about God and insight into people's thoughts and deep-seated sins (Gilsenan 2000: 11).

One of Hulusi's dervishes expressed his belief in the Shaikh's extraordinary abilities to me as follows, "The Shaikh is amazing, we could be sitting in a room full of people and he knows everyone, he even knows your thoughts. He knows your problem better than you do. In a few sentences he gives you a solution." (DAH#18) Hulusi's perceived ability to know people's thoughts legitimized him in the eyes of his followers, since this power must have originated from a divine source:

> I did my own research, asking people how they came to the *tekija* and their first contact with the Shaikh. There are certain explainable factors such as the *tekija's* remarkable organisation, but there are also factors that point to the assistance of a higher power. For example, I myself do not know all the names

of the people that are coming to the tekija. The Shaikh not only knows the names, but he knows the state of every person, when the last time was that they came to the *tekija*, and everyone's life story. You can see that he has divine assistance, divine inspiration and spiritual power." (DAH#17)

Hulusi sometimes publicly demonstrated that he was in direct communication with the transcendent realm. For example, during one of the meals at the *tekija*, he turned to me in front of all his dervishes and asked if I believed his words. After I answered in the affirmative, he made the following statement, "Belief is for those who do not know. Let me give you an illustration. I can tell you that there are nine cigarettes in this pack. You will believe me, because you know that I speak the truth. But only when you check for yourself and count the cigarettes will you truly know." At that moment, he looked at me intensely and asked, "Have you ever heard anything like this before?" He then went around the room and asked six or seven other people the same question. Everyone responded that they never heard such teaching. Then Hulusi smiled and said, "That is because I have just received that revelation myself. It simply gets lowered down upon me." (FNH#30) By openly displaying secret knowledge, the Shaikh validated his special status as a conduit through which divine inspiration flowed "from its transcendent source" (Lizzio 2007: 16). This strategy solidified the trust of his followers.

In addition to insights into the lives of dervishes and general revelation, transcendent knowledge also pertains to the interpretation of the Qur'an, since its inner meaning is only accessible through an authentic Shaikh and his exposition of its secret truths (Yukleyen 2010: 277, 285). Otherwise, it is possible for ordinary believers to misinterpret, or worse, misapply the teachings of the Qur'an (Farrer 2009: 163). This becomes problematic, since it implies the antinomian potentiality that makes hidden knowledge beyond the Qur'an possible (Singh 1999: 296, 304).[117] It nevertheless constitutes one of the necessary attributes of a qualified guide, who is able to go beyond the written text and receive secret knowledge. The pragmatic, interpretive and theological difficulties of applying and understanding the Qur'an led to the emergence of leaders who recognised these limitations, claiming that they were sanctioned to interpret God's word correctly, and display the right way of its implementation (Lindholm 1998: 211 – 212). Holy writ was not abrogated; merely the interpretive limitation recognised. For a true meaning of the Qur'an, one needed a special person. This exegetical authority furnished the Shaikh with the ability to provide explanations that solidified his legitimate role as guide for the community (Renard 2009: 166; Takim 2006: 49). The notion of esoteric knowledge is fundamental to

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[117] From the exoteric point of view, esoteric knowledge that Sufi Masters claimed to have achieved appeared at times to contradict the Qur'an itself (Anjum 2012: 78).

understanding the Shaikh's role, since it sanctions his authority and establishes transcendent legitimization within the Sufi hierarchy (Soares 2005: 34, 37).

This idea that not even the Qur'an could replace a living Shaikh (Buehler 1998: 148) was expressed by Faruki, who said, "I am the living Bible. You cannot really do what it says unless you find a living book. Where are you going to go? God never left humankind to itself, without giving them the right person who knows where and how to lead them." (FNF#86) Ismail corroborated this, saying, "The Shaikh is a living book. Some people who are looking from the side think that people are worshipping the Shaikh, but rather the dervish is relating to him, like he would toward God, knowing that God lies behind the veil of the Shaikh." (FNF#40) During his speeches, Faruki often quoted passages from the Qur'an by memory, and then provided the listener with his own authoritative interpretation. (FNF#76) This approach was evidently different from Hulusi. While Faruki displayed knowledge mainly connected to Qur'anic interpretation, Hulusi's supernatural insight was more concerned with the inner secrets of his disciples. Faruki thereby proved his transcendent legitimization through a display of extraordinary insight into the secrets of the Qur'an, while Hulusi achieved the same result by demonstrating his knowledge about the hidden thoughts of others.

Although divine endorsement depends on the demonstration of miraculous abilities, the seeming paucity of miracles does not negate their existence. This ostensibly paradoxical feature is a pedagogical tool, where any action or inaction by the Shaikh is an intentional choice for the proper upbringing of the dervish. Even if the Shaikh does something inexplicable, his actions are divinely authorized and beyond scrutiny (Buehler 1998: 141 – 142). The dervish might not understand the reason behind a Shaikh's action or verbal instruction, but since he possesses a higher degree of revelatory insight, he must not be questioned (Singh 2010: 69 – 72). Within their narrative, Sufis are consequently able to reinterpret the scarcity of miracles as part of their training to subdue their ego, trust their Shaikh and only rely on God. Thus, the shortage of the miraculous becomes miraculous in itself. Rozehnal noted this dynamic, where any decision or commandment uttered by the Shaikh, regardless of its rational content, was supposed to be believed and obeyed (2007: 155). Any appearance of lack of knowledge or miraculous abilities did not necessarily result in the derogation of authority.

When I asked Ismail, what a dervish ought to do when his Shaikh is saying or doing something wrong, he responded:

> If a dervish trusts him, he will progress fast, but if he always questions everything, then he will progress very slowly. If a dervish is trying to achieve something, he has to accept the Shaikh's teaching and have full trust in him. If he is mistrusting the Shaikh, he will not benefit at all. It is better that he leaves, for it is neither good for him, nor for the Shaikh. Once God shows you whom you are to follow, you can be certain and no longer need to ask questions. (FNF#85)

In a similar way, one of Hulusi's dervishes affirmed that the Shaikh should never be questioned, saying, "In Sufism it is important to follow someone. You should never ask yourself why. When the Shaikh does something, you have to believe… Never ask why." (DAH#2) As representatives of the Prophet, Shaikhs were, according to Midhat, trustworthy guides, "All you have to do is follow him and listen to his instructions, for there is great danger of you getting lost. But if you stick with your guide, it is highly likely that you will reach your goal."[118] (FNH#21) The Shaikh's deeds, even if flawed, were divinely inspired and approved, thereby granting him reliable transcendent validation that inspired confidence in his leadership.

In this section, I have examined three categories of legitimization, which included historic, legal and transcendent endorsement. In all three cases, legitimization permitted subjectivity and was dependent on follower perception. Sacred documentation regarding a Shaikh's spiritual connection to the Prophet could be falsified, legal requirements may temporarily be suspended for the attainment of higher goals and the paucity of miraculous demonstrations did not diminish their implicit existence. Due to this inherent flexibility in legitimizing the authenticity of the Shaikh, I will engage in a critical analysis of the latent subjectivity and significance of followers in the verification process.

5.4.4. Follower Legitimization

Scholars have noted how Sufis validate a legitimate Shaikh based on evidence derived from the satisfaction of their inner "state of longing" and accounts of private "mystical experiences" when in the proximity of such a divinely ordained leader (Ewing 1993: 78 – 79; Takim 2006: 42). Hazen noted how disciples often intuitively knew from the inaugural encounter with the Shaikh that he was powerful and validated by God (2014: 149). This "subjective interiority" is a major driving force that motivates disciples to submit themselves to their Shaikh (Werbner 2017: 167). While individually this approach may be satisfying, it

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[118] This type of blind obedience has been demonstrated in the well-known story of the mythological figure of Khidr and his interaction with Moses in Sura 18: 65 - 82, where Moses was tested to uncritically follow the demands of his guide.

does not provide objective certainty. This can result in critical voices and contradicting conclusions regarding what factually constitutes a "true" or "false" Shaikh. This dynamic was amply evident during fieldwork, and it became progressively clear that authenticity was largely dependent on personal preference and subjective conviction.[119] A Shaikh might declare himself as genuine, but others must recognise and accept that claim. Faruki agreed, saying, "All these people are Shaikhs, because they have followers. But what type of Shaikhs they are, that is another question." (FNF#114) Since the Shaikh's legitimacy ultimately "depends on individuals' acceptance of his special link with God" (Gilsenan 2000: 43), it helps to explain why certain individuals either rejected or accepted Faruki and Hulusi as an authentic Shaikh.

The relativity of objective legitimization made it possible that anyone, regardless of the genuineness of his credibility, who successfully convinced followers could become a Shaikh. This relativized the office and imposed natural limits on his authority since it required willing consent from others. One of Hulusi's dervishes expressed this as follows, "To the degree that you are able to follow the Shaikh and listen to his instructions, to that degree is his authority absolute." (DAH#4) Consequently, a Shaikh can only influence the people that believe in him and choose to submit to his demands. Shaikh Kukavica provided an excellent summation of the limits of the Shaikh's authority, saying:

> How much authority can I have over you if you refuse to accept it? There are dervishes that do not listen to me. I talk to my dervishes, and they ask me because I have more experience regarding what they should do in a given situation. We talk, and I try to help them solve a certain problem in their lives. I helped some to find a job, others I helped to get married and similar things. Nobody is forced into anything. It is a volunteer institution. But when you become a dervish, you do have certain responsibilities. You should talk to the dervishes that left the *tekija* and are no longer listening to me. I do not have authority with them. (DAOI#16)

Regardless of institutional endorsement, Sufi leaders cannot impose their authority on an unwilling subject. Authority requires voluntary acceptance.

The nature of subjective validation became particularly apparent in the area of recruitment. Confidence in the Shaikh's authenticity was the main incentive that attracted potential candidates. One of Faruki's senior dervishes recounted to me his journey of finding his Shaikh and attaining certitude that this was the right path for his life:

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[119] As I will demonstrate in this section, this was in particular the case with secondary informants and Faruki's community. See for example: (DAOI#5, 6, 10, 13, 15, 24, 26; FNF# 87, 93, 95)

There are certain verses from the Qur'an that explain that God can communicate through your dreams which Shaikh you are to follow. The night that I read them, that is exactly what happened. I dreamt Faruki and I heard the words that this was now my Shaikh. Later on another dervish, who is now quite ill, had another dream in which he was told to bring both me and my brother to the Shaikh and to tell us that this was now our Shaikh. That is how all of this started." (DAF#4)

In this account, it was through a dream that this seeker was first prepared and then instructed on how to identify a true Shaikh. Affirmation could also occur spontaneously on the level of the heart during one's first encounter, "A true Shaikh is a person that when you are with him, your heart calms down. Nothing but Allah is important to you and his words are medicine to your soul. But all of that is subjective; there is no objective way to prove a Shaikh." (DAOI#15) The heart, or subjective self, becomes the measure of validation, which is intrinsically void of any need for objective confirmation. One of Faruki's long-term dervishes described his inaugural meeting as follows:

When I first saw him, I loved him. I cannot really explain why… I knew that it was because of Shaikh Faruki that my heart had been opened to a new world. I was incredibly thirsty, and I met a man who had water to drink. I know that he recognised that about me immediately. It was a magical connection. I did not care about becoming a dervish. All I wanted is to learn and be with him, be with this incredible person. I found this amazing man and I felt that I was his and he was mine. My love towards him is enormous." (DAF#17)

This dervish was convinced that he found what he was looking for from the moment of encountering Faruki. Their first meeting confirmed the Shaikh's authenticity and thereby solidified their mutual relationship.

Hulusi's dervishes likewise recounted how they were instantaneously sure at first sight that they found a true Shaikh. For instance, "When I saw the Shaikh's eyes for the first time, I knew that was that." (FNH#11) Another dervish, who recently started coming to the *tekija*, explained to me his process of deciding to follow the Sufi path, and why he was persuaded that Hulusi ought to be his Shaikh:

I was certain in my heart that I would not kiss the hand of the Shaikh. But when I saw him, I lost all control and I felt something deep within. My heart started beating faster and I felt that I had to kiss his hand. I immediately liked him a lot and was wondering who this man was. My mind was not able to comprehend why I felt like that. I cannot describe it, but I did not want to leave anymore. Immediately the next day, it was my birthday, I visited the *tekija* again and the Shaikh treated me very well. Any food that was brought to him, he immediately passed on to me. I was wondering what he wants. Then he called me over to him and gave me my secret *vird*. This is when I informally became his dervish." (DAH#18).

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The first encounter with the Shaikh was crucial in confirming Hulusi's legitimacy. One female dervish told me, "When I met the Shaikh, my heart immediately recognised him, not my mind. He carries with him a special kind of love. He is a good person who wants to help." (DAH#34) Another one had a similar experience saying, "When I came to the *tekija*, it was love at first sight. I fell in love with it. And when I kissed the Shaikh's hand, it was also love at first sight." (DAH#39) Although there were accounts of a more gradual legitimization process confirming Hulusi's authenticity (DAH#22, 25), an instantaneous certitude gained during the initial encounter predominated my informant descriptions.

Confirmation through dreams also played an important role. I quote the following account by senior dervish Emin at length, because it exemplified several converging features that reinforced the authentication process of the Shaikh:

> January 25th 2002 I had a dream about Hulusi, and I woke up quite moved by that dream. The next morning, even though I am a very shy person, I decided to go and talk to him. I showed up for the *dhikr*, and afterwards he and I sat down and had a conversation. I explained to him my dream, upon which he responded to me that what I was looking for I found… In that one moment when I talked with the Shaikh, all of my spiritual unrest ceased at once. The next day at ten fifteen in the morning, I received a text message from Hulusi saying, 'Thinking about our conversation from last night, I pray that the messenger of our hearts, that his *nur* (light) will be the light on your path of seeking knowledge and truth.' Then a battle started in my head, where one side was asking how it was possible to love a person so much that I just met, while the other side felt an incredible amount of peace. The next couple of days I was eagerly awaiting the next *dhikr*. There were about ten to fifteen people. I had such a beautiful feeling in my heart. My eyes were full of tears. Then I was thinking how I could have possibly doubted all of this. I have been a member ever since. (DAH#17)

Reason, dreams, supernatural elements and emotional experiences all coincided in this event. The dream proved divine endorsement and rational satisfaction, which was sufficient to provide necessary certitude. My research demonstrated that both Faruki's and Hulusi's dervishes emphasised that recognition at first sight, and supernatural verification were all part of the process of legitimization. These examples show that a Shaikh ultimately depends on his followers to substantiate his claims. If he failed to convince anyone, neither an authentic *silsila* nor transcendent, legal or miraculous feats would accredit him with the ability to function as Shaikh. Although agency fundamentally rested with the dervish, mechanisms were also present for inherent exploitation and deception, to which I now turn.

5.5. Critical Voices regarding the Role of the Shaikh

Buehler noted that throughout Islamic history false Shaikhs would occasionally arise with no theological qualifications in hopes of inheriting power that came with the office (1998: 150). The Shaikh's enormous political and economic influence, as well as its abuse is well-documented in the literature (Hassan & Kamal 2010: 80; Hassanali 2010: 33 – 34). The exploitation of power and prestige by some Bosnian Shaikhs has also been recorded (Hadžimejlić 2015: 167), and comprised an emerging theme during the course of my research.[120] One informant noted, "Today they say that you cannot come to God except through them… Believe me these individuals, these so-called Shaikhs, use their position to make money, get rich and to gain authority." (DAOI#23) A Bosnian scholar of Sufism saw the following danger with the institution of the Shaikh, "Whenever there is an advantage to be gained, there is the danger that manipulators will try their luck. That is why true Sufis never attached themselves to the governing authorities." (DAOI#31) Similar to other types of authority, Shaikhs could use their office to achieve personal goals. The possibility of abusing the position revealed the implicit dangers associated with the amount of authority that Shaikhs possess. Criticisms against Shaikhs even came from other Shaikhs:

> Everything we see today are nothing but quasi Shaikhs… They are playing around with these terms. My opinion is that all of these Shaikhs are nothing. They are merely foam. I have sat with these so-called Shaikhs. If you catch him lying to you three times, even if he is walking on water he is not a true Shaikh. You have to call him a liar. You cannot be a Shaikh and not know how to recite the Qur'an. (DAOI#5)

Faruki also criticized the situation, "Shaikhs have derogated themselves with their behaviour. They no longer have a soul or a heart. They quickly became Shaikhs and all of this became absurd… Today we have Sufism that is void of God." (FNF#108)

If a Shaikh's legitimacy substantially depended on follower recognition and not objective qualifications, then all he essentially needed to accomplish was to find individuals who would verify his claims. This dynamic became exceedingly clear to me when a young Shaikh disapprovingly presented his hypothetical manipulation strategy of gaining followers:

> It is easy to take advantage of these innocent kids. Here is how I would take advantage of them. First, I know everything about the *bejat*, because I have studied it. I also know everything about the institution of the Shaikh. I have also met many of the most holy people in the world. Then I gather ten young men

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[120] Except for a few exceptions (DAOI#4, 20, 36), most secondary informants were predominantly critical of the institution of the Shaikh in Bosnia.

around me and tell them that I am a Shaikh. I tell them all the things they need to do and that this is how it was done in the past. I warn them regarding the fires of hell and the certainty of Allah's judgment, and if they dare to screw me over, I tell them about the terrible things that will happen to them. These kids are finished for the rest of their lives. Moreover, if I throw in some practical help, such as a scholarship or a job, it is finished. It is easy to play around with kids. (DAOI#24)

The institution of the Shaikh in Sufism was evidently vulnerable to the emergence of inauthentic leaders who were pursuing their own personal goals.

At the institutional level, the IC likewise criticized the lack of proper qualifications for Shaikhs in Bosnia. There was an evident tension between the private opinions of Islamic leaders and their official endorsement. The multiplicity of criticisms that I recorded revealed a partnership dynamic that was less approving than what was presented in public. IC leadership endorsed Sufism officially as an important part of Bosnian Islam, but while they approved of Sufism as a whole, on an individual basis criticism against Sufism and particularly Shaikhs was a characteristic feature. (DAOI#2, 3, 25, 26, 38) For instance, the former director of the educational department of the IC mentioned a programme that attempted to ensure the competence of new Shaikhs by standardizing the necessary qualifications:

> The first problem that we have to solve is that Shaikhs have a lot of religious authority with their followers, but have no type of verifiable, official qualification. They have never completed any religious education, have no knowledge about religion and many of their dervishes know more than they do… Two years have passed since we gave them that draft and they have not responded. They hesitate because I required them to meet a certain standard. I even offered them to choose some young boys who love Sufism, but have also been Madrassa educated and perhaps even finished Islamic University. We would then send them to the most reputable Sufi Shaikhs in the world, even pay for it, and organise everything. Our Bosnian Shaikhs did not permit us to do that, because they know that they would lose their own position eventually. (DAOI#22)

In addition to the disapproval regarding the lack of valid qualifications, there was also an explicit theological rift, where informants that were part of the official leadership did not believe that a Muslim needed a Shaikh in the first place, "I am not a dervish. I prefer to walk on firm ground. Some people try crossing water by walking on top of it. That is unnecessary, because there is also a bridge that you can use to cross. I prefer taking the bridge." (DAOI#3)

Exploring this further, the current director of higher education for the IC commented on the need for a Shaikh as follows, "I do not believe that I need a Shaikh, because I feel that through my theological education I have all that is essential to develop my spirituality. I feel

that this would be placing a limitation on my way of thinking, because I enjoy that I have my own freedom of thought." (DAOI#25) This idea to retain freedom and personal responsibility was clearly articulated by the main imam of Sarajevo:

> I believe that a person loses his freedom when he becomes a dervish… Dervishes believe that they ought to be in the hands of the Shaikh like dough in the hands of the baker. The Shaikh shapes the person. He leads him, he shapes him and he directs his life's journey. They believe that everyone needs to have his own Shaikh. I personally do not believe that this is fundamental to our Islamic faith. An imam does not nearly have that type of influence over your life. He is not going to require you to ask him what you should be doing. Even if you ask him for advice, you are free to make your own decisions. With Sufis, that is different. There if you ask the Shaikh, it is over. (DAOI#24)

There were obviously those in official leadership who did not see the necessity of having a spiritual guide, viewing Shaikhs as ineligible and unqualified religious leaders. Even among those who were sympathetic toward Sufism and believed in its cultural and historic importance, criticism and unfavourable judgment predominated.[121]

While the role of the Shaikh could be exploited, protective mechanisms were in place to diminish its misuse, but the latent possibility of its occurrence explained the criticisms. The initial phase prior to initiation and the solemn oath that one would give his life to the Shaikh provided some checks and balances, since the potential seeker had not yet accepted the Shaikh's legitimacy. Once initiated, however, Sufis were taught that disobedience or withdrawal of one's allegiance had serious ramifications. Bashir notes, "But the deadly consequences of cases where disciples fail to submit mark these stories as threats that allow Sufi authoritative figures to assert their domination over their subordinates" (2011: 190). Such stories with both primary and secondary informants abounded regarding dervishes who dared to take a job or went on vacation without the Shaikh's explicit approval, resulting in unfortunate outcomes and even near-death experiences. (DAH#26; FNF#25, 31; DAOI#9) Hulusi publicly warned those whose commitment began to wane, saying:

> That is why you ought to know, my son, that you are honoured by Allah's mercy and grace, for he brought you to a clean source of water, and therefore do not be unthankful when Allah honours you. Do not say that this is wonderful water to drink, and then look for other sources. I warn you not to mix these waters. Mixed waters are not good for drinking, and there is danger that you get drunk and begin to wander away. (FNH#61)

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[121] This, however, is not necessarily in line with other Sufi examples, where Shaikhs not only played the role of Grand Mufti in Egypt (Bennett 2017: 28), but they were also frequently part of the highest levels of the ulemma and fully supported by them (Werbner 2003: 10).

When I returned to Bosnia for follow-up fieldwork, I met one of Hulusi's former senior dervishes who decided to leave the Shaikh and the Sufi path.[122] Reasons that he listed for his choice included, "people are closed", "an unhealthy personality cult around the Shaikh", "being brainwashed and manipulated" and the "feeling of emasculation". (DAOI#26) I asked him if he was afraid of the consequences of leaving the Shaikh, to which he responded, "There is only one life. If the price for my freedom is to lose all that, I am willing to pay. I could no longer live as a slave. I pretended on the outside to be free, but on the inside I was afraid what terrible things could happen to me." (DAOI#27) This example substantiates that fear of leaving the Shaikh, or disobeying him, created a powerful bond between Shaikh and dervish.

In spite of the multiple voices of criticism regarding the institution of the Shaikh, in the eyes of his followers his authority remained absolute. In the final section, I will examine the manifestation of this authority, its implication and how it enabled the Shaikh to profoundly shape the community under his leadership.

5.6. The Authority of the Shaikh to Shape

When I first began fieldwork, I was surprised by my observation regarding the relationship between Shaikh and dervish. The level of submission on one hand, and the seemingly boundless authority on the other, was not something I expected. Considering his role, however, where disciples were utterly dependent on his guidance for attaining their goal, as well as the institutional evolution surrounding his persona that I already discussed, positively accounted for his exceptional authority. Obeying the Shaikh's commands ultimately became the only way to come into God's presence (Kabbani 1995: 414). If a disciple "disobeys, his progress on the path stops" (Pinto 1995: 113). While my prior interrogation of Faruki's and Hulusi's position regarding the nature of the Shaikh's role and legitimization displayed multiple variations, their interpretation of authority revealed a pronounced similarity.

Hulusi asked me once in front of his dervishes to take the watch that he was wearing and to break it. Embarrassed I refused and Hulusi addressed the crowd, "Dejan did not obey my command, because he is not my dervish. Does everyone understand what I am saying?" (FNF#36) He repeated the question several times to individual dervishes, who all responded in the affirmative. Hulusi thereby communicated that regardless of how illogical his demand may

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[122] Although I heard that some dervishes also left Faruki (FNF#75), I was never able to verify their names, or conduct interviews with them.

be, instantaneous and absolute obedience was the normative requirement. I personally failed the test, but his dervishes learned a valuable lesson. According to Faruki, spiritual transformation could only occur through unconditional obedience and the degree of submission was proportional to progress on the journey, "The Shaikh is a divine person. Success is directly dependent on the degree to which a person is willing to become a corpse in the hands of the Shaikh." (FNF#116) Ismail explained the necessity of this dynamic as follows:

> The dervish ought to view his Shaikh as perfect. Regardless if the Shaikh is perfect or not. He is supposed to believe, not because of the Shaikh, but because of himself. If you already submit yourself to a person, this is the best way to go. This ought to be the subjective opinion of the dervish, but again, it is for his own good. This will help him on the path. In a sense, he is supposed to listen to the Shaikh the same way he would be listening to God. This is because the Shaikh is leading him to attain knowledge, and if the dervish is full of doubts, that will hinder him on his journey. Doubts block you." (FNF#87)

Submission personally benefited the dervish, and comprised the imperative prerequisite for the Shaikh to carry out his responsibility as guide. The reciprocal nature of the relationship obliged the Shaikh to accompany disciples on the path of truth, while demanding obedience in return. This essential interdependence forms the bedrock of the Sufi enterprise.

The degree to which my informants at both communities expressed their willingness to obey their Shaikh's instruction was remarkable. Verbal confirmation included readiness to kill, get a divorce, donate a kidney, quit a job and even skip prayers, if required by the Shaikh. (DAH#14, 15, 18; DAH#20, FNH#16) It is likely that these statements were exaggerated, or rhetorical in order to elicit a startling impression and convey extraordinary commitment. Nevertheless, it revealed the readiness to blind obedience. Ismail offered this useful comment, "Following blindly is good, when the person that is following is blind. That is why he needs to find a guide who is able to see." (FNF#68) Faruki added, "You have to follow him and do whatever your elder tells you. The Shaikh is the creator of your life. You have given your life into his hands. (FNF#77) In other words, the life of a dervish is placed in the competent hands of the Shaikh, as a "corpse in the hands of the washer" (Karamustafa 2007: 112).

The term frequently employed by both communities to describe this type of obedience was *teslimijet* (obedience), expressing the idea of complete submission without questioning (Ohlander 2008: 214). Hulusi defined the term as follows, "*Teslimijet* means submission and obedience. You are supposed to obey the Shaikh, but it is important that you do so out of love. You can increase your *teslimijet* through spiritual progress. The further you go, the stronger

your *teslimijet*." (FNH#54) Hazim stated that this one word summarized all of Sufism, "The essence of Sufism is *teslimijet*! Find the right person and submit yourself to him. That is that. Sit down, listen and learn. That is Sufism." (FNF#86) The Shaikh not only monitors the spiritual advancement of his disciples, but also manages their ordinary life choices. Hulusi agreed, saying, "He has authority over matters regarding the earthly life. He is the absolute authority on the path of coming close to God. He directs the entire life of his dervishes." (FNH#58) Sani likewise noted that dervishes needed to seek permission from their Shaikh for all mundane matters in life (2010: 108 – 109). Gilsenan corroborated that the dervish "has absolute obligations of obedience in any and every area of his life over which the *Murshid* (guide) chooses to exercise" (1973: 87). If he fails to obey, it can lead to negative consequences. Faruki communicated, "I told you not to get married. Look what happened, he is divorced and has two children. Listen to your Shaikh, for he knows best." (FNF#90)

The Sufi narrative that asserts absolute dependency and the need for a guide, can appear borderline idolatrous.[123] This accusation, according to Geoffroy, Sufis categorically deny, "The veneration of the Sufi for his shaykh is only a support, which reminds him of his veneration for the Prophet, and of his worship which is dedicated to God. Even so, exoterists find it easy to launch such criticisms when they see disciples prostrating themselves before their shaykh, which has indeed occurred" (2010: 144). Netton added that the Shaikh was always conceived as a channel, and not the goal; externally he might appear the centre of ritual practices, but "God is held to be the heart of the ritual" (2000: 159). One informant, who approved of Sufism in principle, disagreed with the level of submission required by the Shaikh, saying, "If I had not experienced repulsion when I saw this iconography regarding the Shaikh, I might have become a dervish myself. I know for myself that I have to be free in my faith." (DAOI#23) Others expressed their antipathy in stronger language, saying, "I believe that giving yourself over to another person like a corpse is nothing but idolatry!" (DAOI#13)

There were also voices who surprisingly embraced the controversial term "idol" as a positive thing, "Those people who think that the Shaikh has too much authority are stupid and know nothing about dervishes. A dervish needs a very good idol in order to practise his obedience." (DAOI#20) Conceptually, the Shaikh became merely a tool through which disciples perfected their worship and obedience. Faruki explained how to avoid idolatry as

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[123] Visualizing the Shaikh during ritual *dhikr* performances, accepting secret knowledge that goes beyond the text of the Qur'an and belief in his mediating power are examples of areas I already discussed that are often denounced.

follows, "You are only allowed to bow before God. A true Shaikh would never let you believe that he is divine, never." (FNF#86) Ismail added, "You avoid such a false belief by attaining knowledge." (FNF#87) Yet, the potential to elevate the Shaikh beyond his approved function was present enough to warrant Hulusi to say, "The benefit that a dervish receives is directly proportional to his submission to his Shaikh. Obviously, a Shaikh must not be worshipped, and no one has ever said that. The Shaikh is supposed to be followed." (FNH#32)

Although the Shaikh's role required caution, the synthesis of authority, obedience, divine endorsement, spiritual and mundane domains of jurisdiction, all contribute to the comprehensive ability of Shaikhs to utterly transform their dervish, where, "body, mind, and soul are gradually refashioned" (Rozehnal 2007: 172). The Shaikh is clearly instrumental in moulding the lives of his followers, or as Hulusi's dervish succinctly stated, "It is due to the leader; it is due to the Shaikh! He shapes the community." (DAH#9) Faruki explained this process of shaping as follows,

> The Shaikh shapes the dervish spontaneously, not with an axe. This is called *fena fi* Shaikh (annihilation in the Shaikh). You are annihilated in your will, in your learning and the way you see things. The Shaikh can even influence how you look. No wonder that Prophets were such beautiful people. The Shaikh emanates something. He is radioactive. (FNF#114)[124]

Ephrat likewise articulated that the Shaikh did not only shape the dervish through divine instruction, but by the inherent spiritual energy transmitted when dwelling in his direct presence (2008: 51).

Moreover, Faruki expected submission to result in the appropriation of the leader's qualities, which would eventually result in the disciple's fundamental transformation. Chaudhry gives an excellent description of this reshaping process, where the, "*pīr*'s ears not only mingle with but become the *murīd*'s ears, the *pīr*'s eyes the *murīd*'s eyes, the *pīr*'s tongue the *murīd*'s tongue, the *pīr*'s hands become the *murīd*'s hands, and thus the intense imagination converts the communion into a union" (2012: 48 – 49). When I inquired how Faruki actually succeeded in shaping his followers, Ismail responded:

> The Shaikh is a teacher who shapes his community through knowledge… He travels with his dervishes and instructs them what to add and what to take away in their behaviour. He helps the dervish by putting theory into practice. Even the Prophet was visited by the angel Gabriel, who showed him practically how

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[124] The three stages of annihilation are fanā' in the Shaikh, fanā' in the Prophet and fanā' in Allah (Buehler 2016: 158; Pinto 1995: 8). Each needs to be passed successively in order to reach the final stage (Schimmel 1975: 216).

to perform the ritual prayer and other things. He helped him to put theory into practice. He brought revelation with him, and then explained to him how he needs to do things. It is not heretical to say that the Qur'an by itself is not enough. (FNF#87)

Not only did Faruki provide insight and theoretical interpretation, he also modelled the appropriate way to implement Qur'anic principles both in the religious and everyday sense. Without the Shaikh's example, it would be difficult for dervishes to know proper behaviour. I regularly observed Faruki's dervishes intentionally sitting, drinking tea and smoking in a manner similar to their Shaikh. It was common for dervishes to preface a statement with "as Faruki says" and then quote or paraphrase an aspect of the Shaikh's teaching. (DAH#3, FNF#104) Consequently, by mirroring the actions and sayings of their Shaikh, they were gradually fashioned in his image.

Hulusi's dervish explained the influence that his Shaikh exerted on him as follows, "He shaped me as a person. He shaped me how to live, how to view the world, in my dedication of inner cleansing all the way to my relationships with other people… I think this is due to the Shaikh's example, his teaching and explanation. I would observe him and then try to live as he does." (DAH#17) The all-encompassing effect of the Shaikh was likewise affirmed by Rozehnal, who described the relationship as a, "bond that shapes their worldviews, directs their actions, and frames their basic sense of self identity" (2007: 145). As the Shaikh transformed individuals, the whole community concurrently took on a distinct character, "Everything depends on the Shaikh. The Shaikh shapes the individual; by shaping the individual, he shapes the community." (DAH#26) Endowed with authority and divine insight, the Shaikh is able to decide on the best approach to achieve spiritual advancement under current circumstances. Hulusi explained how he views his own role as follows, "The Shaikh is the one that shapes. The Shaikh builds an organisation in order for it to be successful. The manner in which he does that depends on the time he is living in and the people that he is leading." (FNH#28) In other words, it is the Shaikh's subjective decision that determines the contours of the community.

Although the Shaikh has the independent prerogative to select what he considers appropriate, the narrative implies that "as a friend of God he is in constant contact with God and does only what He wills" (Pinto 1995: 140). Faruki commented, "In a certain way the Shaikh colours everything around him. But the colour itself is God's colour." (FNF#77) The Shaikh influences, but only as far as God permits. Even though he "colours", he has to follow the divinely appointed directive. Agency was the Shaikh's, but the colour always remained

God's. This notion that the Shaikh was merely adhering to God's mandate, was likewise an important emphasis among Hulusi's followers.[125] When I asked a dervish regarding the limits of the Shaikh's authority, he responded as follows, "It all depends on the Shaikh. How the Shaikh is, that is how the *tekija* will be. The Shaikh receives spiritual instructions directly from his Shaikh and he has spiritual power to know and understand these things… The way the Shaikh is, determines how his dervishes will be. (DAH#4)

While dervishes were confident in the authenticity of their respective Shaikh and his ability to execute God's instructions, the objective reliability of these claims is questionable due to the discrepancy of implementation and even clashes over legitimacy among a range of Shaikhs in general, and between Faruki and Hulusi in specific. If all of them were rightly doing God's will, then how is it possible to reconcile differences and contradictions emerging from their leadership choices? The following comment proved useful, "Dervishes are like mud that the Shaikh is supposed to shape into perfection. But today's Shaikhs do not have godly hands, but are wearing the gloves of their own nature… Shaikhs have not attained perfection, and yet they are raising dervishes through their own imperfection and through their own nature." (DAOI#24) Ultimately, the perceived infallibility of the Shaikh's action requires the subjective trust of followers. Both Hulusi's and Faruki's disciples believed their Shaikh was obeying heavenly commands, which meant they were obliged to faithfully implement his perfect directive. This dual dynamic of authority and obedience consequently resulted in the Shaikh's profound ability to influence his disciples and thereby independently decide how to shape Bosnian Naqshbandi Sufism on behalf of the community under his authority.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on outlining the basis for the Shaikh's importance as the indispensable guide and living representative of the Prophetic tradition. My objective was to engage with the broader literature, highlight specific distinctions within my research context and suggest the need for advancing a more comprehensive understanding of the Shaikh in Sufism. I identified dissimilarities between Hulusi and Faruki including variances regarding the mystification of the office, paternal terminology and the conceptualization of mediation, which I attributed to their independent decisions. Additionally, I provided a comprehensive overview of the traditional progressive development of the Shaikh's role and examined the

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[125] The Shaikh was presumably likewise a "corpse" in the hands of God, as the dervish ought to be in his.

central legitimizing factors that endowed him with reliable authenticity. I covered the historical evolution and practical need for finding a credible guide for the spiritual journey, while exploring insights from critical voices that either derogated the institution of the Shaikh, or cautioned about its possible dangers. My examination showed Hulusi's comparatively greater insistence on written legitimization, strict adherence to law and personal supernatural abilities, while Faruki stressed concrete proof of validity through action, the possibility of temporarily suspending Shariʿah requirements and his insight into the Qur'an. My analysis demonstrated evidence that legitimization was ultimately subjective and depended on follower recognition. Once followers accepted their Shaikh, his capacity to shape their lives became exceptional. I also identified similarities between Faruki and Hulusi regarding the Shaikh's absolute authority and the need for disciples to submit. With this relationship in place, they were able to shape the lives of individuals and thereby the community as a whole. Although critics pointed out potential risks, for disciples any command or adaptation by their Shaikh was solely his faithful implementation of divine instruction. The overall purpose of this chapter was to establish a framework that accounts for the Shaikh's ability to independently transform and reinterpret Naqshbandi Sufism. My specific study contributes to the theoretical discussions by presenting an original empirical expression of contextualisation in its local manifestation, where apparent divergences were principally engendered by the Shaikh.

In the following two chapters, I will first investigate key theological concepts that were particularly representative of each community. I then examine prominent ritual practices and specific choices regarding social engagement and transnational connections. The objective is to continue to advance additional layers of understanding regarding the instrumental centrality of the Shaikh's role in interpreting and appropriating core Sufi ideas. I framed the chapters under the rubric of theology and practice, since chapter six analyses the inner, theological dimension, while chapter seven examines the outer, ritual and social dimension. My analysis will highlight commonalities and consider salient differences to determine the extent of the Shaikh's responsibility in generating these distinctions. The assessment of continuities and discontinuities aims to provide additional insight into the agency of the Shaikh and substantiate the inherent flexibility that permits this multiform expression to emerge, even within the same Naqshbandi tradition that claimed a corresponding point of origin.

6. CHAPTER SIX: THE THEOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF GUIDANCE

6.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter explored the role of the Shaikh and how his authority evolved, permitting independent decisions within a Naqshbandi Sufi framework to appropriate its specific elements to the community under his leadership. I highlighted distinct differences between each Shaikh, examined critical voices and the inherent subjectivity and dependence on follower recognition in the legitimization process. I concluded that the Shaikh's agency accounted for the empirical diversity encountered in the field. The following chapter is a continuation of my unfolding analysis, as it aims to take a closer look at prominent theological ideas that formed the basis for Hulusi's and Faruki's theoretical and pedagogical emphasis. While the concepts were located within Naqshbandi Sufism in Bosnia, their specific selection, interpretation and practical application, reveal the intrinsic possibility of a differential appropriation by individual leaders within a common tradition and similar setting. By analysing the contrasting approaches that Hulusi and Faruki considered essential for spiritual progress, I seek to assess to what extent these dissimilarities can be attributed to their agency, and evaluate the resulting implication as it relates to the shaping of the life of each community. At the end of this chapter, I have organised the thematic categories that emerged from the investigation into a succinct table in order to organise major concepts in a clear and concise way.[126]

6.2. Exploring the Centrality of Love

As already indicated, my initial goal was to understand the role of love among living Sufi practitioners. Once I compared the data I obtained to the unexpected material collected in the field, I realised my focus had to shift. I shared with one of Hulusi's dervishes that I reoriented my research from the role of love to that of the Shaikh, to which he responded, "How can you love if you do not have somebody who can teach you how to love?" (DAH#21) The notion of love became essentially subordinate to the Shaikh. Although the theological and experiential responses I gathered during my beginning phase of data collection were useful, since they represented a valid aspect of what my informants believed, this data was no longer sufficient as the main interpretive framework. Instead, I recognized the importance of focusing

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[126] I will provide rationale for its emergence as the chapter develops. Once I establish this interpretive grid, I use it as a lens through which I look at a pertinent sample of specific methods of guidance and distinct practices employed by the two Shaikhs and document the resulting significance in chapter seven.

on the Shaikh regarding theological interpretation and performative implementation. Consequently, in order to understand the beliefs of the community, I needed to examine the beliefs of each Shaikh.[127] The conceptually most prominent themes warranting deeper examination that I identified in the literature and recognised as especially significant during my fieldwork were love, knowledge and proximity.

It is difficult to discuss Sufism without mentioning love (Hoffman 2009; Chittick 2013; Michon & Gaetani 2006). One of the fundamental contributions of Sufi thought within Islam is that it placed love at the centre of its theology. Although love was an important concept in my research context, it was less central than the literature suggests. It certainly was not, as Green proposed, perceived as the end goal of the Sufi journey (2012: 80). Rather its primary purpose was as a means of travel and source of motivation for meaningful action (Heydarpour 2012: 26). Hulusi explained, "The most beautiful path is the path of love…If you are in love, there is nothing too difficult for you. Love is simply a means of travelling, not the destination." (FNH#27) Here, Hulusi portrayed love as a method, or way of journeying, but not as the destination itself. One of his oft-repeated phrases at the end of his weekly lecture was to say, "Love is the best way for the dervish to travel." (FNH#12, 26, 30)

Faruki affirmed that love was the purest motivation for the Sufi journey, "Any motivation besides love is on a lower level. Rare are the ones who perform the ritual prayer out of love. Only a true *ašik* does it motivated by love. He does everything he can to be with his Beloved." (FNF#61) This resembled Biegman, who described love as a catalysing force that creates the experience of proximity with God (2009: 11 – 12). It is through feeling God's love that reciprocal love is elicited in return. Faruki's dervish expressed his experience of God's personal love as follows, "I do not even dare to say this, but sometimes I feel that God loves me the most in the whole world and that I am the most important person to him. He takes such unbelievable care of me that I am totally astonished." (DAF#12). Assured of God's love, Sufis feel strongly motivated to continue experiencing intimacy with God by travelling in His direction. Schimmel corroborated that love energizes the traveller to remain steadfast, "Divine love makes the seeker capable of bearing, even enjoying, all the pains and afflictions that God

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[127] I selected key concepts from post-field data analysis based on their representativeness from the perspective of each Shaikh, who affirmed their centrality through their teaching and instruction. I verified if the concepts that I selected were indeed central in the thinking of Faruki and Hulusi during my follow-up visit to the field. (FNH#80 – 82; FNF#124 – 127) For this reason, the present analysis is limited to only specific theological categories insofar as they were confirmed by the actual data. Consequently, this chapter focuses on the voices of the Shaikhs and less on community members, since the contextualisation of doctrine rested in their domain.

showers upon him in order to test him and to purify his soul" (1975: 4). Both Shaikhs acknowledged this idea.

> Faruki, for instance, explained love's role as a motivating factor as follows:
>
> Love does not let you stop! When I was young I would visit this girl I liked in the dead of winter, but I was not cold. Some people, however, do not continue on this path, but a true *ašik* keeps on going. And this path consists of good deeds, according to Allah and his prophets, both inner and outer and only because of Allah, and nothing else…Finally he comes near her but she is wearing a veil. You are not a true *ašik* unless you grab her veil and rip it off, whatever may happen. It is love that moves all actions. And I mean all! (FNF#24)

Ismail likewise reinforced the importance of love in sustaining the traveller on his path, "I would say that love is the thing that moves Muslims. Love is the energizing force that helps Muslims to journey in the direction of that which they love." (FNF#40) Love's motivating role to remain steadfast during the difficulties of the journey was plainly reinforced by Hulusi when he said, "Love is a feeling, a product of the heart. It motivates us on the path." (FNH#7) Midhat corroborated this idea, "Love is the only way to come to one's Lord, because it is love that motivates." (FNH#17)

Although the data I gathered on love was extensive, and included conversations about its divine origin and altruistic dimensions (FNF#45; FNH#30), its relevance was secondary since love was merely conceived as a method of travel and the impetus that provided encouragement along the path. It was neither the goal itself, nor the highest virtue. This made it inferior to the attainment of proximity and knowledge. My analysis identified two other important concepts that formed the foundational paradigm for each respective Shaikh. Faruki focused his energy to understanding and applying the concept of *tevhid* (divine oneness). Hulusi's predominant aim was the implementation of *hizmet* (voluntary service). In the following section, I intend to present evidence, which establishes these terms as the foundational interpretive categories that help to distinguish and define what each Shaikh prioritized as his preferential theological framework and method of providing guidance on behalf of his followers.[128]

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[128] See table at the end of this chapter.

6.3. Faruki's Conceptual Framework of *Tevhid*

A theme that continuously coloured Faruki's understanding of the world was humanity's dependence on God and awareness of his implicit activity behind all of reality, "The fundamental truth is that there is no agency except Allah." (FNF#63) Even loving others, was according to him not possible without God first endowing someone with the ability to do so, "God wants to, desires to love. That is what moves the world. This is pure, clean love, which is poured into us. But when it enters a human being, it is as if water flows through a sewage system. It gets dirty." (FNF#22) Moreover, God was the initiator of love, who placed His love into man's heart. We love with God's love and not our own. Faruki explained, "I am not doing it, but God through me. God gives you health and wealth. You are not spending your own money. Even love is from him. But it all comes with a set of instructions: what to love, how, why, where to spend your love, etc." (FNF#18) Finally, due to humanity's weakness there was an implicit inclination toward sinful actions, which modified the initial purity of love that originated with God, making it soiled and imperfect. For this reason, there were certain things, according to Faruki, that should not be loved:

> All love comes from God. All real love. And God commands you what you ought to love. Do not spend someone else's love where you should not. There is no such thing as your own love. We are spending someone else's gift according to what our master has commanded. God says this is mine and you are my slave. He will ask you how you spent your life. Your life belongs to God. (FNF#66)

While God was the source and proprietor of love and man enjoyed its benefits, he must direct this love carefully, and treat it as something that he received for a specific purpose. Faruki took this a step further, claiming that it was actually impossible to love anything besides God.

Not only did Faruki espouse God as the Creator and giver of love, he was also the perpetual object of affection regardless of one's individual awareness of that fact. He explained, "First you have to love God, then the Prophets, then society, then everyone else…What people do not understand is that everything you love, you really only love God. Even when you love authority, or riches, or education, or whatever, if you are aware of it or not, you in fact are loving God." (FNF#24) This was difficult for me to understand at first, so I asked Ismail to explain, "In order to understand this, the key is *tevhid* (divine oneness). God is one. If someone loves something beautiful, such as a car, or a house he merely loves the reflection of God's beauty. And if you love that which reflects God's beauty, you in fact love God." (FNF#49) As my understanding grew over time, I realised that the concept of *tevhid*, which ultimately

considers man as a mere vessel through which God interacts with the world, while synchronously not abolishing his individual agency and responsibility, comprised the foundational theological belief and pedagogy that made up the heart of Faruki's teaching.

Faruki's view of *tevhid* reflected the idea that all reality in existence is unified in God, and, as Heck likewise noted, that all activity in the world is ultimately God's (2006: 259). This is an essential doctrine employed by Ibn ʿArabi, where the reality of existent creation (*haqqiqa*) is ultimately unified in the absolute Real (*haqq*), a term synonymous with God (Chittick 1989: 132 – 135). This idea is derived from the belief that only God truly exists, and that creation is an emanation without its own intrinsic existence, but solely as an extension of God (Geoffroy 2010: 15). He expressed this notion in the following words, "One day we will have to learn the lesson on *tevhid*, even if it lasts a thousand years. You will know who moves everything in existence. He is the cause before every manifestation on earth." (FNF#73) This quote is broadly representative of Ibn ʿArabi's sophisticated theological contribution, which chiefly proposed the idea of the non-reality of creation as it relates to essence, causing the breakdown of absolute duality (Hirtenstein 1999: 26, 248; Chittick 2013: 13). The realisation of *tevhid* requires the abrogation of any belief in the autonomy of existence (Shah-Kazemi 2002: 172).

Unlike Knysh who defined *tevhid* as a particular moment when identity is dissolved and the human replaced by divinity (2000: 303), Faruki's understanding is better represented by the idea of a permanent state of reality, where God is continuously operating in the world, regardless of people's recognition of that fact. It is more than merely, "a human experience of oneness with the divine being" (Geaves 2010: 40), but rather man essentially is one with God and an instrument through which God works, regardless of his experience of that fact.[129] Faruki explained his belief as follows, "There is no agency except God's. Only God can give life or death. Your deeds will be judged according to their intention, but God is performing them. You might think that you are separated from God, but when you wake up you realise that not only was He with you, He was you." (FNF#22) Attaining awareness that God moves everything in existence was one of the fundamental teaching points of the Shaikh. He internalized this belief and was certain that, "Allah is the one that is at work in everything. I truly believe that. You cannot even move your eyelash without Allah." (FNF#73)

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[129] He evidently espoused Ibn ʿArabi's doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* (Oneness of Being) rather than *wahdat al-shuhud* (Oneness of Witnessing) (Geaves 2005: 127; Mayer 2008: 275).

Following the example of their Shaikh, dervishes were encouraged to develop the necessary skills to live conscious of God's all-encompassing involvement in the world. They needed to realise that, "He works through what looks like secondary causes just as the tailor works with a needle or a calligrapher works with a pen, and that it is He who is the real Creator of the design" (Schimmel 1994: 225). Getting to the point of discerning the fullness of this reality was a difficult process, since God is both immanent and transcendent while man is only immanent (Nasr 2007a; Chittick 1989; Singh 1999). Achieving advanced levels of recognition occurred, according to Ismail, in stages,[130] "The minimum requirement for *tevhid* is to say that there is no God but Allah. The next stage is to say that there is no Lord but Allah. And the final stage is to say that there is nothing except Allah. *Tevhid* means that God alone is working, without creation's participation." (FNF#76) Faruki explained further:

> We are tools in God's hands. He is the absolute Lord. He created both you and your work. The world is not God, but it is also nothing else. It is like ice. You can build an igloo, or make ice cubes, but it is not water. You cannot drink ice. But it is also not different from water. When you go to the market, everything is God. When somebody insults you, it is God speaking to you. I know this is difficult to understand, but we should try. (FNF#90)

For Faruki *tevhid* was not speculative, but real and applicable in everyday life. For him everything pointed to God, which is why he encouraged his followers to search for God in the world, "Read! Nothing occurs by chance. The world is God's book. There is a film playing and you are in this film, but this film is not reality, God is." (FNF#14)[131] In addition to his teaching, he also modelled what he preached. Once while a popular folk song was playing on the radio, he asked everyone to be quiet, closed his eyes and said, "I seek God even in a song. Allah creates every tone and a true Sufi sees God in everything. Every phenomenon in existence is God's." (FNF#26)

This does not mean Faruki believed that creation and God were identical.[132] God remains unlike anything in creation and man cannot comprehend boundless divinity, because, "Reason cannot understand God, because He created everything in a pair. Only He is one." (FNF#26) Rather, in everything and through everything God appears onto the stage of creation,

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[130] Chittick likewise describes these gradations of *tevhid*, where the believer begins by repeating the *shahādah* (statement of Islamic faith) and ends with the realization that he is one with God (2013: 156).

[131] Although such statements come close to monism, as Affifi wrongly suggested (1979: 13), Sufi apologists have explained why it is not (Chittick 2005b; Murata 1992; Ernst 1997). Since there is no fusion of two essences (Baldick 2012: 83 – 84), and God remains perpetually other than creation, monism cannot account for this doctrine (Burckhardt 2008: 17 – 19). Stoddard offers a useful definition of oneness as "non-duality" (1985: 49).

[132] Schimmel made a similar point regarding the incomparability of Creator and creation (1994: 226).

being immanently present, yet always more than the sum of its parts. Consequently, mankind's duty is to discover God in the cosmos. Ismail elaborated as follows, "Sometimes, God masks himself, sometimes he does not. He takes on clothing. When he wants to do something, he clothes himself in that outfit. That is why it is important to recognise God in this or that situation." (FNF#73) Faruki took this idea a step further, saying, "God does not have an image. This does not mean he cannot take up an image." (FNF#29) Faruki's conceptualization is evidently rooted in the theological idea of *tajallī* (God's self-disclosure), where God discloses himself through creation to the creatures (Chittick 2000: 52). Often translated as theophany (Chodkiewicz 1993: 80 – 89) or transfiguration (Lings 1999: 72), it ultimately describes creation as a reflection, or visible manifestation of God (Nasr 2007: 45). This divine self-disclosure can include the controversial idea that God is able to appear in the guise of other people (Chittick 1989: 364). Similar to Faruki, Shah-Kazemi also claimed that most religious leaders know that God exists, but only Sufis accept that all that exists is God (2002: 162).[133]

The practical outworking of this understanding for Faruki's dervishes was significant. As Muedini pointed out (2010:6), Sufis are trying to recognise God in the world. Faruki explained this as follows, "Everything in this world is God's book. Nothing is hidden and a true Shaikh can read God's book. Learn how to read." (FNF#24) Due to this focus on discovering God in the world, community members were encouraged to train themselves to develop a constant awareness of God's activity, which ultimately would lead to spiritual enlightenment and personal felicity, "Never forget about *tevhid*. Allah is doing all of this. Sometimes He gives and sometimes He takes away. Stop complaining!" (FNF#64) By looking at the world through the prism of *tevhid*, it could improve the quality of everyday life and unlock the delights of religion. Ismail commented:

> When you are close to God, there are no problems in life. God is always with us, but the question is if we are aware. That is what *tevhid* is all about. When you are with God, you cannot have a problem. For example, when a police officer stops you, it is actually God who stopped you. You are doing business with God and this is pure joy, for if you do business with the world there are always problems and burdens (FNF#13).

Another example of viewing the world in this manner occurred when the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Bosnia published a theological commentary, condemning Sufi thought and

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[133] This position is clearly not universal among all Sufi currents, as for example in the South Asian and Indian contexts (Dahnhardt 1999: 64).

distributing it around the country. As dervishes expressed their anger and discontent during one of our Friday meetings, Rifet, a long-standing dervish made the following comment, "Faruki taught us that all things, even the ones that appear wrong to us, are flowing the way they should. The most beautiful thing is to look at all of this through *tevhid*. Then you have no problems. It would be nice if a person could always be in that kind of a state. But our faith calls us to attain that!" (FNF#77) As soon as he said these words, reminding them of the Shaikh's teaching, dervishes in the room nodded in agreement. They acknowledged that God was orchestrating this event, and that consequently there was no reason to become upset. It is difficult to overemphasise the importance of *tevhid* for Faruki and his followers. It comprised a characteristic feature that consistently coloured the Shaikh's speech.

Moreover, Faruki openly disclosed his personal supernatural experiences of *tevhid*, saying, "Yes, I have had supernatural experiences. What are you looking at me for? God took me and I travelled through the heavens. I looked, and there the sun was to my right. That is how it was. The Sufi path is a heavenly path." (FNF#73)[134] His follower shared the following story about Faruki:

> We were sitting at a friend's house with Faruki. We were talking about going for a walk downtown, wondering if it was going to rain or not. The cartoon Tom and Jerry was playing in the background at that very moment. Jerry was holding an umbrella, a few drops fell and then he closed the umbrella. The Shaikh told us that we can go and that we will not need to take umbrellas with us. And that is exactly how it was, it rained a little bit and then it stopped. (DAF#5)

I also witnessed a comparable incident while the Shaikh and a few of his dervishes were sitting at the calligraphy studio. The Shaikh started talking about some people that were pestering him to take a photograph, because he was wearing his turban, which he rarely does. He kept refusing, but finally gave in. At the exact moment that he was finishing the story, an unknown lady walked in, which was fairly unusual, and asked Hazim if he could pose for a photo shoot that they needed for a book publishing on Bosnian calligraphy. The Shaikh interjected with a smile, "Of course he is willing. He will do it." After the lady left, we all looked at each other and the Shaikh said, "God is so close that I would love to just scream. But there is no benefit from that." (FNF#51) Although perhaps coincidental, from the point of view of Faruki and his followers, this was a clear example of *tevhid*, or God's dynamic participation in the events of

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[134] This explanation closely resembles the Sufi conception of *mi'raj*, where the Prophet's journey through the heavenly spheres served as the prototype for all Sufis to follow, and comprised one of Ibn ʿArabi's central cosmological doctrines (Morris 1988: 629).

everyday life. Ismail also disclosed the enormous transformative difference that a conscious awareness of *tevhid* made in his own life, saying, "I always thought that God was absent. I did my obligations faithfully, but I thought I was here and He was there. Now I know that He is both in heaven and on earth." (FNF#40)

In Summary, Faruki's emphasis was to develop the capacity of his dervishes to experience increasing degrees of awareness of God's all-encompassing agency, which was directly proportional to their ability to view the world through the prism of *tevhid*. Outside of minor possible variations, Faruki's interpretation of *tevhid* can be located in Sufi literature, which views God as the only true reality (Lings 1999: 65) that manifests itself in creation (Geaves 2005: 40), where man's activity is ultimately controlled by God (Smith 1935: 253). His actual commitment, however, to the application of this doctrine to everyday life comprised a remarkable representation of living Sufism in the contemporary world. Faruki serves as an exceptional example of the embodiment of a theoretical construct in its local appropriation, and thereby contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how living Sufis operate. For Faruki, all other concepts were subordinate to the prominence of *tevhid*. It was the fundamental idea that informed his leadership style, theological hermeneutics and, as I will demonstrate in the following chapter, the selection and implementation of ritual practices and social involvement. While *tevhid* was central to Faruki, Hulusi emphasised the importance of service.

6.4. Hulusi's Conceptual Framework of *Hizmet*

Whereas Faruki consistently referred to *tevhid*, the concept was noticeably absent in Hulusi's teaching. During actual fieldwork and post fieldwork systematic analysis when I crosschecked interview data and detailed description of Hulusi's public teachings, I recorded the mentioning of this word by either Hulusi or one of his followers only one time. (FNH#7) The one time he mentioned it we were sitting in the courtyard, and while discussing different topics, he started talking about *tevhid*. He quickly apologized for making that mistake, saying, "I am sorry. I should not have said that. I am afraid to go into a teaching on *tevhid*, since this is reserved only for special occasions and for a select few mature dervishes." (FNH#7) Although I attempted to discover the reason for this avoidance, only after I returned to the field was I able to ask informed follow-up questions. I mentioned the dearth of this term to Midhat, to which he responded, "From your perspective that might be so. When I walk into the *tekija*, I see an *elif* (first letter of the Arabic alphabet) and I think *tevhid*. When we repeat the words *la ilahe*, we are doing *tevhid*; we are pronouncing the very definition of *tevhid*." (FNH#82)

This explanation of *tevhid* compared to Faruki's understanding points not only to a less frequent usage of the term itself, but also to a qualitative difference regarding the degree to which *tevhid* was taken to its logical conclusion. Nicholson's comment is useful here, "Both Muslim and Sufi declare that God is One, but the statement bears a different meaning in each instance. The Muslim means that God is unique in His essence, qualities and acts; that He is absolutely unlike all other beings. The Sufi means that God is the One Real Being which underlies all phenomena" (2002: 56).

Hulusi was cautious to publicly declare a belief in the unity of all existence, and even warned people regarding this doctrine, "Ibn ʿArabi is the most difficult scholar to understand and the most dangerous to apply. It is a type of philosophy. But what do people have from that? How can they benefit from such thinking?"[135] (FNH#81) Hulusi's primary emphasis did not lie in the realm of contemplative Sufism, but in concrete action. The appropriate conceptual word that expressed this central idea was *hizmet*.[136] Hulusi explained, "If you do not apply what you know, such knowledge is useless. This is the reason why knowledge needs to overflow into *hizmet*." (FNH#81) Midhat added, "The only way to get to this type of understanding is through *hizmet*. In order to get to *tevhid* you must start climbing from somewhere. Starting with *tevhid* is reversing the proper sequence." (FNH#82) Due to its centrality, it is through the interpretive lens of *hizmet* that I will analyse Hulusi's method of guidance.

While Faruki's paradigm of *tevhid* led him to believe that the source of love and object of affection was in reality God Himself, Hulusi established the genesis of love on the idea of *hizmet*. He explained this as follows, "He who is in the beginning of his path, his love will be awakened through his *hizmet*." (FNH#38). Not only did love for God arise from *hizmet*, but it also triggered God's love in return. Hulusi continued, "The greatest benefit from *hizmet* is being honoured by Allah's love." (FNH#38) A common phrase repeated by Hulusi and his disciples was, "*Nema himmeta bez hizmeta* (There is no support from God without service)."[137] (FNH#2, 40) Midhat called it the "motto of the tekija". (FNF#82) The Shaikh used it during his lectures, and I heard dervishes say it to one another in a variety of situations. *Himmet* is an important concept and, according to Schimmel, although *himmet* comes from God, it is

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[135] Here it appears that Hulusi's theological position on *wahdat al-wujud* followed more the Indian school of Sirhindī, which rejected Ibn ʿArabi's interpretation (Knysh 2000: 232), rather than the Ottoman position, which largely accepted and promoted his ideas (El-Rouayheb 2015).
[136] It is used both as a verb and noun in Bosnian (Skok 1972: 670). Hadžimejlić defines *hizmet* as works of service both inside and outside the *tekija* for the purpose of properly training and raising the dervish (2016: 119 – 120).
[137] I am providing this quote in Bosnian to demonstrate its rhyme and simplicity.

channelled through the Shaikh (1994: 79). It has the intrinsic ability to make something "that normally does not receive existence, existent" (Pinto 1995: 93). Its wide usage emphasised the responsibility of each disciple to engage in concrete actions that would result in God's providence. Faruki did not deny that serving God resulted in divine favour, but his focus remained on *tevhid*, "Everything has to be done sincerely, and in the name of God. If that is not the case, you are not going to receive *himmet*. Again, I insist that *tevhid* has to be the basis for everything." (FNF#70) The implicit reciprocity of appropriate behaviour followed by rewards was present in both communities, but while Hulusi emphasised the need for personal agency, Faruki insisted on God's involvement behind every deed.

I asked Hulusi how he hierarchically ranked *hizmet* compared to other approaches for the purpose of spiritual progress, to which he responded:

> I respect Ibn ʿArabi, but I do not recommend him for raising up young dervishes. His teaching is more for Shaikhs and mature dervishes. I think that reading him will confuse most people. He is not easy to understand. Look, when studying spiritual giants, there are four categories… The first category is represented by Shaikhs, such as Bahā'uddīn Naqshband. This group is symbolic of *hizmet*. *Hizmet* helps to erase our ego. It gives a social dimension to the dervish. There is nothing good in our faith if it does not benefit others… The second category is represented by Ghazali. He is a proponent of *ibadet* (worship, good deeds) and *ilum* (knowledge). The third category is represented by Rumi, who is a proponent of love. The fourth category is represented by Ibn ʿArabi, who is a proponent of *kashf* (revelation) or seeing behind the veil. If you ask me, I always say to my dervishes to start with *hizmet*, seek after knowledge, develop love for Allah. It is only in this way that you will come to attain revelation. (FNH#66)

With this statement, Hulusi disclosed his personal approach of consolidating all the key teachings of Sufism into one comprehensive method, but it also confirmed the fundamental centrality of the role of *hizmet* in his own pedagogical and theological approach.

During my secondary interviews, one of Hulusi's close friends and fellow Shaikh, described Hulusi as follows, "Some Shaikhs emphasise love, others emphasise good deeds, while others emphasise knowledge. Hulusi emphasises all of that. Hulusi encompasses all of these things, with love being the icing on the cake." (DAH#21) This quote highlighted that Shaikhs can choose their preferred pedagogical methods, but it did not represent a precise description of Hulusi's primary approach. Although he verbally accentuated the necessity of incorporating a full, progressive spectrum of educational tools, *hizmet* played the predominant function. During follow-up fieldwork I wanted to verify my assumption with Midhat, "Your analysis is correct. *Hizmet* is the backbone that carries the entire body. Without *hizmet*, you

cannot progress. *Hizmet* is taught and perfected here in the *tekija*." (DAH#82) Similar to Anjum who noted that, "service of humanity was one of the principal doctrines of Sufism" (2014: 162), Hulusi asserted that "Sufism is acting beautifully towards all of creation. You ought to do *hizmet* without asking about one's nationality or religion. As much as *hizmet* is necessary toward Muslims, it is equally necessary toward non-Muslims. *Hizmet* simply means to help those who are in need." (FNH#38) For Hulusi, *hizmet* was superior even to supererogatory ritual performances.[138] He emphasised its importance, saying, "I have told you many times before that if you see your brother or sister in need you must leave all *nafille* (supererogatory prayers) behind and help your brother or sister. That is more important than everything else that you are doing." (FNH#70) Hulusi evidently prioritized service over personal devotions.

During public announcements, members were encouraged to contribute financially to a *sergija* (collection box) for unexpected medical expenses, a death in the family and other unfortunate events. (FNH#48, 73) In Hulusi's words, "It is not enough to only perform the *dhikr*, but one has to *hizmet* others with his life and possessions." (FNH#38) Help came in a variety of ways, and included the Shaikh encouraging the community to attend an art exhibit by a fellow dervish. (FNH#33) Such communal support resulted in dervishes feeling a strong sense of belonging and commitment both to the Shaikh and fellow members, which Hulusi explained as follows, "The goal of *hizmet* is for hearts to be connected to one another… The goal of *hizmet* is to be useful to your brothers and yourself, and the main benefit is to come close to Allah and to become his friend." (FNH#38) Essentially, *hizmet* comprised a central pedagogical tool for developing good, moral human beings. During his research among Bosnian Sufis, Henig noted the centrality of *hizmet* for organising community life in the *tekija*, but especially its role for improving individual morality (2014: 104). Heck likewise affirmed the role of *hizmet* for cultivating individual morality and fostering generosity and service toward mankind (2006: 271). Hulusi illustrated this as follows, "My goal is for someone to become a good person. I believe that if you are not a good person, you cannot be a good believer." (FNH#71) Midhat stressed that this was what the *tekija* was all about, saying, "We try to spiritually educate people in order for them to become better than they were." (FNH#29) Consequently, positive ethical value, which is foundational to attain God's satisfaction, is directly dependent on implementing *hizmet*.

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[138] Silverstein also noted that *hizmet* was superior to supererogatory prayers (2002: 229).

Developing morality and improving the character of his followers essentially comprised the heart of Hulusi's pedagogical aims, "The goal of the Sufi path is for you to become honourable people and good dervishes." (FNH#63) This was reminiscent of Muedini, who claimed that it was impossible for Sufis to serve God without serving others (2010: 14 – 16). Midhat expressed this as follows, "The path of Sufism is trying to cleanse your evil tendencies and to replace them with good and useful actions, in order to attain happiness for the individual, for the community and in the end for humankind. That is the goal." (FNH#62) Hulusi modelled his teaching on *hizmet* with exceptional commitment and evident self-discipline. His apparent hard-working ethics, participation in all extracurricular activities and his continuous availability to the numerous requests for assistance he received from members and non-members alike, revealed an impressive willpower and commitment to religious devotion.

Hulusi insisted on self-control and the necessity of character development as prerequisites for spiritual progress, saying, "Self-control and the fight against oneself is the most important thing." (FNH#8) According to Hulusi, *hizmet* even determined the quality of one's faith, "*Hizmet* is a believer's mirror, and is the measurement of the beauty of one's faith." (FNH#38) For Hulusi, only certain types of individuals could come to God, and *hizmet* played a crucial role in their formation. While Hulusi focused on the moral progress of his disciples, Faruki consistently emphasised God as the final goal. He acknowledged the importance of proper moral upbringing, but stressed its hierarchically less important role when compared to the concept of *tevhid*, saying, "It is true that you need to be a nice person who is well brought up, but sin needs to be removed by its root. Pruning is not enough… But if you teach a dervish to understand *tevhid*, he sees God in you and in everything else. That will also take care of his behaviour." (FNF#111) For Faruki everything remained subordinated to *tevhid*.

Hulusi's focus on *hizmet* also resulted in active social engagement. In contrast to Hulusi, Faruki was largely uninvolved in society and politics, deliberately choosing to maintain a rather private profile. Solberg described this relatively new phenomenon of visible Sufism compared to the more traditionally reclusive one in these perceptive words:

> Both types of neo-Sufi communities represent a transition from the inward spirituality of esoteric Sufi brotherhoods to the outreaching activities of religious communities involved in *hizmet*. This notion of *hizmet* (service to Allah and humanity) plays a crucial role in the self-understanding of these communities, although it can be interpreted differently from one case to the next. The core idea is that serving a fellow Muslim in particular and humanity in general is an important part of one's religious duty. (2007: 441)

This approach demonstrates a shift from an inward orientation to the role of *hizmet* in encouraging social involvement (Howell 2015: 278). Hulusi affirmed his own focus in line with this strategy, saying, "The goal of faith is not to run away from this world, but to *hizmet*. One must dwell in the world and help people as much as he can." (FNH#38) Hulusi evidently cared about local and international political outcomes, the general welfare of the state and complying with the religious establishment, topics I discuss in the following chapter.[139]

Hizmet was the fundamental idea that characterized Hulusi's community. It informed his leadership style and encompassed such varied spheres as developing personal morality, promoting community cohesion, public service, social engagement and the initiation of love for God. The following clear admonition by Hulusi summarized the benefits for devoting oneself to *hizmet*:

> Do more *hizmet*! *Hizmet* is the foundation of Sufism, the foundation of our faith and this path. A hadith says, 'If you help Allah, he will help you.' He will help you through guidance, give you *bereket* (blessing), dignity, provision and ease your life both in this world and in the next. He will make your steps firm, therefore turn and commit yourself to *hizmet*. Help each other." (FNH#19)

From the aforementioned examples, it became evident that for Hulusi the essential strategy for spiritual progress is the conscientious implementation of *hizmet*. While this theoretical concept is supported in Naqshbandi literature, its local contextualisation and preferred selection for spiritual and moral upbringing provide an original perspective. This advances a more detailed understanding of *hizmet*, and underlines that the Shaikh's choice of guidance determined the particular contours of community life and action.

It is difficult to overstate the significance of *hizmet* and *tevhid* in the process of correspondingly analysing the two research communities, and I will continue to develop additional implications and practical consequences as they relate to those terms. Using the metaphor of the journey to God, the centrality of *hizmet* in Hulusi's understanding resulted in a more prominent focus on the actual journey, while Faruki's emphasis on *tevhid* led to his insistence on the destination. This dynamic helped to explain some of the theological and performative differences in matters of emphasis. Faruki's interest in *tevhid* prompted a pronounced inward orientation that was principally centred on the metaphysical end goal of the journey, rather than the process. Morality, service and social involvement comprised

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[139] For an excellent study of Sufi involvement in all layers of society and politics see: (Eaton 1978).

necessary by-products for attaining awareness of God's all-encompassing existence. In contrast, since Hulusi stressed *hizmet* as one of the essential conceptual themes in his theological framework and pedagogical paradigm, it clarified why he was prioritizing service, the progressive moral development of his disciples and intentional social engagement.

Having introduced two of the most important hermeneutic categories for improving the analytic understanding of each respective Shaikh, I will now examine the concept of knowledge, which in the context of this study constituted the most important conceptual element in attaining the sacred aim of proximity to God. As the discussion unfolds, I highlight a considerable imbalance and dissimilarity that emerged between Hulusi and Faruki, revealing that theological concurrence does not necessitate corresponding actualization.

6.5. The Role of Knowledge in Attaining Proximity to God

The pursuit of knowledge was central in Faruki's cosmology and superseded all other categories in his teachings. The terminological usage of knowledge in this discussion encompasses both *maʿrifa* (metaphysical, transcendent knowledge), and *ʿilm* (ordinary knowledge) (Ernst 1997: 28; Nicholson 2002: 51). A clear demarcation between the different types of knowledge categories was often difficult to ascertain and consequently I retain its broad usage since this is representative of its usage by my informants. Hazim endorsed the centrality of knowledge in the following words, "Knowledge is the most important thing to Faruki." (FNF#125) When comparing the concept of love with knowledge, Faruki stated that, "Knowledge is higher than love." (FNF#9) Shaikh Ismail corroborated:

> Knowledge is king. Again, knowledge is king. All the other attributes revolve around it. The greatest honour one can get is knowledge…Love without knowledge can be unfortunate. There was a bear and a man that loved each other. While the man was sleeping, a fly landed on its nose. Out of love towards the man, the bear picked up a rock in order to try to kill the fly. Instead, he killed his friend." (FNF# 39)

The superiority of knowledge did not diminish the importance of love, obedience to the law, or ritual performances, it merely represented the hierarchically most important objective. While this position was in line with Awn, who affirmed that knowledge supersedes love due to love's required duality (2013: 253), as well as Shah-Kazemi, who agreed that knowledge is always greater than love (2002: 150), it contradicted Knysh who claimed that God was the goal and not knowledge (2000: 309). Faruki resolved this by equating knowledge with the actualization of God's nearness. Disagreement regarding the exact nature of proximity, its various stations

and levels of knowledge has been duly noted by Schimmel (1975: 130 – 148). Consequently, the present discussion aims to limit its scope to Faruki's point of view. For him, the journey of coming to God was in actuality proportional to the journey of attaining knowledge. He explained, "God is not the goal, for He is not an object. The objective is knowledge of God by which you are coming near to Him. The degree of knowledge is equal to the degree of closeness." (FNF#34)

Faruki's notion of what this knowledge contains went beyond Ibn ʿArabi's distinction between *jalāl* (majesty) and *jamāl* (beauty), where the former represents God's incomprehensible, transcendent essence, and the latter depicts God's immanence in creation through His names that the seeker can discover (Singh 1999: 295 – 296; Chittick 1989: 23). With Faruki, there appeared no strict differentiation between God's unknowable nature and concrete knowledge of His self-disclosure (Lee 2015; Murata 1992). This became clear to me during the following exchange, where Faruki said, "The veil are His names. Once they are removed you will know the essence of God." (FNF#22) I asked him to clarify if he really meant essence, since Ibn ʿArabi appeared to distinguish God's names from His essence. He responded, "You do not understand Ibn ʿArabi. Yes, it is His essence. Not only that, I am speaking as one who has personally experienced this." (FNF#22) Although this statement warranted further exploration, the possibility of such a radical explication by a contemporary Sufi contributes new empirical layers to the theoretical possibilities of interpreting Ibn ʿArabi.

In essence, Faruki concluded that attaining knowledge fundamentally comprised the link by which man can reach God, which is what Abrahamov likewise espoused (2003: 38). Smith called this an "assent by Divine knowledge" (1935: 253). Ismail explained the result of this endeavour as follows, "The path of attaining closeness is in fact the path of knowledge. He who knows God has come close to Him." (FNF#63) By thus linking knowledge with proximity, Faruki firmly established the pursuit of knowledge as the main objective for himself and his followers. This belief further solidified the importance of *tevhid*, since awareness of God's already existing proximity was contingent upon knowledge. Faruki explained, "It is not important that you are in Sarajevo, but that you know you are. It is about being aware of where you are. You see, again *tevhid*." (FNF#124) In other words, knowledge does not produce contact with God, but enables the recognition of its present existence. Ismail's following illustration substantiated this point, "Some people turn on the TV, and listen to God. Faruki is not even watching TV, but trying to discern what God is communicating to him. He is aware

that everything is in God's hand, and that He directs everything. Whatever anyone says, God is saying it. The world becomes God's lecture hall." (FNF#58) For Faruki, *tevhid* and the attainment of its metaphysical truths for progress on the path remained central, "Without the prism of *tevhid* you will not be able to interpret and understand anything. Pay attention to *tevhid*. You have to accept it." (FNF#24)

Knowledge also has other benefits. First, only through knowledge can someone obey God. Merely having the law is not enough; one has to know how to apply these requirements. Ismail explained, "It is important to do what God wants you to do and that is why you need knowledge. Without knowledge you cannot please God." (FNF#97) Second, according to Faruki paradise is conditional upon knowledge, "In order to enter heaven there is a certain amount of knowledge that has to be achieved. Allah wants a particular type of company." (FNF#36) Third, not only is knowledge required for entrance into heaven, it determines the level of proximity to God in the afterlife, "In the next life, there will be an encounter with God. We will be able to see him and the ones that are closest to him are the ones that have the most amount of knowledge." (FNF#89) Finally and paradoxically, existence requires temporary ignorance, which once it is resolved, results in the annihilation of the self (Hirtenstein 1999: 198).[140] Faruki explained, "If you were not ignorant, you would no longer exist. You only exist so that knowledge can be awoken all the way until the end." (FNF#37) The aforementioned examples of the multiple functions of knowledge establish its central importance in Faruki's thought and teaching. In comparison to Hulusi, notable differences emerged.

Attaining knowledge was also important to Hulusi, "There is nothing good without knowledge. No one can be noble without knowledge. Knowledge is the most important pursuit of all." (FNH#7) He added during one of his lectures, "Knowledge is the foundation for everything. There is no *hizmet* without knowledge, no love, nothing. Knowledge is the greatest *keramet* (miracle)." (FNH#80) Although the aforementioned quotes assigned supreme priority to knowledge, Hulusi's overall treatment of the concept revealed explicit variations when compared to Faruki. The main contrast was regarding the degree of prominence that Hulusi ascribed to the role of knowledge. When Hulusi spoke about knowledge, he often enumerated it alongside other valid pursuits. (FNH#66, 80) Explaining the correlation between knowledge and proximity, for instance, he said the following:

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[140] The notion of "dying before death" has been discussed in Sufi writings and can encompass the external dimension of submitting one's will to God's commands (Chittick 2013: 245), or as the prerequisite for an encounter with God through the annihilation of the self (Nasr 2007: 18; Nicholson 2002: 115; Mahmutćehajić 2007: 17).

I always speak about knowledge. Knowledge is the most important thing. Knowledge without faith and faith without knowledge are the fundamental reasons for all our societal problems. Read what I wrote. The road to success is based on sincerity. Without it, you have nothing. It is the foundation of everything. Secondly, you must have right intentions, thirdly knowledge, fourthly patience and finally love. All five are necessary to attain the goal. You need all of these to succeed. Our beliefs and actions have nothing good in and of themselves unless they are founded upon knowledge. (FNH#44)

Here knowledge was not the absolute focal point, but rather one feature among several important aims to achieve. I followed his suggestion and read the introduction he wrote for an edited volume (2015: 7 – 14). In this text, knowledge was not directly related to its metaphysically supreme role of attaining proximity with God, but rather its main purpose was to foster societal improvement and advance the political and economic situation in the country.

The auxiliary function of knowledge was likewise evidenced by Hulusi's standard enumeration of the essential elements that according to him defined a Naqshbandi, saying, "First, a Naqshbandi has to be a good person. Secondly, he has to be a good Muslim, who faithfully fulfils all of his obligations to Shariʿah. Other Sufi Orders are more lenient, but Naqshbandis are strict when it comes to Shariʿah. Thirdly, a dervish has to perform *hizmet*. Fourthly, he has to seek knowledge."[141] (FNH#13) While recognising knowledge as a fundamental trait of Naqshbandis, Hulusi did not categorically set it apart above all other characteristics, as was the case with Faruki. Furthermore, none of my secondary informants mentioned knowledge as one of the defining characteristics of Hulusi, but instead, when praising one of his qualities they typically mentioned that, "He is a very good organiser and very capable. He is a good manager." (DAOI#30) As already discussed, Faruki's central activity involved efforts in translation, discussion and instruction, while Hulusi emphasised service, moral upbringing and religious performances. While in theory knowledge was important to both Hulusi and Faruki, its hierarchical ranking and intentional prominence in practice was different between the two Shaikhs. This is important, since it informed the subsequent choices that each Shaikh made regarding their leadership style and areas of emphasis, which in turn shaped other aspects of community life.

Having established key differences and similarities between Faruki and Hulusi regarding the concept of knowledge, I will now discuss the essential methods employed by

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[141] Standard secondary sources on the Naqshbandi do not explicitly define and delimit the essential characteristics of a Naqshbandi Sufi in this way (Kabbani 1995; Le Gall 2003; Paul 1998). While not contradicting Naqshbandi doctrine, Hulusi compiled the items himself. I recorded a remarkably similar list during another interview with Hulusi a few months earlier. (FNH#7)

each Shaikh for acquiring such knowledge. By highlighting their particular strategic approach, I intend to add to the explanatory grid established thus far.

6.5.1. Methods of Attaining Knowledge

As discussed in chapter two, Naqshbandi Sufis are sober in religious performances and orthodox in Shariʿah adherence (Geoffroy 2010: 107). Both Hulusi and Faruki likewise affirmed the centrality of sacred Scripture. According to Bell, since the Qur'an expressed God's will, which is His essence, directly proportional to the degree that man's actions exist in harmony with God, nearness is realized (1979: 47). Consequently, acceptable obedience and the acquisition of additional knowledge required, according to Ismail, "knowledge about what God commands and forbids." (FNF#39)[142] Faruki explained further, "God's law leads one to God. He described the path to Him. You have to pray, worship, perform the *dhikr* and if everything is of good quality you will achieve proximity to God. But it has to be a good deed according to God's standard." (FNF#19) Since attaining knowledge of God's will was fundamental for achieving His nearness, in-depth familiarity with the Qur'an was essential to Faruki's instructional method.

His reputation of being a remarkable scholar was confirmed by his ability to comfortably quote the Qur'an by memory, while confidently giving his own interpretation. (FNF#97, 100) I observed that when questioned, he characteristically tried to respond using the authority of the Qur'an rather than his own. (FNF#109, 117, 123) He also instituted that during the introductory phase of the *dhikr* every member of the community must sit in a circle and recite verses from the Qur'an in Arabic. (FNF#2) This level of literacy displayed across the entire spectrum of his dervishes was remarkable. During Ramadan, daily meetings were held at the *tekija*, where each dervish recited the Qur'an in small groups. (FNF#96) It was evident that the attainment of Qur'anic proficiency comprised one of Faruki's essential emphases. When comparing this approach to Hulusi, differences emerged. Although passages from the Qur'an were recited by Hulusi during his formal teachings, in ordinary conversations and interviews, he did not frequently refer to Scripture. Hulusi evidently did not have the same level of memorized knowledge as Faruki. (FNH#78) While the degree of scriptural knowledge was different, both Shaikhs agreed on the importance of its implementation.

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[142] Smith also maintained that without knowledge it was impossible to obey God (1935: 95).

Putting things into practice is an important prerequisite for success on the Sufi path. Smith, pointed out that for Ibn ʿArabi and other Sufis the contemplative life had to take shape through practical deeds, where both God and man were served (1935: 283 – 284). Chittick also noted that knowledge depended on spiritual practices for its acquisition (1989: 149). Ismail stated that, "Knowledge is spiritual capital and it is increased through works… There is a verse in the Qur'an, saying that knowledge seeks application, for if you do not do what you have learned, knowledge will evaporate." (FNF#39) Faruki emphasised the importance of applying knowledge as follows, "People think that the purpose of knowledge is to know God. That is incorrect. The purpose of knowledge is application. Only when you apply what you know, will you attain knowledge of God! Knowledge without application is as if you are studying medicine, and not taking the medicine yourself." (FNF#63) In remarkably similar language, Hulusi asserted that, "Knowledge has to be applied. Not applying knowledge is as if a person is performing the ritual washing, without following it up with ritual prayer. Therefore, my good son, the foundation of every good deed is knowledge and pure intentions." (FNH#34) Both Shaikhs affirmed that the path of knowledge required the application of God's law, but the challenge remained how to apprehend such knowledge

6.5.2. The Heart as the Locus of Knowledge Acquisition

In accordance with the literature, for Hulusi and Faruki, reason was inadequate for attaining comprehensive knowledge of God (Griffel 2010: 284; Abrahamov 2003: 63 – 64). Faruki explained, "We are travelling towards God, trying to understand who He is. And even if you understand, you cannot define Him." (FNF#43) He later on added, "It is impossible to know God through reason. If you are not losing your mind, you are not close to God. Humanity's intelligence is limited and cannot come close to God." (FNF#66)[143] This did not negate intellectual effort, and Faruki strongly encouraged his followers to read and study diligently, but it did emphasise a hierarchical order in which reason was deficient for attaining the desired goal. In a similar way, Hulusi also dismissed the comprehensive powers of reason, saying, "Allah cannot be understood rationally. That is the difference between philosophy and faith. In philosophy you are supposed to doubt and prove things, whereas in faith you are supposed to believe and find out." (FNH#71) He continued by suggesting the need to supplement outer knowledge with inner knowledge, "It is not enough, as I have said before, to

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[143] This idea of "bewilderment" was discussed by Ibn ʿArabi, where two opposing rational concepts, such as "he is and he is not", are supposed to be equally embraced in perfect tension (Chittick 1989: 3 – 4).

read volumes and volumes of books. It is not enough to learn knowledge of *zahir* (the visible world), if one does not know *batin* (the invisible world)."[144] (FNH#37)

Although reason continued to have an important function, its inadequacy for the attainment of knowledge about God required another approach. This is a widely discussed theme in Sufi theology. Ibn ʿArabi, denoted *kashf* (unveiling) as superior to intellectual knowledge (Chittick 1989: 232). Knysh described a qualitative progression of attaining knowledge from empirical, to experiential (*dhawq*) and finally revelatory knowledge (*kashf*) (2000: 311 – 312). This superior cognition is also expressed by technical terms such as *mushāhada* (witnessing), *baṣīra* (insight), *ilhām* (inspiration) and others (Herawati 2013: 227). Once knowledge reaches its culmination, existence as such, and therefore all duality, supposedly disappears in the oneness of God (Burckhardt 2008: 24). For Sufis it is ultimately the role of the heart to comprehend God, and thereby attain proximity to Him (Lumbard 2007: 376; Chittick 2013: 428). Nicholson described the heart as the organ intentionally designed to know God (2002: 37). As the primary locus of going beyond theory, where the "internal senses provide spiritual intelligence" (Bashir 2011: 44), the significance of the heart for transcending the confines of reason and attaining true knowledge of things is difficult to overstate (Corbin 1998: 221).

Faruki expressed its importance by pointing his finger at his heart and saying, "The food for the heart is knowledge. Everything that is called knowledge, drop by drop that knowledge comes out of here and not from here (pointing to the head)." (FNF#14) Ismail also commented: "The heart is the most important organ inside the human being. Even the Qur'an was lowered down upon the heart. Only afterwards, can reason comprehend and analyse it. Only the heart can rise above the spheres of reason and come close to God."[145] (FNF#63) Hulusi expressed his point of view during a lecture, saying, "If you turn your heart toward Him cleansed and alert, He will reveal to you His secrets." (FNH#30) The extraordinary significance of the heart for going independently beyond reason and directly attaining knowledge about God was remarkable, and Faruki described it as follows, "If the heart is alive, it can find God with a Shaikh, without a Shaikh, in the Qur'an, in the Bible or on TV. But if the heart is not being fed, then you really have nothing." (FNF#64) As the superior vehicle for attaining transcendent

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[144] The Sufi pursuit of the external dimension, such as obedience to the commandemnts, and the internal reality that seeks to understand the deeper, hidden significance behind outward actions, has been a perennial mark of Sufism from the beginning (Ostřanský 2015: 475).

[145] Qur'anic revelation decending upon the heart of the Prophet is discussed by Chittick (1989: 260 – 262).

knowledge, the role of the heart was paramount, but to initiate its function there was a necessary and intentional developmental phase that prepared, cleansed and enabled the heart to fulfil its objective.

In theory, the heart can achieve much, but this is only possible if it is in an appropriate state of readiness. Consequently, the science of purifying the heart comprises one of the core Sufi theological discussions (Smith 1935: 86 – 87; Nicholson 2002: 49 – 50; Ernst 1997: 23). Its cleansing constitutes an important prerequisite for Sufi aspirants, and one of Sufism's main goals is to purify the heart (Kabbani 1995: 35 – 37). Hulusi gave the following instruction, "Useful knowledge, is the type of knowledge that expands like rays of light in your chest. That is only possible by cleansing your heart from dislikeable moral qualities and the taking on of appropriate moral qualities." (FNH#34) When interviewed by reporters, Hulusi said, "Sufism is the science of cleansing one's heart. Dervishes try to keep their heart away from anything that is not God" (Skorup & Rostuhar 2009: 62). As I will discuss in the following chapter, the *dhikr* is one of the principal methods for cleansing the heart (Geoffroy 2010: 164). Because of this specific role, the *dhikr* directly enables the heart to achieve greater degrees of knowledge. Hulusi acknowledged the importance of the *dhikr*, saying, "The *dhikr* is necessary for knowledge and proximity to God, but the prerequisite for that is that the heart is present during the mentioning of the name Allah, which is the perfect medicine for the heart. Mentioning Allah with the heart leads to attainment of knowledge of Allah by the heart." (FNH#66) Hulusi's emphasis on action and religious performances was authenticated by the frequency and variety of *dhikrs* performed at his *tekija*. However, he did not stop there.

Further complexity was introduced by his instruction that attempted to reconcile action and contemplation. He explained the relationship of the *dhikr* with the insistence on *fikr* (reflection) in the following words, "Allah can only lower his secret onto the pure heart of his slave. That is why the *dhikr* and *fikr* are two wings. For the *dhikr* cleanses our hearts, while *fikr* sharpens and empowers our ability to reason. Then both the heart and reason form an alliance." (FNH#66) The importance of *fikr* has a variety of viewpoints in the literature. For instance, according to Chittick, Ibn ʿArabi considered *fikr* markedly subordinate to *kashf*, and wholly inadequate to comprehend the Divine (1989: 62 – 63). Netton, on the other hand, emphasised the significance of *fikr* and its centrality for proper *dhikr* practice (2000: 146). For Hulusi, knowledge acquisition evidently required clean hearts. This largely depended on the *dhikr*, but the correct performance thereof necessitated active rational thought and

contemplation. While the performative aspect of the *dhikr* predominantly characterized the life of Hulusi's community, reason also played a role. Faruki agreed with the interpretation that the *dhikr* purified hearts, but he offered another interpretation.

For him, the purpose of the *dhikr* went beyond the purification of the heart. It was a means to an end, but the primary objective remained the attainment of knowledge, "How do you cleanse your heart? Since it is the organ created to know God, it must be cleansed with knowledge. Therefore, since *dhikr* sharpens your knowledge of God, it is the perfect vehicle for cleansing your heart. Through the *dhikr* Allah straightens out your knowledge." (FNF#34) In other words, the *dhikr* was an auxiliary tool for the pursuit of knowledge, and an effective mechanism to produce awareness of God's absolute agency, or *tevhid*. Ismail expressed this idea as follows, "God clothes himself with the garment of the world and then appears to us. Sometimes He can even appear in the clothes of a pauper. You can seek and find God both in the material and spiritual worlds, but the question is in which direction is your heart turned towards." (FNF#71) Ultimately, the objective of purifying the heart, although exceedingly difficult, was to obtain a permanent state of remembrance. Faruki commented, "It is possible to be in a constant *dhikr*. If someone is experiencing a state of *tevhid*, then while he is walking through Sarajevo, he is in *džennet* (heaven), while others could be inside a mosque as if they were in the middle of a marketplace."[146] (FNF#13) Both Hulusi and Faruki concurred regarding the central importance of the purified heart. While Hulusi prioritized the performative dimension of the *dhikr* and affirmed the importance of contemplation, Faruki insisted on its role in producing the necessary condition for knowledge acquisition that resulted in a permanent awareness of *tevhid*. These differences of emphasis reflected their underlying theological position, which consequently influenced the actual implementation of the ritual.

While individuals are responsible to prepare their hearts to acquire knowledge, ultimately this is not possible without God's direct assistance. Although man is accountable for obedience and moral virtue, knowledge is fundamentally a gift from God (Shah-Kazemi 2002: 160; Chittick 2013: 227). The interpretation of the exact content of this divine gift differed between the two Shaikhs. For Hulusi the primary expression of this gift manifested itself through finding a true guide, whereas for Faruki it was the dispensation of knowledge. Faruki explained the matter in the following words, "Knowledge comes from God. He who is really

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[146] As already discussed, the permanent state of awareness of God's existence is a prominent feature in Ibn ʿArabi's writings (Herawati 2013: 170), but also a central principle of the Naqshbandi Order (Lizzio 2007: 15).

thirsty, he will receive from God." (FNF#55) Ismail corroborated this notion, "In the beginning is knowledge. You do the things that you know, and then Allah will give you knowledge about the things you did not know." (FNF#89) This direct instruction from God without any intermediary may appear paradoxical due to Faruki's clear emphasis regarding the central role of the Shaikh. Rather than expressing a contradiction, this teaching was reflective of Faruki's affirmation of God, rather than a derogation of the importance of the Shaikh as the source of divine knowledge. For him, any agency in the world goes back to God, "God is your teacher. Your father, your professor, your Shaikh, are all just tools that God uses. It is He who teaches you."[147] (FNF#39) The Shaikh remained indispensable for promulgating knowledge, but ultimately it was the benefaction of God.

While Hulusi was not denying that knowledge had to come from God, his predominant insistence was on the critical role of the Shaikh for its transmission:

> If you sincerely ask Allah to increase your knowledge, you must patiently continue to search until Allah directs you to a teacher who will perfect your knowledge. Then one day you will meet the person that Allah reveals to you. He will lead you all the way to that which you have believed. If you find the right school, the school of knowledge, kiss the hand that will lead you in this school and successfully complete it. (FNH#61)

God's gift to the sincere seeker was to provide a true Shaikh, who could unlock divine mysteries and lead him to a successful completion of the journey. According to Hulusi, it was crucial for the disciple to display absolute commitment to his guide, "You cannot start the journey without a guide who knows the way and speaks the language of knowledge. You need to respect your guide. If you distance yourself you will have troubles." (FNH#28) In other words, each Shaikh chose to stress a particular aspect of knowledge as a gift from God. Hulusi focused on the Shaikh as the medium through which God bestowed knowledge to the community, and the responsibility of disciples to remain committed to his instruction. Faruki, faithful to his understanding of *tevhid*, prioritized God as the source of knowledge, while maintaining his role as the conduit by which it was dispensed. These positions were neither exclusive, nor opposed to each other, but rather represented a matter of emphasis. While such differences appeared minor, their manifestation and resulting implication in the lives and practices of each community were significant.

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[147] Herawati discussed this issue, highlighting Ibn ʿArabi's perspective that as knowledge increased, disciples would be able to recognise God's self-manifestation and agency in all things (2013: 179).

6.5.3. The Heart as the Means of Knowledge Transmission

One manifestation of this dissimilarity was the divergent understanding of how each Shaikh transferred knowledge to the dervish. Hulusi believed that the most important form of communication was nonverbal, taking place metaphysically through the vehicle of the heart:

> The most important thing, and you might not accept this right now, is the overflowing of knowledge from one heart to another. Some hearts are dead and ignorant. As the Qur'an says, 'They have hearts, but they do not understand.' The mind and the heart are connected. Our hearts affirm when they hear the truth. The word that flows out of someone's heart will find its way to another person's heart. But if it only flows from the tongue, it barely even reaches someone's ear. (FNH#30)

Hulusi's strategy of providing instruction for his followers through the vehicle of the heart was central to his understanding of how knowledge transmission occurred. He also taught on this important topic during his public lectures, "If a word comes from the heart, it will enter the hearts of those to whom it was directed. But if it comes from the tongue it can never reach the heart." (FNH#34) Buehler noted that this particular pedagogical method was fundamentally rooted in the Naqshbandi insistence on the intrinsic ability for Shaikhs to transmit deep insights of spiritual truths to their followers through heart-to-heart communication (1998: 96). In other words, it was a standard Naqshbandi strategy for fascilitating progress on the path.

In addition to his teaching, this approach was also reflected in his interaction with community members. While sitting in the courtyard, Hulusi was giving an allegorical interpretation of an Islamic poem, when he unexpectedly asked me to restate to the group everything he just said. I was unable to do so and asked him to repeat his teaching. He responded, "I just said it. Your heart is not able to understand. Whatever you needed to hear is what you heard. Everyone receives what he needs, to the degree that he can in the moment. You will not hear it again." (FNH#30) To him, the receptacle of understanding transcendent truths was not the cognitive faculty, but the heart. It alone was able to go beyond human language and receive directly from another person's heart. A further example of this type of wordless transmission of knowledge, where the Shaikh displayed his ability to "affect others without verbal articulation" (Bashir 2011: 90), occurred when the Shaikh was sitting in the *tekija* doing paperwork. I turned to one of his dervishes who was intensely staring at the Shaikh and asked him what he was thinking. He smiled and responded, "I am listening to a lecture." (FNH #30) Communication that went beyond words was characteristic for Hulusi's way of transmitting spiritual messages, and was considered the primary way to attain true knowledge.

Faruki also considered the heart as an important organ where faith took place, "The heart is always tumbling here and there. That is why Allah reveals himself to the heart, because He never shows himself in the same way twice." (FNF#64) During his teaching, he cited his Shaikh as the reason behind this conviction, "My Shaikh told me that he was speaking to my heart. That is right; the heart is the place that receives the seed, for it is with the heart that one receives the faith." (FNF#83)[148] While the heart was prominent in Faruki's thought, it was also limited. For instance, when I inquired about this idea of wordless transmission of knowledge and heart-to-heart pedagogy, Faruki became hostile against the idea, saying:

> Do not fall for it. If anyone could have done that, it would have been the Prophets. But no, they spoke, they talked, they fed the hungry… It is important to think. That is what I am asking from my dervishes. They need to search, study, read and make an effort. The Shaikh ought to push his dervishes to think deeply. Grab as much deductive knowledge as you can. Grab! Intuition will come, God's light will turn on for you to see, but it is your responsibility to prepare enough material for God to work with. This teaching is thievery and the work of Satan. Get away from it! (FNF#43)

The strong aversion to this concept was at first puzzling. This was also one of the rare occasions where it appeared that Ismail's teaching was not concisely representative of Faruki's own interpretation. His response to my question was, "It does exist, but I cannot tell you much about it. I know that this type of communication can exist. There are numerous living examples of the fact that it exists." (FNF#45) A few days later, Faruki chastised me for approaching Ismail with the same question, saying, "I received news that you asked Ismail the same question regarding knowledge being able to pass from heart-to-heart. You should not have done that. He has not fully mastered all of this material yet. In this religion, there is no hocus-pocus… There is absolutely no pouring of knowledge from heart-to-heart."[149] (FNF#46) This statement, however, also revealed an apparent inconsistency in his own teaching, since during the same interview I also recorded him saying that, "These types of events are historically very rare." (FNF#46) This discrepancy was probably due to the dangers such teaching might entail, which made the Shaikh feel more comfortable to dismiss it altogether than to permit its rare occurrence. Nevertheless, denouncing this approach, whatever the reason, simultaneously challenged fundamental Naqshbandi doctrine.

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[148] One of his main criticisms against the Islamic leadership was that they abandoned the heart and were conducting their affairs through reason. (FNF#34, 43, 66)

[149] Not only did this once more reaffirm the hierarchical difference between the two Shaikhs, it also highlighted Faruki's feelings regarding the subject matter.

In contrast to Faruki's criticism of heart-to-heart communication, Hulusi readily encouraged direct communication from the Shaikh's heart to the heart of the dervish. He pointed out how beneficial it was, saying, "Speaking from a pure heart to the heart of a dervish wakes up love towards Allah, toward the Prophet and toward this path. It brings you closer to Allah and wakes up love in your heart toward Him." (FNH#44) Although Faruki's focus was to acquire intellectual knowledge through books and verbal instruction, affirming that the preparation of the heart through listening to the Shaikh's teachings, hard work and personal study enabled the dervish to receive divine knowledge, some flexibility remained. In rare circumstances, Faruki did permit the possibility of receiving knowledge from another heart, "The lamp needs oil. First, you need to have a heart in order to receive something from another heart, in the same way that a telephone needs a signal. It is possible, but it is very rare." (FNF#101) Contrary to his earlier categorical rejection of this teaching strategy, rather than completely discarding it, he essentially dismissed its value as it related to the spiritual development of a dervish, and warned of its dangers if wrongfully applied. The tension between the importance of the heart as the principal medium for attaining divine knowledge and the necessity for personal intellectual striving by engaging the power of reason was evident. The central role of the heart, however, had yet another important implication.

6.5.4. The Heart's Connection to the Shaikh

The function of the heart for Sufi travellers is directly related to the concept of *rabita* and is one of the predominate keys for spiritual advancement (Buehler 2016: 160).[150] Le Gall recorded that the Naqshbandi were particularly known for their emphasis on *rabita* (2003: 95). Intentionally practising *rabita* assured the seeker of certain progress (Paul 1998: 34 – 35). Disciples were supposed to cultivate a bond of love by binding their heart to the heart of the Shaikh (Geoffroy 2010: 144), which permitted an outpouring of spiritual blessings. *Rabita* was cultivated through specific exercises which strengthened both emotional and psychological ties between Shaikh and disciple (Valdinoci 2012: 40). Abrogating the need for the Shaikh's presence enabled Naqshbandi to spread widely, since dervishes could remain connected to a Shaikh, even when physically absent (Paul 1998: 75). This powerful connection and intimate companionship formed the necessary prerequisites for success on the path (Fusfeld 1981: 125, 208). *Rabita* included meditating on the Shaikh and internalizing his teaching, which became a key method for spiritual instruction. Better results were directly proportional to the intensity

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[150] An extensive study on this concept was done in German by Swiss scholar Fritz Meier (1994).

of love for the Shaikh. If a Sufi neglected to spend time with his Shaikh, or permitted other things to replace the love he had for him, he could not achieve his goal (Paul 1998: 40 – 41).

In line with Naqshbandi doctrine, for Hulusi *rabita* between him and his dervishes was not only important for guidance and instruction, it was moreover necessary to attain a connection to God. When I asked him how a disciple knew that he was coming closer to God, he responded, "The heart knows. He gets close through me. I am his *rabita*. That is how he can feel and receive proximity." (FNH#27) Long-term dervish Samir explained this as follows, "Our connection with God is through the heart of the Shaikh. He has proven that he is in God's proximity. He is close to Allah and that is why we are trying to always be close to the Shaikh." (DAH#4) This notion was reasonable, since if the cleansed heart comprised the locus of knowledge, then the Shaikh, who already attained perfect purity, ought to have the greatest amount of access to divine knowledge. The purity of the Shaikh's heart consequently authenticated his direct perception of divine secrets. Thus, by binding one's heart to the heart of the Shaikh through *rabita*, the dervish would be able to benefit from both closeness to God and transcendent knowledge. In contrast to Hulusi's insistence on *rabita*, the term was largely absent from Faruki's discourse.

My only recorded instance of the term showed that he was more focused on its efficacy regarding obedience, and not primarily as a mystical connection between Shaikh and dervish, "The Shaikh can command you to bow before a certain spot in order to train you in obedience, in order to train you in *rabita*. He has the right to do that." (FNF#77) Ismail likewise showed his lack of understanding, saying:

> I do not know much about it… *Rabita* is a heart connection with the Shaikh. It is a way of calling upon his presence. If that happens you are more concentrated and focused in life. This leads to a better quality of life. Allah established all kinds of connections, with your family, with your friends and co-workers. Ultimately, these connections and relationships are with God himself, who is standing behind the veil of these people. (FNF#91)

This quote, as well as its dearth in Faruki's discourse, clearly displays the limited importance of *rabita*, while highlighting the centrality of God. The reference to the "veil" pointed once again to *tevhid* and God's agency behind all things. While consistent with Faruki's aversion toward an overemphasis of the heart-to-heart transmission of knowledge, his disregard toward *rabita*, deviated from established Naqshbandi doctrine, which prioritizes its notion. This empirical example contributes to a more refined understanding of how the interpretation and

application of particular theological concepts can vary according to the independent selection of the respective leader.

6.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented an analysis of a selection of theological concepts that were of fundamental importance to each Shaikh. I examined similarities and dissimilarities, pointed out comparative insights, linked my analysis to broader discussions, and indicated minor instances where my investigation went slightly beyond established boundaries. My aim was to investigate the Shaikh's independent ability to decide which standard theological aspects were most important and assess the resulting implications. The theoretical arc shared universal features. Although love was not the absolute centre, it was a key means of travel and motivating factor for dervishes to continue the journey. Achieving divine knowledge was ultimately paramount, since it paved the way to reach God. The essential considerations of love, knowledge and proximity comprised the basic framework of both communities. Differences began to emerge when specific details were either understated or emphasised.

Faruki's learning and expertise in the thought of Ibn ʿArabi was reflected in his consistent insistence regarding the reality of God's oneness and absolute agency. This was encompassed by the concept of *tevhid*. Hulusi's spiritual formation, background in secular leadership and concern for society expressed itself in his preference for *hizmet,* personal agency and the development of his dervishes into good, moral human beings. Although both Shaikhs highlighted that God was the end goal of the journey, in practise, Hulusi focused more on concrete aspects of the journey and Faruki on the destination. The attainment of knowledge and the necessity of its application was mutually accepted as the highest goal. Hulusi prioritized the importance of the Shaikh for the realisation of knowledge and contact with God through nonverbal communication on the level of the heart. For the heart to receive knowledge, it ultimately needed to be cleansed and connected through *rabita* to the Shaikh. In contrast, while Faruki affirmed the Shaikh's role in disseminating spiritual knowledge, he continued to stress *tevhid*, God's agency and the supremacy of verbal instruction. The purified heart constituted the key receptacle for knowledge, but Faruki maintained the prominence of cognitive learning and awareness of God as the giver of knowledge. I have organised the essential themes that describe the overarching theological cornerstones of each Shaikh, in the table below. The final two categories of form and essence will be discussed in the following chapter:

Hulusi	Faruki
Hizmet	*Tevhid*
Journey	Destination/God
Form	Essence

These themes were not exclusive and degrees of overlap continuously emerged. Instead, they represent a basic interpretive structure that provides a representative picture reflective of each Shaikh's differential area of emphasis. Although the concepts are essentially standard in Sufi literature, their independent selection and creative application, promote new insights into the actual functioning of such communities. This also offers additional concrete data that the Shaikh's agency fundamentally accounts for the empirical diversity of Naqshbandi in Bosnia.

In the following chapter, I provide further evidence to support my interpretive rationale regarding the concepts of form and essence from the perspective of each Shaikh. Although both Hulusi and Faruki acknowledged the theoretical primacy of trying to attain the essence of ultimate reality, considerable dissimilarity appeared once theory was put into practice. In light of the established theological beliefs of each Shaikh, by analysing specific external manifestations, such as key ritual ceremonies and social engagement, I will demonstrate a more nuanced understanding of the life of each community. The cumulative analysis of the data will advance the investigation regarding the Shaikh as the principal mechanism for shaping the lives of his followers as he adapts inherited religious normatives in their practical application.

7. CHAPTER SEVEN: THE PRACTICAL DIMENSION OF GUIDANCE

7.1. Introduction

The objective of the previous chapter was to examine underlying theological points that each Shaikh determined to prioritize. My evaluation highlighted that while the two Shaikhs shared commonalities regarding the general narrative, a deeper analysis substantiated significant differences. Continuing with the journey metaphor, the key idea maintained by Hulusi was *hizmet*, or serving others. His primary goal was to produce morally upright dervishes, who were beneficial to society and one another. Attaining proximity to God remained important, but the pedagogical and practical priority centred on the journey itself. Faruki, on the other hand, insisted on the centrality of *tevhid*, or oneness of God, as the foundation for understanding the entire Sufi enterprise. His interpretation and application of the term affirmed God's comprehensive involvement behind all existing phenomena. This prominent emphasis accounted for his orientation toward the end of the journey, or God Himself. I presented these contrasting objectives in a succinct table, asserting that the apparent divergences within a shared Naqshbandi framework were due to the agency of the Shaikh.

The current chapter continues to build upon the previous analysis, moving from the inner, theoretical dimension to the outer, practical application. I will advance the discussion by employing the hermeneutical concepts of form and essence, which arose from concrete data patterns represented in the field. The primary purpose is to assess the empirical contrast between Faruki and Hulusi regarding their understanding and consequent actualization of these terms as they relate to the performative and societal dimensions. The ensuing juxtaposition and comparative analysis will demonstrate that while their conceptual perspectives largely overlapped, considerable contradictions and distinct variations occurred in the actual external implementation. Using this interpretive grid, I have divided my evaluation of the empirical life of the communities into two principal categories. The first considers two prominent religious rituals, the *bejat* and the *dhikr*, while the second explores the wider social involvement. The aim is to highlight manifest differences, whose inauguration is directly associated with the subjective interpretation and preferential design under the leadership domain of the Shaikh.

7.2. Exploring the Relationship of Essence and Form

The inner life evidently constitutes the essence of Sufism (Heck 2006: 253). However, external forms ranging from dress codes, preferential colours to varied types of ritual performances are also essential in defining and differentiating Sufis from one another, since, "knowledge of the interior is predicated on the ability to understand and interpret the exterior correctly" (Bashir 2011: 27). While demarcations help to anchor cogently constructed definitions that distinguish one Order against another, in practice these rigid boundaries reveal remarkable flexibility. The relativization of membership to a distinct Order is partially located in the historic precedent of seekers joining multiple communities, participating in various *dhikrs*, while claiming that all paths are essentially corresponding and following the way of the Prophet (Geoffroy 2010: 156 – 157). Since the destination remains the same, simultaneously travelling on different paths, even if certain practices might be forbidden by one and permitted by another Order, has been widely practised (Baldick 2012: 77). The intra-Sufi hybridity is further complicated, as Werbner showed, when even in a similar locality, Sufis may share theologically corresponding beliefs, yet they look markedly different from one another in their ritual practices (2014: 282 – 283). While the acknowledgment of a wide range and multifaceted nature of Sufi Orders is evidently an established reality, an in-depth interrogation that provides justification for its occurrence remains insufficient.

The multifaceted complexity reveals the limits of a narrow and prescriptive hermeneutic that suggests exclusive boundary lines. Sufi Orders are not rigidly constructed institutions that remain unchanged, but malleable, living communities that contextualise their "variegated array of ideas and practices" according to contemporary circumstances (Bashir 2011: 11). In other words, as far as the essential desire to know and experience God is concerned, Sufi Orders are one. Differences and performative distinctions predominantly appear on the formal plane. As a result, defining conclusive norms that objectively articulate the central and unique characteristics of a specific Order that distinguishes it from others is a difficult task. As stated before, although highlighting differences in contextualisation is useful, it does not provide an explanation as to how these variations develop. For instance, while Sahin suggests that the most important aspect of the Naqshbandi is its ability to constantly reinterpret and reform itself (2010: 27), he omits to explicitly locate the mechanism responsible for its transformation. Netton is more useful by pointing to the Shaikh as the top of the hierarchical ladder both organisationally and spiritually (2000: 158 – 159), and therefore the principal agent

that implements change and adaptation. Nevertheless, his discussion remains largely theoretical, lacking concrete empirical evidence that illustrates the Shaikh's actual agency. Consequently, my objective is to interrogate specific examples of Faruki's and Hulusi's remarkable individual authority to delineate Naqshbandi contours and administer new interpretations within an existing structure.

7.2.1. The Challenge of Defining the Naqshbandi

The role of the Shaikh in shaping the community under his leadership became clear to me when I asked Ismail to explain the essential features that comprised a Naqshbandi Sufi, "I am not completely sure, but I rely more on that which I hear and see from my living Shaikh. There are certain things that Naqshbandi Sufis insist on, such as knowledge and performing a permanent *dhikr*, but I am not able to list any other specific characteristics." (FNF#106) In a previous interview, upon asking Ismail about the well-known eight or eleven standard Naqshbandi principles (Kabbani 1995: 128 – 135; Algar 1976: 133), he surprisingly responded, "I have never heard of where these eleven principles have been written down. I know they exist, but we do not really follow them… There is no purely Naqshbandi teaching that we follow." (FNF#40) Instead of adhering to previously prescribed principles of the Naqshbandi, Ismail followed the teachings of his Shaikh. This ambivalence in providing a clear definition by a well-educated scholar and Shaikh, who claimed he did not know the official defining elements of the Naqshbandi, was perplexing. It highlighted that to Ismail it was not important what particular Order he formally belonged to, or any of its singular characteristics. His identity was tied to his affiliation with Faruki. Hazim's response to my question regarding required Naqshbandi literature for Faruki's dervishes, further elucidated this point, "The Shaikh takes one look at you and tells you what to read and what not to read. There is no prewritten bibliography." (FNF#62) I recorded a comparable response when interviewing one of Hulusi's dervishes who described his Naqshbandi identity as follows "I am what my Shaikh is. If my Shaikh is a Naqshbandi, that is what I am. I am what he is." (DAH#4) He defined his identity not by a distinct Sufi Order and its specific list of principles, but a living Shaikh. The name and affiliation to a branch of Sufism became subservient to the person he followed.

Hulusi and Faruki ultimately represented what their dervishes were, which made their choice regarding the manner of spiritual travel normative. This was particularly reflected in their divergent positionality toward the concepts of form and essence. For instance, at Hulusi's *tekija*, I noticed the presence of multitudinous external symbols. Midhat acknowledge the

necessity of such symbols and a well-defined form as follows, "The form is important, but the essence is more important. Look at this cup of tea. You cannot drink tea, unless you have a cup." (FNH#82) Although empirically verifiable that form played an important role for Hulusi, trying to determine a representative definition and set of distinct features of Bosnian Naqshbandi proved challenging. I asked Midhat to explain the essential differences between Sufi Orders, to which he responded, "It does not really matter, since they are all like waves that are formed and then they disappear." (FNH#21) This ambivalence toward specificity was substantiated by Hulusi's response to my question regarding differences between Bosnian Naqshbandi and those in other countries, "There are no major differences, except for perhaps the loud *dhikr* that we perform. Most other Naqshbandis have a silent *dhikr*. This is a difference that produced very good results here in Bosnia, since it is appropriate for the character of the people here."[151] (FNH#71)

One of his dervishes answered the same question as follows, "The essence of Sufism remains the same, but the form might differ. Different cultures, customs or climates might adjust the form to its needs, but the essence remains the same." (DAH#28) The same dervish also gave an illuminating response to my additional probing about specific Naqshbandi principles, saying, "They are principles that are adapted to our times … The Shaikh adapts these principles to practical living, while remaining a perfect example to be followed. A Sufi ought to be a son of his time. We do not follow a dogma, since it is not flexible." (DAH#28) According to Midhat, "In their essence, but not formally, all Sufi Orders are Naqshbandi." (FNH#36) On another occasion he added, "Just like there are twelve different cups, there are twelve Sufi Orders. But the content, the essence is all the same." (FNH#42) From the aforementioned examples, it became evident that for Hulusi and his followers, there was no firm disparity between the various Orders, since the crucial denominator was a shared essence, with only minor exterior distinctions.

Secondary informants also added to the idea that distinguished between form and essence, saying, "In essence all twelve Sufi Orders are one." (DAOI#5) As I continued to investigate what defined a Naqshbandi, a young Shaikh gave the following perplexing response, "There are people who are tied to a Naqshbandi Shaikh, but inside he might be Qadiri. There are some who are by nature more inclined towards love, so in essence they are Mevlevi,

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[151] In his introduction to the book on the Naqshbandi, Hulusi mentioned common features of the Order, such as sobriety, self-discipline, awareness of God's presence and the meaning of the name (2011: 20). There were no noticeable deviations from standard Naqshbandi literature.

but outwardly they are Naqshbandi." (DAOI#11) I continued to probe if there were any guidelines to identify a Naqshbandi, "You might be able to tell by the way they dress. But really, in this day and age you cannot really recognise a Naqshbandi. I have been to some *dhikrs* that claim to be Naqshbandi, but have nothing to do with it." (DAOI#11) Hulusi's close friend and Shaikh likewise acknowledged the difficulty of clear definitions, "A Naqshbandi is difficult to define. It is as if you would be asking to define a spirit, or love or knowledge. The definition of what a Naqshbandi is can be found in books, but in reality, it is very subjective." (DAOI#16) While some informants acknowledged the need for form (DAOI#19), the prevailing consensus was that the external features delineating Sufi Orders from one another were peripheral. Ultimately, what mattered most was the underlying essence.[152]

Faruki also agreed, "In essence, all Orders are the same. All paths lead to the same goal… The differences are minimal." (FNF#116) Faruki's dervish expressed his bewilderment regarding which Sufi Order his Shaikh belonged to, saying, "In all these years I still would not be able to tell if Faruki is a Naqshbandi Shaikh or which Sufi Order he belongs to." (FNF#123) In reference to distinctions within the Naqshbandi, Faruki did not see major differences, "The form might differ somewhat depending on the climate, geography and tradition, but regardless if a Naqshbandi is in Mongolia or America, in essence they are the same." (FNF#102) While Faruki dismissed the importance of form, he did not do so categorically. For him the rejection of form was directly tied to spiritual maturity and advancement on the path to God:

> Sufis do not value form! You need to defend that in your thesis. It does not matter which Sufi Order you are… I know that it is easier to defend a form, but forms are for little children. Letters on a page have a form, but in essence, if they could talk to each other the letter A would say to the letter B, 'I am you, and you are me. I am ink and you are ink.' That is their essence. It is not good to be preoccupied by form. (FNF#103)

I was able to trace his particular position back to his own Shaikh when he said, "My Shaikh said that it was easy to condition the behaviour of a dervish, but he never emphasised the form, since the form is not the goal of the journey." (FNF#111) In other words, as dervishes matured, form became valuable, but toward the end of the journey, it would eventually be abolished.[153]

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[152] While secondary literature on the Naqshbandi provides guidelines and defining elements, evidence from the majority of my interlocutors consistently devalued the need for these definitions (DAOI#4, 6, 12, 15, 24, 30, 33)

[153] The three ascending stages are Shariʿah, *mar'ifa* and *haqiqa* (divine truth). This shows a diminishing importance of form that in its culmination is completely abolished (Schimmel 1994: 77; Nasr 2009: 60; Chittick 2013: 217).

Faruki explained, "It is important to protect the form, until it is no longer necessary. But that is a long way away." (FNF#103)

Although Faruki appeared to contradicting himself, this could be largely resolved by viewing his discourse through a progressive, ascending lens, which advocated form in its usefulness to attain maturity, but derogated its ultimate function. He explained:

> When we talk about form we are talking about a particular school. These schools are frames that one ought not to get out of, unless he leaves all form behind. The school has its own programme. Form is important, because if you add something or take something away God's blessing will not support you. Rules must not be changed." (FNF#77)

Ismail corroborated this view, saying, "It is important to keep the form, because one receives spiritual support. If there is an established school, and you follow that form, you will receive support from all of the Shaikhs in the *silsila*." (FNF#78) He later on added, "It is important to know the form in order to learn the essence. Essence is dependent on form." (FNF#112) Hazim illustrated this hierarchical gradation as follows, "The form exists and is important, but the essence is much more important." (FNF#62) In light of this, Hulusi and Faruki essentially devalued the need for clearly defined distinctions between Sufi Orders, making it difficult to compose an objective list of definitive characteristics that determine a Bosnian Naqshbandi. In summary, both Shaikhs accented the significance of essence over form. Respective followers, as well as secondary informants endorsed this position. Nevertheless, form did not become categorically obsolete, but retained an important function.

7.2.2. The Importance of Form and the Challenge of Normative Contours

While on the level of essence distinctions hypothetically disappeared, form retained the vital function of providing reliable guidance regarding the proper means of travel and the necessary blueprint by which Sufis received spiritual support. Moreover, my deeper examination of critical voices exposed the limitation of essence as the underlying hermeneutical explanation, since it did not adequately account for the narrative that insisted on the importance of protecting established principles as the basis for safeguarding the essence. In other words, by relegating form, essence inevitably suffered. For instance, Ismail provided the following succinct explanation:

> Essence is clothed by form in order not to be naked. Being a Naqshbandi needs form, since changing form means getting dressed in somebody else's clothing… Each form has its essence and it is necessary

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to have one and the other. It is important that form and essence mutually fit. When we honour the *usul* (traditional rules) of a Sufi Order, then all the Shaikhs in the *silsila* give their spiritual support. (FNF#106)

Here Ismail asserted the necessity of guarding and honouring *usul*. Chittick, referring to Ibn ʿArabi, defines *usul* as a set of principles related to established doctrine that ought to remain unchanged (1989: 256). In my research context, *usul* was understood more in the sense of sacred tradition, which Faruki categorically insisted on, "Tradition has to be kept! You neglect one thing, then another. Where is that going to lead us?" (FNF#74) Once he passionately commented on the state of Sufism, saying, "I am fighting for Sufism until I end up in the grave. These people devalue Sufi teaching. How can I keep quiet by looking at that? The foundation must not be changed. You cannot change *usul*."[154] (FNF#127)

Similar to Faruki, secondary informants likewise complained about what they perceived as deviations from the established foundation, "These things should not be done this way. These things are outside our *usul*." (DAOI#19) Another informant said, "*Usul* is very clear and one should never change it. These things were set up by Allah in order to save us… I call all of that dervish folklore." (DAOI#11) In principle, there was a presumed, strictly defined normative tradition, which was established by previous generations of Sufis, but has been modified and turned into a "ceremony and a type of parade." (DAOI#30) Hazim illustrated, "I remember when I was a kid, all Sufis were similar to one another and they all followed the tradition." (FNF#72) Faruki described his memory of the past as follows, "I tell you the truth, there have never been many differences between Naqshbandi Shaikhs from the past, but that is because they travelled the path. We would copy things as best as we could from our Shaikhs… Boundaries must be protected. Somebody put the form in place." (FNF#77) This account, however, clashed with Hulusi.

On one occasion he made the following statement, "The Shaikh has the right to determine the appropriate kind of upbringing. Instruction can never be the same. I am an original. I cannot do the same things that other Shaikhs did in their time." (FNH#28) Hulusi did not derogate past tradition, but his understanding of *usul* and the resulting choices were

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[154] It is important to distinguish between *usul* and *adab* (etiquette), since they are closely related. Scholars have indicated the importance of *adab* in Sufism as a prominent method of upbringing, especially related to obedience to the Shaikh (Mayeur-Jaouen & Patrizi 2016: 2; Geoffroy 2010: 145; Huda 2004: 477). It is challenging to define *adab* exactly, since it encompasses morality, ethics and social behaviour. In comparison to *usul* it is less concerned with ritual performances, but interpersonal dynamics and outward conduct. Due to necessity of limiting my scope, in this discussion I am primarily aiming to articulate the concept of *usul* in the sense of tradition, since it comprised the core concern for the majority of my informants as something that ought to remain unaltered.

fundamentally different from Faruki. Hulusi's dervish explained, "Each era has its own Shaikh. They modify things according to the times and needs they encounter… He has the right to determine how things ought to take place." (DAH#59) While Raudvere rightly noted that Hulusi combined "contemporary themes in preaching and practice to historical legacy" (2011: 8 – 9), for those who insisted on the importance of protecting *usul*, this combination was unacceptable. For instance, when I told Hazim that Hulusi claimed to be an "original" he became angry and said, "You cannot say about yourself that you are an original… No one is allowed to touch *usul*. You can make minor adjustments, but the fundamentals must remain. If you touch the foundation, what will happen? These laws were set up by previous generations and you have no right to erase them." (FNF#125)

The broader question is how to reconcile the importance of *usul* with the earlier notion that diminished the importance of form and rigid distinctions in favour of essence. Although Ismail's argument that deviation from tradition obstructed the flow of spiritual blessing may be relevant, it ultimately did not supersede the Shaikh's ability to make changes. According to Hazim, "The currents are alive. The most important thing is that there is a living Shaikh who influences you…Yes, there is a form, and we are to respect it, but you also live in the real world, which changes according to the times." (FNF#62) Both tradition and form are inherently malleable due to the Shaikh's authority. He determines what form the essence needs to assume. This dynamic resembled Pinto's research, where each Shaikh newly codified normative categories, which led to a fundamentally subjective reinterpretation of the Sufi tradition under his domain (2013a: 67). The nuanced difference in my context was that while Hulusi inaugurated his own independent version of *usul*, Faruki promoted the narrative that he was the protector of a historically established and consequently unchangeable *usul*. Nevertheless, the Shaikh essentially remained unbound from a theoretically axiomatic blueprint of *usul*, and could therefore select his preferred method of guidance. This dynamic helped to clarify the prominent contrast I encountered.

In light of this discussion, I will now introduce two foundational ritual practices that highlighted remarkable performative dissimilarities, affirming that the choice of adaptation rested principally with the Shaikh.

7.3. The Performative Dimension – The *Bejat* Ceremony and its Function

Rituals are more than bodily movements. They embody theology and explain doctrinal concepts (Raudvere 2015: 163). The role of the Shaikh authorizes him to both adapt the external dimension of the ritual and determine its theological explication. Although rituals are presented as carefully codified and unchanged representation of a sacred history, much room is permitted for subjective reinterpretation. Pinto explains, "These examples show how the ritual mobilization of concrete symbols for the codification, transmission, and enactment of a shared Sufi tradition allows the emergence of very divergent processes of religious subjectification" (2013a: 72). One of the core Sufi rituals is the *bejat* ceremony, where disciples swear an oath and promise loyal obedience to their Shaikh.

The cardinal act of joining an Order is expressed through the *bejat*, which is believed to replicate the initiation between the companions and the Prophet (Ernst 1997: 141; Buehler 1998: 155). Pledging allegiance to the Shaikh is in the first place a commitment to God through the Prophet. It requires the dervish to submit with complete trust, while expecting spiritual protection and reliable guidance on the path to God (Karamustafa 2007: 120). Chaudhry calls it, "a system of accepting an intermediary for attaining spiritual guidance" (2012: 44). The actual ceremonial process of the *bejat* ritual does not follow a prescribed form. Depending on the design of the Shaikh, it can range from intimate and informal to an intricately choreographed public spectacle (Raudvere 2015: 162). The essence of the *bejat* establishes the relationship between disciple and Shaikh and between the disciple and other followers as brothers of the same community (Geoffroy 2010: 160 – 161).

Once the initiation is completed, the Sufi becomes an official member with all the resulting privileges and responsibilities. Often he is given a new name, special clothing and his individualized repetitive prayers, or *vird*.[155] The *vird* helps to cleanse the ego and strengthen his bond with the Shaikh. The format of the *vird* is flexible, and is customized by the Shaikh according to the spiritual state of the disciple to maximize his spiritual progress. A dervish is strongly encouraged never to desist from his daily assignment. The two main characteristics of the *vird* are its distinct Qur'anic foundation, where verses are incorporated into its basic structure, and its focus on the chain of transmission that links the practitioner to the Prophet (Padwick 1961: 20 – 22; Geoffroy 2010: 174 – 176). Both Faruki and Hulusi practised the

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[155] For an example of a Bosnian Naqshbandi *vird*, see Appendix N.

bejat, but the formal differences were remarkable. On the spectrum ranging from formal to informal, the two Shaikhs were ostensibly on opposite ends, which revealed how they related to form and ranked its importance.

Faruki's developmental period took place during a time when Sufism was not welcomed in public, which undoubtedly influenced his spiritual orientation. Hazim's comment proved useful, "Earlier, *bejat* was never given publicly." (FNF#97) This might explain why he had no ceremonial procedure for initiating new dervishes, "We did not have a ceremony, outward clothing, big turbans or similar things. *Bejat* is submission to the Shaikh and a heart connection to him." (DAF#17) Another follower confirmed, "In all those years that I have been with Faruki, I have never seen a single ceremony." (FNF#95) Besides minimizing the importance of form, initiation for Faruki took place after a prolonged probationary period.[156] Faruki explained how he knew that someone was ready for initiation as follows:

> I just recently made someone a dervish. I felt in my heart for a while that I should, and then he came to tell me a dream. In this dream, somebody invited him during ritual prayer to join the prayer line. Right there and then, I gave him his *vird* and some general advice what he should and should not be doing… On one hand, everything was telling me that he was ready. On the other hand, God was also preparing him. (FNF#51)

Transcendent confirmation through a dream or supernatural signs was essential for Faruki, "If I receive a sign from God, I may ask a dervish if he wants this path. If he does, I ask him if he will obey my instructions. If he answers in the affirmative, he has given the *bejat*." (FNF#123)

He clarified what he considered the most important, foundational feature of the *bejat* as follows, "The *bejat* ceremony has been too mystified and formalized. The essence of it is if you want to obey. Then obey! If not, then go. It is a covenant of obedience. Whatever the Shaikh tells him, he needs to obey. Obedience is the stamp of *bejat*." (FNF#22) Hazim confirmed, "You have to accept him, commit yourself to follow his instructions without asking why, and he has to also accept you." (FNF#15) Ismail explained his understanding of the reciprocal nature between Shaikh and dervish, saying:

> The *bejat* is an oath… The form is simple. The Shaikh says something, pronounces a prayer and takes an oath from the dervish. He gives him a *vird*, which becomes his obligation to fulfil. The dervish promises to honour the Shaikh, but the Shaikh also has an obligation. Both parties have to accept that. It

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[156] Geoffroy noted that not all aspirants would always be accepted into the Sufi fold, with several placed into an extended probationary period, and sometimes even rejected (2010: 140).

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is a spiritual marriage. But most of all it implies that the dervish is the student, while the Shaikh is the teacher. (FNF#94)

The common theme with Faruki and his followers was the formal simplicity behind the *bejat*, with the implication that ceremonial emphasis was unwarranted. The Shaikh asserted, "Did Jesus make a ceremony with his apostles? No, there is nothing. Learn, study, work, those things are the *bejat*. You do not need anything in writing. It can be in writing, but that is not necessary." (FNF#95) One seasoned dervish made the following useful comment, "The *bejat* is a very simple thing. You decide to listen to someone and let him lead you through life. Your obedience is your oath. Where there is a lot of noise, where there is a lot of ceremony, things are hollow. All that leads to folklore." (FNF#94) For Faruki the essence of the *bejat* was evidently the establishment of the relationship between Shaikh and dervish, founded upon obedience and instruction, while the actual ceremonial form was unimportant. In comparison to Hulusi, significant empirical differences emerged.

Hulusi illustrated the theological basis for the *bejat* as follows, "The *bejat* is an oath through me to Allah's Prophet." (FNH#66) During one of his lectures he further elaborated, "When you give your *bejat* you are promising to follow the path of the Prophet, and the Shaikh is the lamp upon your path. If you see him or not, if you know it or not, the Shaikh is always there." (FNH#37) I told Midhat that I identified the *bejat* as the key event in the life of a dervish. He congratulated me on my accurate understanding and explained its meaning as follows:

> This is the moment that someone enters the *tariqa*. The goal is to self-discipline yourself and to practise obedience in order to become a better person. Through the *bejat,* you promise that regardless of the obstacles, you will continue to endure on the path. The essence is to achieve a lifestyle with which Allah is pleased. It is the cleansing of one's soul through following your Shaikh. It is a promise that you will attempt to replace your negative characteristics with positive ones." (FNH#62)

In other words, the basic theological understanding of *bejat* was similar to Faruki, in that it emphasised the promise of obeying the Shaikh, but the ceremonial dimension demonstrated a contrasting trajectory. In order to illustrate the ensuing diversity, I will present a general summary of the event itself.

Hulusi's *bejat* preparations were planned to the minutest detail, demonstrating his remarkable organisational skills. I witnessed one of the planning meetings for the *bejat*, where about thirty dervishes were seated around Hulusi, who personally decided on every detail, including who was responsible for drinks, plastic plates, transportation, food, chairs, prayer

beads, refrigeration and so on. Whenever a dervish did not have a specific answer, the Shaikh said, "When you find out, inform me." (FNH#62) Although it was almost midnight, once a particular decision was made regarding meat and bread, the appropriate butcher and baker were called immediately. Hulusi was in absolute control of the room. Followers paid close attention to his words and had their notebooks open. He demanded absolute discipline during the event, insisting on punctuality and a strict uniform dress code, "You have to be on time, because every minute is planned out." (FNH#61) All of Hulusi's dervishes throughout the country and even internationally were required to attend the event, which was an explicit request made on several occasions. (FNH#49, 61, 62)

On the day of the event,[157] which started at 3 PM and concluded the following day with morning prayers, the Shaikh arrived and all male dervishes not busy with preparations formed two lines on each side of the pathway that led to the *tekija* courtyard, to welcome him. (FNH#63) As he slowly walked through the row of dervishes, he extended his hand to each individual, who proceeded to kiss it three times. It was difficult for me to follow the exact progression of the various *dhikr* performances, but besides the Naqshbandi *dhikr*, I also observed Halveti, Qadiri and Chishti *dhikrs*.[158] As the main event approached, several dignitaries from Turkey, important representatives of the IC and several other Shaikhs from around the country arrived. After the customary greetings by official representatives, the ceremony began. That night, Hulusi received the *bejat* from sixty-four male and three female dervishes. Although I did not personally know all the dervishes to verify their exact age, the majority of initiates appeared to be between the ages of seventeen to twenty-four. I was, however, able to verify that Hulusi initiated dervishes after a relatively short period ranging from two weeks to less than a year. (FNH#26; DAH#17, 18, 21, 30). Eight initiates lined up shoulder to shoulder in eight rows, resembling an Army. The Shaikh gave a short sermon related to the significance of the *bejat*, followed by addressing each individual by name, asking three consecutive times if he accepted him as his Shaikh. As the initiate responded in the affirmative, an older dervish stood behind the individual pressing Hulusi's staff successively on the right, then the left shoulder, and finally on the neck. With each time, the pressure of the push increased. The Shaikh then responded, "I also accept you, my son, to be my spiritual

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[157] This ceremony took place at the Blagaj *tekija* on the river Buna. It is a beautiful complex, recently renovated and expanded by generous donations primarily from Turkey and has also been mentioned by other scholars (Hazen 2008: 84 – 86; Biegman 2009: 75; Vukomanović 2008: 10). Hulusi's dervish Hišam was the main Imam of Blagaj.
[158] Throughout the day, Hulusi changed his clothing and turban from red, to white and then finally to green, the traditional colour of the Naqshbandi in Bosnia, symbolizing the different Orders that he represented.

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child." I asked Midhat regarding the symbolism of this act, to which he responded, "It is the same way when the registrar asks you during the wedding ceremony if you willingly accept your wedding partner." (FNH#62)

Afterward, each dervish walked up to Hulusi, kneeled and placed his hands onto his thigh. The Shaikh whispered a prayer directly into his ear, gave him a sweet beverage to drink and placed a sugar cube in his mouth. Midhat explained to me that the sweet drink and sugar were symbolic of the sweetness of the Sufi journey. (FNH#62) Then each of the new initiates received a folder with his individualized prayer obligation with an official seal confirming that he was now Hulusi's follower, a gift bag containing Sufi books and prayer beads. This professional, formal approach left a deep impression. One recent dervish described the importance of having official documentation in the following words, "I received an official paper from the Shaikh with his stamp and signature. You have to have the stamp and signature; otherwise, it is not worth anything. It is proof that it came from the Shaikh. This stamp is unique, and there is only one of a kind." (DAH#20) The ceremony was identical for female dervishes, except that they did not walk up to the Shaikh and make physical contact with him.

After the initiations were completed, Hulusi promoted seven of his senior dervishes to a higher position in the *tekija* hierarchy and gave them permission to lead *dhikrs* from other Sufi Orders. The physical representation of their advancement was marked by either receiving a new turban that represented one of the other Orders, or adding another green track to their existing Naqshbandi one. Hulusi gave a brief reason for why each dervish deserved this promotion and explained the meaning of their Sufi name and his rationale for choosing it. He also listed what they were authorized to do, which included dream interpretation, the performance of miracles and other spiritual endeavours. The principal area they were not authorized to administer was the acceptance of new dervishes into the Order. This remained under the absolute domain of the Shaikh. Finally, each person received an official folder with a diploma, posing for a professional photographer who took pictures of dervishes holding their open folder as visible proof. Hulusi commented, "Everything that I do, needs to be done in the light." (FNH#63)[159] In a previous sermon, he offered rationale for this position, saying, "The *bejat* and any spiritual promotions are always made public knowledge to avoid false accusations. That is why I have never given any Sufi document, *bejat* or *vird*, without it being

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[159] I found this comment perplexing, since Hulusi persistently claimed that he did not know the exact number of dervishes. (FNH#78) This approach could be reflective of Hulusi's intentional compliance with providing the IC with a meticulous report of all of his activities and current membership numbers.

recorded." (FNH#37) I gave this comprehensive description of the *bejat* ceremony as an example of Hulusi's performative emphasis on external symbolisms and a unique ritual performance that combined a variety of elements.[160] My objective was to demonstrate the ability of Shaikhs to operate with remarkable originality, resulting in the strengthening of their legitimacy in the eyes of their followers.

This level of independence, however, also elicited criticisms and disagreements from the wider community, "The *bejat* is supposed to be hidden, and needs to remain only between the dervish and his Shaikh." (DAOI#10) One informant made the following incensed comment:

> The *bejat* ceremonies that they are performing is playing games with our faith. The connection between a dervish and his Shaikh is a private affair and should not be public. I cannot stand that; it is horrible. This has nothing to do with Sufism. The last hundred years there were no *bejat* ceremonies here in Bosnia. True Shaikhs do not do that. Quasi Shaikhs need that because of their personal image and because they are obsessed with their career." (DAOI#5)

Criticism included that this type of *bejat* was "outside our tradition" (DAOI#19) and that the number of initiations was inherently wrong, "I call that dervish folklore. Anyone that read even the smallest amount of Sufi literature knows that it is impossible to give the *bejat* to dozens of dervishes every year." (DAOI#22) I asked Hulusi how he handled such criticism, "Everybody has the right to criticize me… It would not be right if people were only complimenting me. If crooks and hypocrites are complimenting you that is not good." (FNH#71)

Hulusi's ceremonial emphasis on external forms and outward appearance was in stark contrast with Faruki, who commented, "Real Sufis do not need big turbans. Those who are not, are looking to receive acknowledgement from others. They use all these things to fill up the hole inside them." (FNF#70) When I asked Faruki where the particular components of these ceremonies historically came from, he responded, "They came from Satan's kitchen… With time, things have disappeared and people have started filling the gaps with ceremony and caricature. It is ceremony for ceremony's sake. Do not play around with holy things! Do not make folklore out of these things!" (FNF#95) While both Hulusi and Faruki claimed that their approach was normative and according to the essence of things, the external manifestation and observable form revealed deep disagreement. The presence of critical voices and clashes in

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[160] As I noted in chapter four, Hulusi practised a remarkable amount and variety of religious performances in addition to prescribed religious obligations that prioritized symbolism, figurative detail and emphasis on form, but due to the constraints of space, I am unable to provide further specific examples.

perspectives regarding axiomatic norms and universally accepted tradition furthermore highlighted that truth was ultimately subjective. In essence, each Shaikh was responsible to interpret, adapt and implement the *bejat* according to his personal conviction. Another distinct manifestation of traditional religiosity that revealed dissimilarities between Faruki and Hulusi, and affirmed the role of the Shaikh in shaping established rituals was the *dhikr* performance.

7.4. The Performative Dimension – The *Dhikr* Ceremony and its Function

The most recognisable and central religious ceremony in Sufism is arguably the *dhikr*.[161] The *dhikr* is important in community formation, as it comprises the main occasion for social interaction (Atay 1994: 13). As a powerful, often emotional experience, it shapes the Sufi identity and solidifies their religious commitment (Pinto 2016: 208). *Dhikr* essentially means remembrance, and by implication, the mentioning of God (Ernst 1997: 92 – 95). In order to elevate the soul to attain greater proximity with God, it is necessary to repent from sin, pursue a total abandoning of the self-conscious state and give oneself completely over to the experience of the *dhikr* ritual (Padwick 1961: 13 – 20). The format can vary, but the goal is always the same. The seeker tries to attain a constant state of awareness of God. Once he succeeds, he will experience the joy of God's presence, personal purification and lasting transformation (Kabbani 1995: 35 – 37). Some Sufis even consider the *dhikr* superior, not in terms of importance but efficacy, to the five daily ritual prayers. The reasoning is that the prayers are limited in number, space and time, whereas the *dhikr* can be perpetually performed (Geoffroy 2010: 163).

The core of the *dhikr* is the recitation of God's beautiful names (Nasr 1997a: 275). Theologically speaking, these names represent God in some way, and through their sincere repetition, the Sufi is trying to realise those names within him, approach God and become aware of His presence (Geoffroy 2010: 168). Burckhardt illustrates the meaning behind the *dhikr* as follows, "The Divine name, revealed by God himself, implies a Divine Presence which becomes operative to the extent that the Name takes possession of the mind of him who invokes It. Man cannot concentrate directly on the Infinite, but, by concentrating on the symbol of the Infinite, attains to the Infinite Itself" (2008: 90). Through verbal invocations and repetitions Sufis strive to cleanse their heart to such a degree that they can experience God and ultimately be dissolved in divine union (Knysh 2000: 317 – 322). Gilsenan illustrates this, "When the

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[161] As it comprises one of the most essential Sufi practices, it is firmly founded upon the injunction of the Qur'an. See for example: 2:152, 3:191, 13:28, 18:24, 29:45 and 33:41.

most essential of the Names is chanted, *Hu* (He) indistinguishable from that other source and symbol of power and life which delivers it, the breath, men can experience for a rare moment the unity of the beyond and the within" (1973: 187).

Achieving success is difficult and requires help from a spiritual master. Throughout the *dhikr* the role of the Shaikh, whether physically present or not, remains central. In order to progress faster, disciples are supposed to practise an intense visualization technique and recall the forehead and eyes of the Shaikh as the main focal point during the *dhikr* (Buehler 1998: 136). While critics point out the danger of idolatry (Gilsenan 1973: 184), Sufis claim that the Shaikh is not the goal, but a door by which to reach God. Intense visualization maintains concentration and develops one's connection to the Shaikh. Valdinoci explains, "This daily effort of visual focus on the shaikh undoubtedly contributes to strengthening the disciple's tie with the shaikh, even if they live far from each other and cannot meet frequently" (2012: 38). Cultivating this intense bond is one of the key methods of spiritual travelling (Dahnhardt 1999: 142 – 143).[162] In other words, the Shaikh becomes the physical and spiritual centre of the performative event:

> The dhikr is central in the constitution and enactment of the charismatic persona of the shaykh, for the latter is the focal point of the ritual, serving as channel and mediator between the participants and providing the models of mystical experiences encoded in the symbols and iconic figures of the Sufi tradition. In this process, the affection devoted to the shaykh by his followers and disciples is identified with the Sufi notion of divine love, articulating a vast range of experiences that the Sufis see as connecting sacred and profane realities (Pinto 2013a: 73).

Both Hulusi and Faruki displayed similarities regarding their theological and theoretical basis for the *dhikr*. Significant differences, however, emerged in its actual formal implementation. This feature is not unprecedented, but an established Naqshbandi practice that can be traced back to the historic authority of the Shaikh, who has "throughout the ages considerable freedom to dismantle and rebuild its path according to the needs of their personality, place, and time" (Weismann 2007: 30). Although diversity is not inherently unique, Faruki and Hulusi offer a concrete, localised example of its operationalisation.

For their followers, the *dhikr* had a central importance in their lives. Faruki's dervish, for instance, remarked, "No matter how bad I feel or how many worries I have, every time, and

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[162] I discussed the central importance of *rabita* in the previous chapter. In close association with *sohbet* (companionship) (Paul 1998: 34 – 35), they mutually complement each other and serve as important tools to help dervishes attain spiritual progress (Krokus 2014: 183 – 188; Silverstein 2002: 8).

I mean every time that I perform the *dhikr*, after fifteen minutes I feel such peace that it is difficult to describe. Sometimes there are tears, sometimes there are not." (DAF#11) Another one confessed, "I live for the *dhikr*. It gives me purpose for life. Without it, I would not know what to live for." (DAF#14) One of Hulusi's dervishes said, "The *dhikr* is the battery that keeps me going. It is like a refresh button for my life. One simply feels the beauty of Islam." (DAH#7) Someone else added, "The experience of what the *dhikr* does with my heart was and still remains the key piece that helps me to progress on this path." (DAH#25) Although informants also described situations where the *dhikr* felt mechanical, boring, void of emotions or spiritual experiences (DAH#24, FNH#26; DAF#16, 20), throughout my interviews and interactions with dervishes from both communities, there was a consistent narrative that highlighted the positive significance of the *dhikr*. The predominant consensus among my primary informants was that the *dhikr* comprised a central part of their Sufi life, helped them to remain steadfast on the journey and elicited experiences of intense emotion such as joy, happiness and satisfaction. (FNH#15; DAH#11, 24, 25, 37; FNF#31; DAF#10, 15, 16)

According to Lings, the primary purpose of the *dhikr* is to cleanse the heart (1999: 59). Hulusi agreed and added, "Allah says that we should look for him in the hearts of his slaves; that is why we have to cleanse his house. Cleansing one's heart is done through the *dhikr*." (FNH#26) Midhat confirmed, saying, "The *dhikr* is the means for cleansing the heart from all bad characteristics that a human being assumes by his behaviour." (DAH#16) Dervishes likewise corroborated that the *dhikr* and its regular performance was the only way to cleanse one's heart. (DAH#2, 24, 26) In a similar way Faruki expressed, "The *dhikr* cleanses the heart, and when it is cleansed then it can see. God shows Himself to the heart and never to the mind." (FNF#18) Its ultimate purpose, however, was its efficacy in propelling the Sufi forward to attain proximity to God. Hulusi articulated this as follows, "The *dhikr* is distinguished by one specific thing, and that is coming into God's nearness." (FNH#66) In remarkably similar terms Faruki held the position that, "The goal of the *dhikr* is proximity to God, but that is very, very hard to achieve." (FNF#73) Other benefits of the *dhikr* that were mentioned by informants from both communities can be added to the list: its effectiveness in curing forgetfulness (FNF#18), removing one's sin (FNF#28), medicine for the soul (FNF#63), its power to calm down the heart (FNH#36), improve one's morality (FNH#17) and strengthen one's faith (FNH#36). Other overlapping features included the absolute importance of the Shaikh and a broad inclusion of what constituted a *dhikr*.

In order to retain one's focus, it was paramount to visualize the Shaikh throughout the *dhikr*. (FNH#17; FNF#18, 28, 129) Hulusi's dervishes mentioned that physical proximity to the Shaikh during the *dhikr* was advantageous, since it intensified the *dhikr* experience (DAH#16), because he was the "source of fire." (DAH#20) One dervish explained, "The Shaikh is the source of the *dhikr*. Sufis used to say that for young dervishes it is more important to be in the presence of the Shaikh than to perform the *dhikr*." (DAH#25) Faruki even suggested that the role of the Shaikh was hierarchically greater, saying, "There is one thing that is stronger than the *dhikr*, and that is the Shaikh's speech. It is a means to God, which can bring you to the very gate of heaven." (FNF#18) Furthermore, definitive demarcation lines regarding the *dhikr* were flexible, which Midhat's following comment revealed, "Every human activity where the topic is God is a *dhikr*." (FNH#17) One of Hulusi's dervishes added, "You do not even have to be performing the *dhikr* to feel the fervour, passion and cleansing of the heart. Merely a gaze from the Shaikh can cause that feeling." (DAH#16) Employing similar language, Faruki's senior dervish said, "There are various types of *dhikrs*. Ritual prayer is a *dhikr*, the *shahada*, Qur'an recitation, all these things are *dhikrs*." (DAF#6) Faruki once forbade me to leave our meeting to attend a *dhikr*, saying, "Why would you be looking for a *dhikr* if you have me? I am a living *dhikr*." (FNF#102) In the theoretical dimension, both communities displayed resemblances. They shared a common understanding of the importance of the *dhikr* for the cleansing of the heart, the attainment of proximity, the centrality of the Shaikh and the interpretive broadness of what constituted a *dhikr*. Once theory manifested into form, however, similarities began to dissolve.

7.4.1. The *Dhikr* Ritual

According to Hazim, the *dhikr* had to contain the following components, "There are basically only three parts to the *dhikr*. During the first part, you ask forgiveness from God, which prepares your heart. Then you recite prayers for the Prophet, which connects your heart to him. Then through that connection, since the only way to come to God is through the Prophet, you start reciting God's beautiful names. That is it." (FNF#16) Faruki's *dhikr*, even during holidays never fluctuated from its basic form.[163] It took place twice a week and started with Qur'an recitations by each member, followed by a short, seated and mild *dhikr* that ended with an *ilahija*. Even when Shaikh Ismail was present, leadership of the *dhikr* rotated between him and several other senior dervishes. There were no external emblems or uniform clothing. At

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[163] For an example of a standard Naqshbandi *dhikr*, see (Kabbani 1995: 417 – 419).

the end of the meeting, those dervishes that had time, remained in the tekija, smoked and listened to a brief teaching by Shaikh Ismail. Although the *dhikr* was central for the social, spiritual and ritual life of the *tekija*, its purpose was to achieve a higher aim. Faruki's following statement clearly illustrated this, "It is merely a means to an end. Dervishes have made the *dhikr* the goal. They are like little children who are sweeping the floor, thinking they are cleansing their hearts. They are not cleansing their hearts, but just rubbing dirt around." (FNF#116) To him, the ultimate goal of the *dhikr* goes back to the theological concept of *tevhid*, "You are supposed to become a faucet through which God Himself can speak. You become His instrument; you become God's medium." (FNF#28)

In comparison, Hulusi's *dhikr* differed significantly. At his *tekija*, *dhikrs* were performed daily (FNH#66). The main regular weekly event was the Naqshbandi *dhikr*, but Halveti, Chishti and Qadiri *dhikrs* were also open to the public.[164] As far as I am aware, Hulusi was the only Naqshbandi Shaikh in Bosnia who held *dhikrs* on Fridays and not Thursdays. One of his dervishes gave me a very practical reason for this choice, saying that Friday was chosen because it made it easier for people to stay late, since Saturday was not a working day. (DAH#21) The presence of multiple Orders did not diminish Naqshbandi affiliation, but, according to Midhat, merely added new ones, "All of us are first and foremost Naqshbandi. This *tekija* has been founded as a Naqshbandi *tekija*. Only later have other Sufi Orders been added." (FNH#36) Hulusi considered the performance of multiple *dhikrs* a great honour, "We have the Halveti *dhikr* here at the *tekija*. After hundreds of years, we have been honoured to once again revive this *dhikr*, I therefore expect you to come and attend it. That is our duty and honour with which we will attain Allah's satisfaction." (FNH#70) During announcements, Midhat confirmed this, saying, "Thanks be to Allah that we have the Halveti, Chishti and Qadiri *dhikr* here. Come and attend them." (FNH#38) I asked Hulusi what the benefit was of performing multiple *dhikrs*, "The more the better. Allah says in the Qur'an to mention Him often." (FNH#54) Midhat in response to the same question likewise agreed that more was better and gave the following useful allegorical explanation:

> It is beneficial to eat various types of foods. If you need more vitamin C, then it is good to eat oranges,
> but it is even better to add kiwis, pomegranates and peppers, which have the most amount of vitamin C.

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[164] The Naqshbandi *dhikr* was attended by most of the dervishes and visitors, while the Chishti and Halveti were ordinarily performed by a smaller, select group of about twenty to thirty dervishes. Qadiri *dhikrs* were not practised on a regular basis, but only during special occasions.

Consuming this variety helps to strengthen one's spiritual organism. If you enjoy writing with a regular pen or a fountain pen, it does not matter, for both will leave a mark. (FNH#36)

In addition to the regular weekly schedule, the year was also marked with several special occasions and holidays, which always included a Naqshbandi *dhikr* as part of the programme.

The *dhikr* started with the *destur* (permission) ceremony, where dervishes stood as the Shaikh processed to the front and commenced to ask for blessing from previous Shaikhs in the *silsila*.[165] Hulusi's list contained about thirteen names, which included the founders of the Naqshbandi, Chishti and Halveti Orders, a few famous Shaikhs from Bosnia's history, Mesud, Tayyar and Halid. Afterward, Hulusi gave a short teaching, followed by the standard Naqshbandi *dhikr* that concluded with ritual prayer, a meal and socialization late into the night. Although the structure of the format resembled that of Faruki, the *dhikr* was louder, lasted significantly longer and included other contrasting points such as the Shaikh sitting on a chair, the dimming of lights and the performance of an *ilahija* during the entire duration of the *dhikr*.[166] One dervish explained to me the reason for the duration of the *dhikr*, saying, "Because of the young people that come, the entire evening needs to be filled up. It is better they are here rather than going to places where they should not be." (FNH#69) During special events, this programme was augmented by the *tekija* choir *Ašik* performing *ilahije*, a professional actor who read poetry and stories from Islamic history, a sacred dance,[167] musical instruments (ney and drums),[168] an additional standing *dhikr*, greetings by dignitaries and a lavish meal. (FNH#47, 74, 83) These ceremonies were well attended, and included IC leadership, other Sufi Shaikhs and important Turkish representatives. Evidently, for Hulusi the *dhikr* was not solely about the spiritual dimension, but included a pronounced outward, formal emphasis that appealed to regular participants and occasional visitors alike. His elaborate manifestation of the *dhikr* was vividly different from Faruki and caused considerable clashes and disagreements regarding its general legitimacy and departure from preserving and perpetuating Bosnian Naqshbandi *usul*.

Regarding the variety of the *dhikrs* performed at the *tekija*, a fellow Shaikh and secretary of the TC strongly disagreed, saying that it was against the tradition in Bosnia and

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[165] I already discussed the importance of the *silsila* for receiving authority from the Prophet (Zelkina 2000: 75).
[166] I have included photographs of the two different *dhikrs* in Appendix M.
[167] Wolf noted the importance of dance, poetry and music for Sufis in his ethnographic research (2006).
[168] The use of musical instruments inside mosques is officially forbidden by the IC, but during my interview with the main Imam of Sarajevo, he confessed that they intentionally turned a blind eye to this practice. (DAOI#25)

that Naqshbandi Sufis historical never performed *dhikrs* from other Orders. (FNF#5) Hazim agreed, "That is absolutely illogical and unnecessary. Yes, it is true that the essence of all of them is the same, but traditionally we always follow only one Sufi Order. That is enough." (FNF#53) Later on, he gave a few examples of minor things that he observed as a guest at one of Hulusi's *dhikrs* that were altered, saying, "These are small things that get changed, but little by little, what will become of it?" (FNF#84) Another Shaikh complained that far too many changes have been introduced to Sufism in Bosnia, "There is a Naqshbandi *usul* that is not supposed to be changed, but has been changed. The Naqshbandi *dhikr* has its rules, but now people have been making many changes. This is not a game." (DAOI#10) Regarding multiple *dhikrs*, Faruki commented, "I do not think they are performing a single one of them… If the intention is good, the form is not that important, but we must avoid folklore." (FNF#28) Ismail added, "It can lead to confusion. It is a mixed cocktail and I do not recommend it." (FNF#40)

Faruki saw no need for *dhikrs* to last long, saying that it was about "quality and not quantity." (FNF#18) He remarked, "I do not have the right to burden you this much. You cannot prescribe the same medicine to everyone. With medicine, you are not permitted to either add to or take away from." (FNF#101) One dervish gave the following illustration, "Those people that perform the *dhikr* for two to three hours go home and do nothing else. We purposefully do a shorter *dhikr* as a community, while encouraging people to make the *dhikr* a priority at home and in their day-to-day lives." (DAF#18) Not only was Faruki concerned with quality, he additionally saw destructive danger, since too much spirituality and too many religious practices "inevitably increase the ego and lead to pride." (FNF#101) Since there was no universally agreed-upon frequency and standard length of the *dhikr* performance, ultimately whatever the Shaikh commanded became normative for the dervish. Ismail put it this way, "There can be intense and less intense periods in one's life, but what is important is to do what the Shaikh says." (FNF#129) Faruki also opposed the use of chairs inside the mosque (FNF#74), as well as instruments, saying, "It is wrong to use instruments.[169] My Shaikh never did. It leads to playfulness and pretence." (FNF#100)

According to both Ismail (FNF#70) and Faruki standing *dhikrs* were strictly forbidden, "We try to uphold the main things in our good old tradition. For example, we do not practise a standing *dhikr*… There is no standing *dhikr* with the Naqshbandis. He who says so, is practising

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[169] This is supported by Naqshbandi literature, which suggests that Naqshbandi repudiated music and dance and emphasised soberness and modesty during ritual performances (Kabbani 1995: 40 – 43; Knysh 2000: 220 – 221).

heterodoxy." (FNF#106) Hulusi's senior dervish disagreed, believing that standing *dhikrs* were standard Naqshbandi practice, but to him, "All these differences are unimportant." (DAH#10) Another dervish corroborated that while some Sufis do not practise a standing *dhikr*, Hulusi's followers did, "This is the custom of our *tekija*. Our Shaikh permits us to participate in that type of *dhikr*, and it does not confuse us." (DAH#28) It was ultimately the Shaikh's responsibility to customize the *dhikr* according to what he considered appropriate for his community. I noted another example of this remarkable autonomy during my conversation with Hulusi's dervish in charge of leading the Chishti *dhikr*, who explained that its original form was too long for the Bosnian context and that the Shaikh adapted its length in order to make it more acceptable for Bosnian use. (FNH#12) In the end, any adaptation of *dhikr* performances and the establishment of normative principles was based on the independent decision of the Shaikh. The following explanation by a dervish provided a useful summary of this point, "Sometimes the *dhikr* changes according to the Shaikh. Sometimes the way things were inherited, is the way they are performed, and sometimes certain changes are introduced. That is up to the Shaikh, because he is directly in touch with God." (DAH#34)

The aforementioned examples and critical voices attest to clashes in perspectives regarding what ought to constitute proper Naqshbandi practices in Bosnia. I demonstrated that while Faruki and Hulusi shared a common theological framework regarding the *dhikr*, once doctrine was translated into practice, significant variations appeared. These dissimilarities challenged the strength of universal norms to establish an accepted formal blueprint for ritual performances, and highlighted the Shaikh as the agent who can adapt inherently malleable Naqshbandi principles according to his preferential design. Although this led to disagreements and competing definitions of objective truth, it did not diminish the Shaikh's legitimate authority and independence to appropriate changes, claim divine sanction and testify to the validity of his personal choice.

Having examined salient examples of specific rituals as they were implemented by each Shaikh, I will now evaluate their particular consideration regarding social involvement.

7.5. Sufism and the Social Dimension

Although some scholars suggest that Sufism is inwardly focused, emphasising individual spiritual achievement and consequently disinterested in political power, social reform and wider influence (Lizzio 2007: 6; Yukleyen 2010: 281), others indicate that one of

the core Sufi doctrines includes an intentional participation in the world (Gilsenan 2000: 131 – 132). Ernst pointed out that the external dimension is often part and parcel of the mystical journey, which intentionally extends into a profound involvement and influence in society (1997: 145 – 146). Their popularity, significant followership and vast spanning networks made Sufi Orders a significant social and political force (Camara 2014: 105). The notion that Sufis try to distance themselves from the issues of this world is, according to Muedini's extensive research on the subject, an absolute misconception (2015: 24). Not only did Sufis successfully transform Muslim societies throughout history (Heck 2006: 280), the basis for personal spiritual growth and the authenticity of a legitimate Shaikh are based on the practical engagement in worldly affairs (Kriger & Seng 2005: 779 – 780).

Among Sufi Orders, the Naqshbandi are, due to their orthodoxy, sobriety and Shariʿah conformity, highlighted as one of the most socially engaged groups (Schimmel 1975: 366 – 368). This worldly interest by the Naqshbandi is not only presented as a distinguishing characteristic of this Order itself, but is also used in helping to explain the reluctance of other Orders to get involved in formal institutions (Dickson 2014: 416; Avanoğlu 2012: 92). Since spiritual drunkenness and annihilation in God is secondary, Naqshbandi remain present in the world and instruct others regarding the right path to God. Weismann argued that this attitude came from the key Naqshbandi principal of practising "solitude in the crowd", which requires awareness regarding current circumstances, resulting in the natural attempt to resolve emerging problems and bring appropriate change (2007: 12). Naqshbandi have actively sought favour with political leaders (Green 2012: 90), and in certain cases their spiritual focus even became subservient to earthly concerns (Yavuz 1999: 129).[170] Algar interpreted this shift in the Naqshbandi endeavour from spiritual to social issues as another form of spiritual wayfaring, where societal involvement complemented one's inner devotion (1976: 151 – 152).

The explanation of this phenomenon can be traced back to the prophetic example. Since a Shaikh is supposed to emulate the Prophet, he must also be involved in societal issues and not just spiritual practices (Buehler 1998: 12). This is why Shaikhs were often active participants in political institutions and social concerns (Takim 2006: 55). They not only influenced individual behaviour, but skilfully guided their disciples to initiate appropriate change (Muedini 2015: 31). Rozehnal provides the following useful comment:

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[170] In extreme situations their convictions overflowed into military engagement (Zelkina 2000; Abun-Nasr 1965; Muedini 2015). In Bosnia, many Naqshbandi Sufis were actively involved during the war (Abiva 2005: 204).

I argue that Sufi masters – both past and present – are revered as the physicians of human souls, the agents of the miraculous, and the heirs to the Prophet Muhammad. As mortal men, however, they remain fully immersed in the social, cultural, and political life of their times. In the cultural contexts of South Asia, Sufi sainthood continues to engage both *din* (religion) and *dunya* (the world) (2007: 46).

In other words, Sufi Shaikhs have authority over spiritual matters as well as material and socio-political responsibilities, which enhances their status and authority. In light of this discussion, the following section examines Faruki's and Hulusi's significantly different strategy as it pertains to providing tangible support, institutional partnership and engagement in society.

7.5.1. The Shaikh's Role in Providing Material Assistance

Keeping the balance between a heavenly orientation and earthly engagement is fundamentally challenging (Foley 2008: 545). An example of this difficulty is the dual benefit a dervish might gain from following a particular Shaikh, which includes both spiritual progress and material assistance, potentially causing mundane and impure motivations (Soares 2005: 164). As the historic influence of Shaikhs in society expanded, disciples increasingly became dependent on help in terms of economic gifts, hoping to gain upward social mobility (Werbner 2014: 294). Once Sufi communities formed around a Shaikh, he provided for spiritual, but also physical needs (Buehler 1998: 210). He helped to find employment, education and met a number of other concrete desires (Gilsenan 1973: 146 – 147). Faruki and Hulusi likewise helped their followers proportional to their own abilities.

Hulusi had a widespread reputation due to his connections to government officials for being able to find people jobs, or to give money and scholarships. (DAOI#21, 25) I asked Hulusi how he ensured that people did not become his followers out of self-interest, "Nobody comes here because he is looking for a job. That is a story perpetuated by jealous people and those who do not know. I truly want to help every person, not just those who are my dervishes. But how can I help? I can give advice or suggest somebody he ought to meet. That is all." (FNH#78) Hulusi did not believe that followers had ulterior motives and downplayed his role in providing for concrete needs. Faruki was not as well-connected, so he supplied primarily financial help to those in need. Faruki similarly denied offering worldly incentives, saying, "If you are looking for money you have come to the wrong place. I am not the social services. But if you are looking for God, then you can stay." (FNF#119) Ismail indicated that even when Faruki dispensed resources to a dervish, it was always under God's direction, "The Shaikh will

help a dervish as much as God is asking him to do. He knows when it is better for someone to remain unemployed than have a job." (FNF#118)

In reality, however, there were unambiguous benefits resulting from association with the Shaikh. This clearly augmented his authority and influence in the life of his followers. Moreover, this allowed non-spiritual motives and personal welfare to inspire one's allegiance. Henig recorded during his research in Bosnia that the *tekija* did not only have a spiritual function, but was clearly a place for networking, finding employment and other practical benefits (2017: 194 – 195).[171] One informant, also a Shaikh, confirmed this, "Material things definitely accompany the spiritual. People come to seek help, which is normal." (DAOI#19) Besides providing practical help, Hulusi and Faruki were also engaged in society. While the manner in which they assisted their followers was largely dictated by the extent of their ability to help, in matters of institutional and social engagement, dissimilarities occurred because of the intentional choices made by each Shaikh. These distinct decisions revealed a fundamental disagreement about what constituted appropriate Sufi conduct.

7.5.2.   The Shaikh's Role in Deciding Affiliation with the Religious Establishment

While Hulusi and Faruki agreed regarding the Naqshbandi premise, which promotes social involvement and political influence, clashes in perspective occurred regarding the type of participation and suitable partnership. In chapter two, I discussed the unique situation in Bosnia where although people shared a common Slavic background and language, it was religious affiliation that defined one's national and ethnic identity (Bringa 2002: 31 – 32; Hellyer 2009: 25). This profoundly affected the establishment of the IC due to its inherently close connection to state and politics. Faruki was extremely critical of this arrangement, saying, "Religion and politics simply cannot go together. Whenever politics fails, religion will also fail if they are connected." (FNF#73) When referring to the IC, he expressed his negative view as follows, "The IC has always been the instrument for either the Communist Party or today's government. They are only interested in politics and money." (FNF#127) While deeply disapproving of the establishment, Faruki was not advocating retreat from society. He merely qualified the type of involvement he considered appropriate, "Naqshbandi are part of society, but not the state. Heavenly teaching does not have a nation or a state. Does math have a passport?" (FNF#127)

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[171] Geaves offers an interesting discussion regarding the need for a nuanced differentiation between spiritual and social capital (2016).

Faruki also denounced those Sufi Orders that were part of the TC, since they were under the authority of the establishment structure. (FNF#93) An independent Sufi made the following helpful comment regarding the decline of Sufism from its spiritual focus to political involvement, saying, "Dervishes never wanted to have governmental authority in the past, but now they do. If you do not want power, you are free to criticize society, politics and even religious institutions." (DAOI#33) This theme of "political Sufism" continued to reoccur during multiple other interviews. (DAOI#6, 7, 11) The perceived increasing politicization of Sufism in Bosnia prompted Faruki to disaffiliate himself from the TC. This stood out as an interesting choice in light of Sufism's historic involvement in the political landscape of Bosnia.[172] He explained his reasoning as follows, "I do not want to be around all sorts of people. I do not want to be forced into this coalition of Shaikhs. I do not want angels to see me with these types of people." (FNF#114) He later on added, "I am proud of the fact that they tell me I am not one of them." (FNF#116) Faruki's position was corroborated by another Shaikh, who also was not part of the TC, saying, "Listen to me carefully, *tekijas* ought never be part of the IC, or under the authority of the TC." (DAOI#11)

The official opinion of IC leadership regarding the matter differed significantly:

As the main imam of Sarajevo, I have a very good relationship with all of the Shaikhs and the TC. There is no antagonism whatsoever. I have a positive attitude toward Sufism. I believe that we need *tekijas* and those people who oversee them. That is why we need to continue to develop these good relationships, and I believe that the TC needs to be within the IC. Moreover, all *tekijas* ought to also be within the TC. (DAOI#25)

One senior member of the TC even implied to threaten those who remained outside officially established structures, saying, "If you are not part of the TC you are just like the Wahhabis and therefore illegal." (DAOI#19) Hulusi's senior dervish, who knew Faruki, disagreed with his choice to stay outside the TC, saying that it caused disunity, "He probably thinks that he and his dervishes are the chosen ones. They probably do not see the need for this system. But why should we be disunified? Hulusi always emphasises the need for unity." (DAH#21) When I mentioned the need for unity to Hazim, he gave the following useful response, "Unity is a bad argument. Everyone uses this argument, but religion should be independent from politics. What should unify us is the Qur'an and faith, not a corrupt system." (FNF#35) Regardless of the

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[172] I discussed the visible presence of Sufism in Bosnia, particularly the Naqshbandi Order, during politically sponsored, public events in chapter two (Rujanac 2013; Henig 2012).

differences of opinion, Faruki chose to remain on the margins of involvement with the official religious establishment. Consequently, his visible social and political impact also diminished.

I questioned his choice to retreat, since it decreased his ability to produce positive social change, to which he responded, "Those who are invisible have a stronger influence. The invisible ones are most dangerous. Whenever you have plenty, it loses its value. It would be desirable that I talk to the politicians, but only if they will listen to me. But for me to applaud them and agree with their corruption, no way." (FNF#74) One independent dervish considered Faruki's privacy as one of his pronounced weaknesses, saying, "The thing that is lacking with Faruki is that he is not involved in the public sphere. Such a person ought to appear more often in public and share the truth with people." (DAOI#24) At the core of his aversion toward the political nature of religion, Sufism and the state was Faruki's desire to focus his efforts on spiritual matters in line with his foundational theological understanding of *tevhid*. He explained, "Even if I would tell my dervishes something about politics, I would say a sentence or two and then quickly turn my attention to the Qur'an and hadith. I have never been in a political party, whereas some Shaikhs have been involved in politics their whole lives. I will not vote. I only vote for God. He is always the best choice." (FNF#37)

His orientation regarding God's activity in all matters became evident in his response to my question if he would go and meet with IC leadership if they invited him, "Of course I would go, because I would know that it is God who is inviting me… In the end, God is doing everything." (FNF#56) His mooring in the doctrine of *tevhid* fundamentally directed Faruki's choice of involvement. To him, external, earthly matters were subservient to the centrality of God and His agency, "It is not good to talk about the problems and politics of the world. Instead, we ought to talk about God. God is doing everything that is happening therefore leave it alone. The point is not to ask why things are happening, but what is the wisdom hidden behind these things that God is doing." (FNF#61) Ismail's following comment corroborated this view, "Politics deals with this worldly dimension. Religion is above nations, classes and races… Politics is not separated from God, because Allah moves everything." (FNF#118) Faruki's lack of official affiliation, overt criticism of the establishment, focus on teaching and spirituality through the prism of *tevhid*, was in stark contrast to Hulusi's position on this matter.

Hulusi publicly affirmed his commitment to remain under the umbrella of the IC and TC. Both years that I attended the *bejat* ceremony, Hulusi's central message was to admonish his followers to protect the unity of the IC and to place its interests before anything else, saying,

"Protect the unity of the Islamic Community!" (FNH#1, 63) One of his dervishes confirmed this, saying, "This is the general problem in the Muslim world. We are simply not unified. These groups are destroying the dignity of the IC. Such disunity is ugly and goes against Islam." (DAH#3) When I inquired of Midhat regarding independent and unaffiliated groups, he responded, "I think they are making a mistake. There is not one good reason why they would not join. They are missing out on the joy of being unified." (FNH#36) The main imam of Sarajevo affirmed the good relationship with Hulusi, "I have never sensed any type of animosity from Hulusi toward the IC… Out of all the Shaikhs, my best relationship is with him. He honours the IC, both publicly and privately." (DAOI#25) Another high-ranking IC employee verified Hulusi's good standing with the establishment, saying, "He has a good reputation, not only with Sufis, but also with the IC. He is highly respected. He has contributed something positive to our society, and that ought to be valued." (DAOI#26) While part of the official structure, Hulusi claimed that he remained largely autonomous in his leadership, affirming that he did not feel any pressure from the IC, and desired only to achieve unity among Muslims in Bosnia. (FNH#10) He described the importance of the relationship of Sufism to the official leadership as follows, "Sufism is one of the pillars of the IC. Therefore, these relationships have to be harmonized and there has to be more mutual understanding between them." (FNH#71) In addition to promoting unity and commitment to the institutions, Hulusi also had a pronounced outward focus.

7.5.3. The Shaikh's Role in Deciding Social Involvement

In contrast to Faruki's characteristic response to the question of social engagement, "My only preoccupation is God" (FNF#28), Hulusi exhibited far more concrete ambitions. Due to his background as a military general and important public figure, with strong connections to political dignitaries, his charisma and organisational skills, Hulusi was remarkably capable for engaging in the socio-political sphere. A number of secondary informants confirmed this fact. (DAOI#4, 26, 27, 32) Faruki also acknowledged Hulusi's significant influence in society. (FNF#66) On one occasion he said, "He is deeply mixed up with politics and political parties and has a huge amount of influence in all kinds of government structures." (FNF#123) He used his authority to influence not only the lives of individual followers, but also to promote far-reaching societal and cultural outcomes. Hulusi explained, "Naqshbandis are well known for being involved in society. Every dervish ought to be the most beneficial member of society." (FNH#44) One of his dervishes described Hulusi as follows, "Hulusi does not have an equal in

Bosnia. Nobody has erected as many mosques, built as many *tekijas*, got people jobs, and distributed scholarships to students. He is extraordinarily well known in the world. He is better known than the president of the country." (DAH#29) Hulusi displayed his serious attention regarding societal concerns and the need for others to feel likewise, in the following words, "We must never neglect this world. As the Prophet said, 'The greatest of you is he who does not neglect this world for the next, nor the next world for this one.' This should be the maxim of every Sufi. He should try to attain his goal, but never neglect this world. We have to sow here in order to reap there." (FNH#71) One of his dervishes corroborated, "The Shaikh is against dervishes separating themselves from society. Instead, we are supposed to be agents that transform society." (DAH#30) The Shaikh's emphasis to be involved in society has, as Raudvere rightly noted, a significant impact on followers, "Membership of the order and loyalty to the *šejh* are also vital to the young followers in their social interaction outside the *tekija*, and links them to a certain expected conduct that comes with the group identity." (2011: 9)

One example of Hulusi's strategic effort was the founding of the "Centre for Research and Promotion of the Spiritual and Cultural Inheritance of Bosnia and Herzegovina", or CID. The goals of the organisation include research, publications and a biannual symposium with guest lecturers from all over Europe. This symposium was held in his hometown at the newly erected, impressive *tekija* complex that Hulusi himself funded. For Hulusi this event was exceptionally important, "This symposium is a crucial event. We desire for this centre to become exactly that for which it was founded. It needs to become a scientific institution that will engage in studying religion. We want these research projects to be available, so that a wider number of people can benefit from them, God willing." (FNH#53) It was evident that Hulusi was passionate about promoting Islamic religiosity in general and Sufism in particular.

I asked Hulusi if he saw himself as someone who was trying to revive Sufism and spirituality throughout the country, to which he responded:

> I would not be a Shaikh if I were not trying to do that. What kind of a Shaikh would I be if I were trying to be like Shaikh Siri Baba? I would be committing pale plagiarism. The greatness of a Shaikh is measured in the originality of his ability to fulfil the needs and wishes of a given time, place and circumstance. I believe that any copy, regardless of how good it may be is still just a copy. The original is always better. In today's day and age, one needs to find an original path that fits the time we live in. We have to provide an answer to the challenges of our time. (FNH#71)

In addition to ritual performances and providing spiritual guidance to his followers, it became apparent that involvement in the affairs of this world comprised a central priority to Hulusi. He protected the official Islamic and Sufi leadership structures, promoted community involvement for the common good, established building projects and educational institutions and pursued a comprehensive expansion of religious consciousness throughout the country. Moreover, he was not only influential on a national level, he also maintained transnational ties, particularly with Turkey, that were significant and in stark contrast to Faruki.

There is a debate among intellectuals regarding the extent of Turkish influence as it relates to culture and spirituality in Bosnia, with those who argue for its evident prominence (Rucker-Chang 2014: 162), while others describe a more complex picture with a limited Turkish impact (Fazlic 2012: 260; Göle 2013: 254). Regardless of where on this spectrum reality is most accurately reflected, it appears that the activities of Turkish networks are generally welcomed (Solberg 2007: 456). In reference to Sufism, Raudvere stated, "The Turkish impact on Sufi-orientated activities in post-war Bosnia is obvious" (2011: 10). Although it is difficult to measure the exact extent of Turkish influence on Hulusi, it was evident that Turkey played a strategic role. For instance Shaikh Tajjar, who gave Hulusi the *idžaza* to become Shaikh, was from Turkey. Hulusi defended this Turkish source of legitimization as follows, "They are attacking our Shaikhs. They say that we are not protecting our Bosnian *silsila*, saying that we are receiving *silsilas* from Turkey, India and other places. They are forgetting that our *silsila* originally came from Turkey, and we are jealously protecting it." (FNH#74) Important guests and dignitaries from the Turkish Embassy in Sarajevo, as well as businessmen, the president of the Turkish run University, professors and intellectuals regularly attended the *dhikr* services and special events held at the *tekija*. (FNH#1, 47, 63, 74) Even during the intimate *bejat* ceremony, Hulusi gave the Turkish guests the honour to address the crowd. Their representative said the following:

> This is one of my favourite moments of my life, and it is a great honour that we get to participate. I am bringing you greetings from Konya and Rumi. Bosnian Muslims love the Turkish nation, and we love you. Our heart beats for you. We are greatly encouraged to know that you are here, because you are guaranteeing that Islam will continue to remain in this region. Know that seventy-eight million Muslims are with you. We Muslims must stick together. Thank you again![173] (FNH#63)

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[173] It is noteworthy to mention that the Turkish government, to which the plaque at the entrance attests, fully funded the newly remodelled and extended *tekija* complex at Buna. (DAOI#1, 63)

This statement clearly demonstrated a political, religious and national relationship between Turkey and Bosnia, and it is particularly significant that it was declared at a major Sufi event organised by Hulusi and attended by nearly all of his dervishes.

Another elaborate ceremony during Ramadan that I attended added further layers of understanding. After the customary greetings directed at his numerous Turkish visitors, Hulusi addressed the crowd:

> How is it possible that in our brotherly Turkey, who is the pillar of Islam today there are people who are willing to spill the blood of a brother… I want to congratulate our brothers from Turkey and I want to tell them that the night when the coup attempt almost succeeded, we spent the entire night performing the *dhikr* and praying to God that he would stop the enemy in what he intended to accomplish. We congratulate the people of Turkey for prevailing. We congratulate the great president Erdoğan, who is a great leader in today's time.[174] (FNH#74)

Hulusi then stood up and prayed with unusual passion that God would give Turkey the strength to continue carrying the banner for Islam, for the president and leaders to have wisdom on what to do next, and for God to protect the brotherly love that Turkey and Bosnia have for each other. Once he finished, one of the Turkish dignitaries addressed the crowd in turn:

> The Shaikh mentioned earlier that Turkey is experiencing a difficult time, and therefore we need your prayers. Some people who declared themselves believers have caused great harm to Turkey. They have unveiled their true intentions and tried to cause disruption to the Turkish nation. July 15th was one of the longest nights in our history, but thanks to Allah and the prayers of millions of Muslims, the people of Turkey went out into the streets and were ready to become martyrs for our country. (FNH#74)

Hulusi's ensuing response to the aforementioned statement, testified to his deep affection for the Turkish nation and its people, as well as his role in offering a spiritual alliance:

> These words have really shaken me. You mentioned how long the night of July 15th was. My dear brothers, believe me that this night was very long for us as well. We were all in this mosque and we spent the entire night in prayer. We were together with you. I would like to ask you to greet your president Erdoğan, whom I have met three times. You have shown the whole world how to love one's country and how to protect it. (FNH#74)

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[174] On July 15, 2016 there was an unsuccessful coup attempt to overtake the Turkish government, which shook the nation and caused major socio-political, constitutional and legal ramifications that are felt until today (Altınordu 2017; Esen & Gumuscu 2017).

In summary, Hulusi cultivated strategic ties to important Turkish officials, displayed his political and spiritual support and affirmed the transnational relationship based on an Islamic foundation that united Turkey and Bosnia. As Shaikh, he saw no need for separating religion and spirituality from national ties and political advocacy. Faruki, on the other hand, advanced a fundamentally different orientation.

When I asked him to explain his connection to Turkey, he responded as follows, "I am definitely not connected to Turkey. This is not a good thing. Historically speaking I am, but I do not need Turkey. All I need is God, the Prophet and my Shaikh. Turkey has a political form of Sufism. You cannot align religion with politics." (FNF#126) Hazim corroborated this point, "He has no connections to Turkey. One time they visited him, but nothing came of it." (FNF#125) Faruki was principally opposed to several of Hulusi's positions:

> This is an empty brotherhood…A lot of these so-called Shaikhs use religion to gain financial and political benefits, and that is not good. When it comes to nationality, we are not brothers with the Turks, because we are not Turkish. When it comes to faith, we also might not be brothers, because not all Turks are believers… A Shaikh always has to go beyond politics. He should talk very little about politics. As you have seen, I rarely talk about these things. That is not my job. That is the job of politicians. (FNF#117)

This quote articulated Faruki's argument that Shaikhs ought to disassociate themselves from the political sphere, and distinguish between national, political and religious affiliation. Far more than Hulusi, he insisted that true spirituality always remained separate from national ties and political agendas. He believed that these public declarations of "brotherhood" were motivated by selfish gain, saying, "This is all about money. They will compliment Turkey all day long in order to get money out of them."[175] (FNF#117) By deliberately distancing himself from a transnational affiliation with Turkey and participation in any form of political manoeuvring, Faruki evidently distinguished himself from Hulusi's approach. In light of the earlier discussion that Naqshbandi were characteristically involved in worldly affairs, Hulusi appeared to be more in line with this teaching and historic precedent than his *tevhid* oriented counterpart. Neither choice was objectively more appropriate, but merely a preferential determination that rested under the legitimate authority of the Shaikh.

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[175] Hulusi recently travelled to Konya to secure a large donation for the translation of *Ruhu-l-Bayan* by Ismail Hakki, who was a prominent 17th-century Naqshbandi scholar. Moreover, much of the funding for new *tekija* building projects came from Turkey. However, there was not enough evidence to conclude that financial benefits constituted the core motivating factor for Turkish sympathy. (FNH#51; DAH#29)

7.6. Conclusion

This chapter added further layers of empirical evidence to the preceding discussion, which principally highlighted the Shaikh's role in autonomously selecting key inner theological concepts and the ramification of the consequent contrasting manifestation. I carried this out through a comparative analysis of essential religious practices in their dissimilar external expression and an evaluation of specific examples of social involvement. My investigation began with an assessment of the conceptual terms form and essence. While both Hulusi and Faruki defended a theoretical positionality that relegated form as insignificant and essence paramount, my analysis showed that form ultimately retained its critical importance. The implication of this exploration showed the difficulty of arriving at clearly determined and universally normative definitions that unequivocally distinguish a Naqshbandi in Bosnia. Followers primarily looked to the Shaikh for identity and not to a set of established, yet abstract principles. I demonstrated that it was fundamentally each Shaikh who decided in what form it was most appropriate to clothe the essence and thereby establish authoritative Naqshbandi contours. This helped to explain the prominent dissimilarity between Faruki and Hulusi. Additionally, the Shaikh's authority extended to his ability to reinterpret *usul* according to his chosen design. Although the implementation of innovative adaptations generated clashes in perspective between Faruki and Hulusi, it demonstrated the Shaikh's agency to bring about change. I proceeded by analysing central ritual practices pertaining to each community and the discrepant perspectives on acceptable social involvement. Although Hulusi and Faruki shared a similar Bosnian Naqshbandi background, the empirical application of *bejat* and *dhikr*, as well as their interaction with the religious establishment and transnational connections, revealed remarkable diversity and contradictory interpretations regarding acceptable practices and their version of what should constitute objective truth. While these divergences highlighted the limitation of universal norms and their inherent malleability, they also attested to the authority of the Shaikh as the legitimate, divinely appointed leader to adapt and shape Naqshbandi practices according to his subjective determination.

Having concluded my presentation of relevant evidence that intended to address my central research question regarding the extent of the Shaikh's agency in shaping Naqshbandi Sufism in Bosnia, in the final chapter I will summarize and review my findings and determine the relative success of the project. I plan to address inherent limitations and attempted strategies

I pursued for maximizing a credible outcome. I conclude by offering specific areas identified during the course of my research that would benefit from further exploration.

8. CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.1. Introduction

The Sufi metaphor of a journey has been in the context of this research deeply and personally relevant. Since vulnerability, empathy and participation comprise central elements of an ethnographic project, it is nearly impossible for the researcher to remain a distant, objective observer. I resonate with Pinto, who wrote, "My non-Muslim identity was counterbalanced by my capacity to share an experiential universe that defined the religious subjectivity of the members of these Sufi communities." (2010: 474) In a similar way, my attempt to partake in the experiences and life-worlds of my research participants resulted not only in gaining intellectual understanding, but also in a self-reflexive process that continuously stretched the way I viewed the world. In that sense, this project became a type of personal pilgrimage, which by necessity has come to a provisional conclusion.

The final chapter aims to review the driving question this thesis addressed, the strategy employed to discover answers and the central argument that developed from its findings. My investigation found the source of Naqshbandi contextualisation in the case of my two research communities in the creative undertaking of the respective leaders. Consequently, in this section I assess how each chapter advanced the inquiry regarding the agency of the Shaikh as the primary explanation for the diversity of the two Sufi groups I examined. While diversity among Sufis comprises a well-documented phenomenon and the role of the Shaikh has been discussed from a variety of perspectives, my research offered a concrete empirical explication of the manner in which different leaders operationalize independent adaptations in a similar localised context. In this way, my research makes a modest contribution to studying Sufism ethnographically through a focused interrogation of the Shaikh's function, the extent of his authority and his specific responsibility in implementing change and transformation. The final section of this concluding chapter presents ideas for further research that emerged during my formal analysis. These recommendations are not exhaustive, but represent a mere sample of possible research endeavours to pursue in the future.

8.2. The Central Argument

The initial motivation for this project was to provide a counter narrative to essentialism of Islam and to expose the deficiency of a top-down approach. Marranci aptly called fieldwork

the "antidote to essentialism." (2008: 6) While attempting to convince others that it was better to approach Islam through Muslim practices, I noted an iterative tendency of essentialising myself. This continuous self-reflexive process remained at the heart of my ethnographic project. As my own journey unfolded, I increasingly understood that it was crucial to study Muslim everyday lives in their natural context. Henig accurately argued that, "anthropological attention ought to be also aimed at the micro-level of Muslims' life-worlds, and examine the process of mediation, authorisation and authentication at the individual level in order to examine what it means to live a Muslim life at the grass-roots level" (2011: 244). Consequently, throughout this thesis I maintained that researching Islam required a hermeneutic lens of people who put it into practice.

At the beginning of this project, I set out to investigate the role of love among Sufi practitioners, but the growing body of data regarding the central importance of the Shaikh gradually shifted my focus. The evidence suggested that his role was far more important to my informants than the concept of love. While I previously had a theoretical background of understanding his significance, I underestimated the degree of prominence. As I came to discern the centrality of his role, I reoriented my objective to attain an in depth understanding of his leadership function as it related to the theological and theoretical aspects, as well as the performative and social manifestation. During my progressive data collection and analysis, which included observation, a varied sample of interviews with primary and secondary informants, ongoing participation and detailed field notes, my attention was alerted to the pronounced difference between the two communities. Although I expected some level of diversity between the two Naqshbandi groups, clashes in perspective and comparative discontinuities were surprisingly prominent. While several factors could account for such dissimilarity, the mounting evidence supported my belief that the central mechanism for adaptation was the Shaikh. Consequently, my central investigative question evolved to the following, "To what extent does the Shaikh shape religion and lived realities of Bosnian Naqshbandi Sufi followers and what are the wider implications?"

The evaluation of primary evidence showed that the Shaikh was the main shaping force that influenced his followers both on an individual and on a communal basis. The extent of his authority appeared solely limited by follower recognition, a normative Islamic framework and loosely defined Naqshbandi principles and practices. In order to interrogate the validity of this

argument, I laid out the order of the subsequent chapters in this thesis in a framework that was reflective of the actual data that emerged from the field.

8.3. Mapping the Argument

I began the exploration with an overview of the general background within which this research was located. After establishing the diversity inherent in Islam and the ensuing need for empirical studies investigating specific localised examples, I continued by introducing my particular research context. I first made the case that the autochthonous community of Bosnian Muslims, due to their maturation in its distinct locality and century-old development in a deeply heterogeneous environment have their own unique version of Bosnian Islam. As supported by existing scholarship, I pointed out the important contribution of Sufism in its establishment (Mahmutćehajić 2000: 61; Aščerić-Todd 2015: 157). It was due to Sufi Orders that local beliefs were reinterpreted and integrated into an Islamic framework, which successfully Islamized the region (Bieber 2000: 23). I then narrowed my focus to the Naqshbandi, which is currently the dominant Sufi Order in Bosnia (Henig 2011: 227). The examination included the broader context of salient Sufi theological underpinnings, such as the journey to God, the inner life of faith and the critical need for a legitimate guide (Mayeur-Jaouen & Patrizi 2016: 8).

The special importance of the divinely appointed guide, whose role historically evolved over time, was especially stressed. My aim was to emphasise the importance and contemporary resurgence of Sufism as both an integral spiritual dimension of Islam and a significant social force. I focused specifically on the Naqshbandi, its particular characteristics in the wider literature and Bosnia in specific. My analysis highlighted a paucity of grassroots ethnographic inquiries in general, showing especially a dearth of material regarding Bosnia. This neglect was compounded by a pronounced scarcity of research on Sufi communities. While the key contribution of this study was not exclusively focused on filling this particular gap, it is nevertheless relevant, because it provided fresh insights into Bosnian Sufi communities in their natural environment. My principal intention was to draw attention to discussions in the literature that acknowledge the wide diversity within Islam in general and Sufism in particular. I indicated that there is a tendency not to provide adequate specificity explaining the emergence of such various manifestations. While the Shaikh's role in the adaptation of Sufi principles is acknowledged (Yavuz 1999: 133), more research and empirical evidence is required.

The succeeding chapter laid out my methodological reasoning for choosing ethnography as the appropriate approach to achieve the research objective. I endeavoured to supply adequate evidence for the credibility and validity of the data collection method, aiming to make the process of analysis and self-reflexivity as explicit and accurate as possible. This research project is ultimately as reliable as the quality of data. Consequently, I intentionally pursued strategies to maximize diversity of sources and collect a range of epistemically valuable and representative voices. Finally, I accounted for possible inconsistencies and how I designed specific strategies to overcome, or minimize emerging obstacles.

After discussing the 'how' of research, I introduced the 'where' of my primary sources, splitting the discussion into two parts. Part one aimed to give a rich description of the research setting by exploring the physical premises and organisational structure of each *tekija*. Part two focused on Faruki and Hulusi, who were in charge of leading the communities. My goal was to gain access to the relevant locations and begin to experience, even if in part, the multifaceted nature of the reality on the ground. I sketched some of the empirical differences between the two sites, suggesting that the perceptible dissimilarity was due to the agency of the Shaikh. In part two, I outlined a brief biographical background of each Shaikh. The apparent contrast between the two leaders influenced the individual formation of the *tekija* communities. Hence, I argued that much of the Shaikh's leadership style, theological inclination, organisational strategies, performative and even architectural choices came as a direct consequence of his individual background and spiritual development. This in turn helped to explain the considerable contrast between the two research sites.

Developing the discussion further, I then discussed the theoretical background based on secondary literature and comprehensive primary data supporting the importance of the Shaikh in shaping the life-worlds of his disciples. I chose to locate the discussion at this point in the thesis and not in the final chapter, since it helped to establish the contextual basis upon which the Shaikh functioned in his authoritative role. As a result, this understanding served as the foundation for the subsequent exploration of specific areas under his domain. To comprehend the Shaikh's remarkable degree of authority, it is necessary to recognise that for Sufis it is imperative to have a guide who has already attained God's proximity, and can lead his followers there. To achieve success the disciple is expected to be as a "corpse in the hand of its washer" (Shepard 2014: 177). The seeker is utterly lost, unable to find God without the Prophet's representative in the post-prophetic period. I traced how this view of the Shaikh

gradually evolved. Especially for Naqshbandi, the Shaikh gradually became a unique human being with miraculous powers, sanctioned by the Prophet, able to communicate with God and fulfil the essential mediatory role, which ultimately brings seekers to God.

Within this particular theoretical framework, I proceeded to demonstrate how Faruki and Hulusi individually selected from this narrative different areas of emphasis for teaching and implementation. For instance, although mediatory terminology was supported in the literature and readily appropriated by Faruki, Hulusi's institutional membership and close ties with official leadership prevented him from explicitly employing such possibly controversial language. This sobriety, however, was not consistent across all categories. Hulusi tended to mystify the office of the Shaikh, implying personal supernatural powers, hidden knowledge, and attributing to himself the role of spiritual father. On the other hand, Faruki consistently emphasized the natural function of the Shaikh as teacher, generally avoiding mystical and paternal terminology. Although these differences were relatively minor and not in conflict with Naqshbandi doctrine, they highlighted the Shaikh's independent ability to creatively select how to appropriate particular elements within their specific context. To substantiate the basis by which Shaikhs can implement change, I continued by including an analysis of various legitimizing factors that authenticated the Shaikh's function.

I demonstrated that the Shaikh received validation through his supernatural abilities, from historic continuity and faithful implementation of Qur'anic norms. The combination of transcendent authentication, a connection through successive generations back to the Prophet and strict adherence to Shariʿah, imbued the Shaikh with absolute legitimacy in the eyes of his followers. In fact, the element of subjectivity helped to explain why the Shaikh's authority did not diminish even when miraculous deeds were absent, historic authentication questionable and legal implementation dubious. Consequently, I argued that the most important legitimizing factor principally depended on follower recognition. While Hulusi stressed the importance of an authentic written *silsila*, uncompromising obedience to the letter of the law and mystical insight, Faruki accentuated credibility based on knowledge and action, flexibility in matters of Shariʿah and authoritative Qur'an interpretation. However, in both cases the role of followers in the verification process was equally crucial. I then continued by introducing pertinent critical voices, but concluded that no matter how outsiders perceived the Shaikh, if his followers believed and experienced his claims, to them he became their legitimate guide. My aim was to

advance new evidence that locates various legitimization pathways in a contemporary context and thereby contribute to a better understanding of how the process is operationalized.

The consequence of the Shaikh's role as the only way for man to reach God resulted in a mutual exchange of absolute obedience and instruction. Disciples were remarkably willing to submit in all areas of life, while trusting the divine wisdom of their respective guide. Faruki and Hulusi displayed prominent similarities in reference to the categories of authority and submission. This dynamic enabled each Shaikh to shape the lives of his disciples by modeling proper behavior, transmitting sacred knowledge and thus transforming their worldview and identity. The exceptional ability to mould the lives of followers helped to clarify the empirical diversity and clashing contrast between my two research sites. As legitimate leaders, both represented Bosnian Naqshbandi Sufism, but its particular actualization was entirely dependent on their individual determination. The main contribution of this chapter to my argument was to establish the context that endowed the Shaikh with legitimate authority that inaugurated the obligatory requirement for absolute submission. This was essential in order to substantiate the subsequent manifestation of differences related to theological interpretation and the outward formal expression, which I explored in the following two chapters.

The first area impacted by the Shaikh that I examined, encompassed the inner, theological dimension, which affirmed clear continuities and discontinuities between the two contexts. My investigative scope was intentionally limited by the predominant themes that naturally emerged from the evidence in the field. Although Hulusi and Faruki shared such normative conceptual categories as love, knowledge and proximity to God, their personal background and spiritual formation influenced them to arrive at significantly different interpretive conclusions, which in turn determined their particular areas of emphasis. Hulusi's personal strengths as a remarkable organiser and man of action resulted in a pronounced exhortation on the practical need to *hizmet* others. It became the dominant, strategic method to attain moral perfection, which was the necessary prerequisite to attain spiritual success. As a result, he and his followers affirmed the importance of outward engagement, personal striving and the centrality of the journey itself. His position generally corresponded to the relevant literature, where serving others comprised both the beginning and end of the Sufi path (Schimmel 1975: 229). While Hulusi's understanding of *hizmet* did not deviate from the standard Naqshbandi framework, his insistence on its centrality for spiritual growth and ethical

improvement underlined a unique strategy that verified the Shaikh's significance in determining the selection of doctrine and manner of implementation.

In contrast, Faruki's lifelong exposure to mystical thought and his deep mooring in the writings of Ibn ʿArabi compelled him to prioritize contemplation, learning and attaining awareness of *tevhid* as it manifested itself in God's active agency in all things. For him and his dervishes comprehending *tevhid* comprised the central aim that promised multiple practical benefits. His understanding that the separative existence is illusory, which requires man to come to the realisation that God is the only reality in existence has been referred to in other writings (Nasr 2007: 41; Shah-Kazemi 2002: 181). Nevertheless, the manifest implementation of this complex theological doctrine by a living Sufi in a local context, contributed an original case of how theory operates in practice. It also explained why in comparison to Hulusi, Faruki disregarded the significance of the journey and insisted on the attainment of the destination.

Another dissimilarity supported by my findings pertained to Faruki's choice to ignore the Naqshbandi attention on *rabita* and nonverbal heart-to-heart knowledge transmission, which Hulusi readily embraced. The detailed discussion regarding their position on the subject supplemented additional insight on the contextual implementation or neglect of established doctrine. More importantly, however, it substantiated the underlying independent authority of Sufi leaders to determine theological normatives and their strategic application on behalf of their community. This added additional evidence to my argument that the empirical diversity that my research demonstrated regarding the theoretical prioritization and divergent local contextualisation, was generated foremost by the Shaikh's subjective agency. He was uniquely endowed to shape the contours of religious beliefs according to his own preferential design. Moreover, the apparent differences between Faruki's and Hulusi's theological position also expressed themselves in their contrasting outward manifestation.

An inner, theological framework necessarily manifests itself through an external application. Consequently, I proceeded by investigating the specific ways that Faruki and Hulusi enacted ritual performances and determined the nature of their social involvement. I highlighted the importance of this discussion in light of the literature that often neglects to provide adequate evidence for the basis of the apparent multifaceted formal dissimilarities among different Sufi groups. I began my discursive analysis by examining first-hand accounts of my informants regarding the concepts of form and essence. Both leaders, as well as secondary informants, propagated the absolute hierarchical prominence of essence, while

relegating form as merely auxiliary. The significance of this theoretical positionality was authenticated by the difficulty of arriving at a set of clearly defined and agreed upon characteristics that ought to be normative for Naqshbandi Sufis. Although in the literature attempts are made to provide concise Naqshbandi characteristics that distinguish them from other Orders, my discussion showed that ultimately a Naqshbandi identity was not primarily dependent on external features and theological principles, but one's adherence to a Shaikh who belonged to that Order. It became evident from the data that succinct classifications were ultimately peripheral to my informants. A dervish was a Naqshbandi not because of his codified beliefs and actions, but because his Shaikh was one. This example of living Naqshbandi communities that defined themselves in this way relativized rigid categorizations and contributed additional data regarding the Shaikh's ability to reinterpret a Sufi tradition and shape the core religious identity of his followers.

Although the role of form was considered ancillary, I documented that it was simultaneously and paradoxically essential for protecting inherited tradition and for incurring divine favour. The challenge, however, was to unequivocally assure which aspects of *usul* were normative, since its determination fundamentally depended on the subjective decision of the Shaikh, who operated under divine sanction and could therefore legitimately dictate which principles to adopt or abrogate. My analysis showed a significant emerging contrast between Hulusi and Faruki, highlighting the Shaikh's legitimate right to ascribe validity to certain elements of *usul* that were according to his subjective preference most appropriate. In other words, normative contours were not located in strictly defined Bosnian Naqshbandi prescriptions, but remained under the authoritative domain of the Shaikh. Any contradictory and conflicting interpretations regarding traditional requirements remained restricted to subjective claims regarding established axioms, but ultimately final justification for the validity of choice remained with the Shaikh. In order to substantiate this point, I then provided a detailed, comparative account of two central Naqshbandi ritual practices, the *bejat* and the *dhikr*, aiming to highlight fundamental differences in their performative dimension. These evident dissimilarities, I argued, were generated by the agency of each respective Shaikh, who adapted and interpreted established rituals.

I ended the discussion by addressing how the two communities related to the wider social environment. The data I presented further corroborated that the degree of societal involvement, participation in official religious structures and partnership with transnational

connections were wholly dependent on the subjective decision of the Shaikh. Similar to the previous examples, Faruki and Hulusi displayed a different approach. Faruki's attention on God and the attainment of knowledge resulted in a diminished social involvement and a rejection of the official religious establishment. Hulusi's focus on service and active participation in the affairs of this world generated a pronounced support of the religious leadership and an active participation in the social arena and transnational connections. The empirical contrast between the two leaders provided comparative insights that underlined intricate dissimilarities. Although such binaries are in themselves not unique, the fact that each Shaikh claimed a common Naqshbandi origin, asserting similar theoretical and theological convictions while simultaneously coming to notably dissimilar and contradictory conclusions, helped to support my argument further. Universal norms, theoretical constructs and traditional principles located within a common Bosnian Naqshbandi framework were ultimately subservient to the paramount agency of each individual Shaikh. The cumulative effect of evidence I examined throughout the thesis, identified the Shaikh's agency as the main explanatory mechanism behind the shaping of the community under his authoritative domain.

8.4. The Shaping Shaikh and Contribution to Knowledge

This research set out to study in a specific locality two distinct Sufi groups, each under the comprehensive authority of a particular Shaikh. Due to emerging evidence from fieldwork, the research aimed to investigate to what extent the empirical differences between the communities were linked to the influence of the leader. Encountering diversity in Islam should not be surprising, since the mosaic of various expressions affirm its inherent diversity. In fact, relevant literature establishes that due to the evident multiformity (Shepard 2014; Bowen 2012; Castells & AlSayyad 2002), in order to understand Islam it is imperative to study Muslims as human beings who apply religion in their daily lives and ritual practices. This approach advances the appreciation of Islam as a living and intricate system that in its embodiment helps people make sense of the world. The inherent flexibility within Islam becomes especially prominent in relation to Sufism. A survey of studies on Sufi communities in general (Küçük 2008; Hermansen 2000; Hoffman 2009; Geaves & Gabriel 2014) and Naqshbandi in particular (Weismann 2007; Piraino 2015; Dickson 2014; Howell 2015) consistently attests to the impressive ability of Sufism to adapt its doctrine and contextualise its practice according to the circumstances in which it is located.

There are two broad ways of exploring this apparent phenomenon. The first employs a predominantly macro lens strategy for gaining insight into Sufism through philosophy, history, theology and theoretical texts (Dahnhardt 1999). The second focuses on empirical support for its process of understanding, but commonly reveals a preference for either a socio-political focus (Abun-Nasr 1965; Camara 2014), or an actual insistence on grassroots data sets and the voices of people studied (Salvatore 2016). Stjernholm affirmed that such local studies were absolutely necessary, saying, "In order to understand how and why the *tariqa* manifests itself differently in various times and places, one must study the activities and narratives of participants in relation to their social context." (2014: 209). In this sense, my research builds on the empirical body of scholarship by offering an additional layer of understanding how adherents implement religion in their practices and everyday lives. Consequently, I make an overarching contribution through an ethnographic study, of two contemporary Naqshbandi Sufi communities that, while sharing a similar locale, displayed pronounced dissimilarity and a range of contradictory interpretations.

Within this overall intention, however, my research focused particularly on the role of the Shaikh in Sufism. This endeavour resulted directly from my data collection and analysis, which suggested that the main factor generating the manifest diversity I encountered was indeed the Shaikh. The historically evolved institutionalization of the office of the Shaikh enabled Faruki and Hulusi to exercise a remarkable amount of independent authority that permeated the most important segments within the Sufi cosmology. Although an established blueprint constructed around a general Naqshbandi framework remained, the distinct personality of each Shaikh engendered change and diversity. While they were both part of the same tradition and setting, subjective choice and embedded religious authority provided them with the necessary power to create new interpretations and implementations, even within the same Sufi Order. As a result, the underlying argument throughout my thesis was to provide evidence regarding the role of the Shaikh in shaping religion and lived realities of Bosnian Naqshbandi Sufis, and thereby contribute to the related scholarship in this field. Although the Shaikh's authority has been "subject of intense debates" in the literature (Auer 2012: 18), the comprehensive significance of leadership in relation to lived Sufism has not been sufficiently investigated. Hence, my review of relevant studies led me to identify three broad categorical approaches of explaining the contextual adaptation of Sufism, especially taking into consideration the Shaikh's agency regarding its effective implementation.

The first and most representative approach tends to generalise the shaping mechanism that accounts for the diverse manifestations of Sufism and its ability to adapt to new circumstances. For instance, Raudvere writes, "Sufi orders adapted to changes within a framework of traditionalism. They have therefore become emblematic among detractors and sympathizers for their ability to change and simultaneously retain their core features and values" (2011: 3). For her, adaptation was administered by the vague category "Sufi Orders", without specifically locating primary agency with the Shaikh. Although she accurately identified malleability at the core of Sufism, the broadness of her explanation lacked specificity. Others likewise acknowledged the occurrence of circumstantial transformation, but they either neglect to establish who is responsible for its development (Sahin 2010: 27), or they allocate agency to such undefined categories as "autonomous individual choosers" (Ammerman 2007: 12), "organisational patterns that shape Sufi orders" (Werbner 2014: 283) and Sufis who are "skillfully re-inventing and distinguishing their religiosity from other older Sufi currents" (Hamid 2014: 192). In this thesis, I argued that it was not the "social context" (Atay 1994: 296) or "different worldviews" (Habibis 1985: 410) that initiated change, but the intentional actions of the Shaikh. While the aforementioned examples acknowledge the multifaceted nature and flexibility of Sufi Orders, a more thorough investigation that provides precise justification for its occurrence is lacking.

The second strategy for explaining Sufi diversity and the underlying clarification for its development, displays a rather unbalanced approach. Such studies on one hand primarily overemphasise the Shaikh's spiritual role as "the catalyst for mystical experience" (Lizzio 2007: 31). Even Desiderio Pinto's comprehensive ethnographic monograph on the relationship between Shaikh and dervish predominately focused on the underlying spiritual framework that comprises the sacred relationship and paid little attention to the wider societal implications (1995). On the other hand, there is research that overly accentuates the Shaikh's political influence and social engagement (Zelkina 2000; Muedini 2015), and thereby omits a more balanced and comprehensive understanding. By either spiritualizing or politicizing his role, the discussions become potentially uneven, diminishing the Shaikh's actual holistic function. This can result in a limited understanding regarding the extent of the Shaikh's authority and influence in the community under his domain. Fusfeld, for example, argued that patterns of change initiated by Sufi leaders were less dependent on personality, or style of leadership but were merely localised modification that were grounded in doctrinal and historical continuity without "radical reformulations of the underlying conceptions", or a significant departure from

accepted traditional principles (1981: 14 – 15). Although he was right in claiming that Sufi leaders do not deviate significantly from dogmatic moorings and that they apply established frameworks to new interpretations, my research showed that their agency does indeed go further. While tradition and doctrine are meaningful devices to contain the Shaikh's power within an axiomatic demarcation (Huda 2004: 471 – 472), he is not merely perpetuating the Prophetic example (Mir-Kasimov 2013).

My research demonstrated that each Shaikh ultimately remained independent in his role as spiritual guide to decide normative parameters and reinterpret traditional constructs. My findings affirmed that not only was each Shaikh able to creatively innovate and stretch beyond the boundaries of standardized and rigid confines, he also did not remain a neutral vehicle of implementation. Personality, experience, background and individual temperament all played a vital role in the choice of selecting the particular strategy regarding the appropriate contextual adaptation of beliefs and practices to the current challenges.

For example, Faruki's formative period during the historic time when Sufism had to retreat from public life and his deep immersion in the philosophical thought of Ibn ʿArabi had a profound effect. His political and social engagement was secondary to his pursuit of God, he exhibited seemingly antinomian tendencies, a rejection of externals and a strong adherence to traditional inherited forms of *usul*. In the case of Hulusi, his late arrival to Sufism, secular education, political power and military success had a different developmental outcome. He preferred worldly engagement, external form, conformity to legal requirements, appreciation of the religious establishment, the moral upbringing of his followers and a flexible adaptation of *usul*. In other words, there are multiple forces that likewise shape the Shaikh into the type of leader that in turn chooses an individual approach for the attainment of spiritual and temporal goals. The third way of providing justification for Sufi diversity accurately understands the principle authority of the Shaikh over both spiritual and mundane matters, deliberately striving to highlight his function in their transformation. Nevertheless, even among this category of studies, there is an absence of sufficient precision, empirical examples and breadth of critical analysis. For instance, Karamustafa properly achieves a valid understanding of the Shaikh's role through both a spiritual and social lens (2007: 176), but his articulation of specific instances of its practical outworking are scant. Netton correctly identifies the Shaikh as the central mechanism for administrating change (2000: 159), but his discussion remains theoretical, providing few concrete patterns that substantiate his conceptual framework. Geaves

also explains the exceptional diversity he observed as largely "based upon the life style, dress, habits and spiritual practices of the *shaikh* that founded the group" (1996: 179). While he locates transformational agency with the Shaikh, important details regarding its actualization are incomplete. Both Ephrat and Buehler achieve an excellent study on the overall role of the Shaikh in the adaptation of Sufism in general and Naqshbandi practices in particular (2008; 1998), but their discussion is located largely in a historical context lacking an explicit localised empirical component. In other words, there is no shortage of scholarly writings regarding the Shaikh's capacity to modify Sufi Orders, change ritual performances, influence the social domain and shape the life of followers, but there is an evident need to contribute definitive examples of how such adaptation manifests in a local setting.

Rozehnal is a prominent example of the type of empirical study that recognises that Shaikhs have absolute authority to reconstruct the Sufi tradition under their domain, because they "have embraced a series of practical strategies designed to adapt Sufism to the contingencies and complexities of twenty-first-century life." (2007: 1) In other words, the observable diversity between various groups is initiated and implemented by the direct activity of the Shaikh. Although my research was located in an entirely different geographical setting, it corroborated Rozehnal's conclusion relating to Sufi adaptability through the agency of the Shaikh. One minor point of divergence was his insistence that the horizontal plane between dervishes constituted an important shaping factor, saying, "The individual Sufi self, in other words, is ultimately moulded within the moral community of the *silsila*" (2007: 224). My research did not support this dynamic, affirming that it was foremost the vertical relationship with the Shaikh, which generated both personal and community transformation. His investigation among Chishti Sabiris in Pakistan stands out because it combines robust theoretical engagement with empirical findings among living Sufi communities.

Pinto likewise succeeds in achieving an integrated approach. His study, although located in Syria, was particularly interesting due to a similar dynamic to my research context. He investigated two different Shaikhs from the same Order, but who constructed, "widely divergent forms of Sufi religiosity within a unified and hierarchical religious organisation" (2013a: 60), not based on a rigid traditional construct, but their individual personality and preferential choice. While his discussion validated the Shaikh's independence, which my analysis also showed, his overall examination revealed the need for additional examples that substantiated his findings. For example, he did not record any instances of intra-Sufi clashes

regarding the discrepant choices made by each Shaikh, which my research suggested. Although Faruki and Hulusi likewise interpreted inherited Naqshbandi Sufi tradition differently, I documented a significant disagreement in the narrative regarding the legitimacy of changing *usul*. Due to Pinto's restricted breadth of documentation, such nuances can remain disguised. In summary, broadly speaking diverse manifestations of Sufism are explicated in the literature through generalisations, a selective, unbalanced approach and a comprehensive recognition that ascribes divergent implementations to the Shaikh, but lacks specificity and practical, localised examples. There are, however, models such as Rozehnal and Pinto that incorporate a robust theoretical foundation with an empirically supported investigation.

My research endeavour was located within this scholarly framework, where I argued that the agency of the Shaikh explained the absence of uniformity between Faruki and Hulusi, who shared the same Bosnian Naqshbandi Sufi tradition, lived in a relatively identical context and claimed a direct connection to a similar sacred past. Although some differences were minor, merely a matter of emphasis and form, others were more significant, and arguably departed from established norms. These included, for instance, differences in using mediatory and paternal language, Faruki's ambivalence toward *silsila*, his practical implementation of *tevhid* and his reluctance of accepting *rabita* and nonverbal heart-to-heart communication, while Hulusi elevated *hizmet* as the supreme method of spiritual wayfaring and emphasised active involvement in society and politics. These particular details represent an original perspective and a nuanced contribution that can only be derived from grassroots studies of distinct living communities. Regardless of the precise nature of individual deviations, whether permitted or not, the nexus of modification, which included both spiritual and social domains, was due to the agency of each Shaikh. Because of the Shaikh's exceptional authority to appropriate religious tradition, divergent and multiform Sufi ideals were allowed to emerge. My limited study of two Bosnian Naqshbandi Sufi groups consequently contributes to wider empirical studies of Sufism an original, localised ethnographic example that underlines the Shaikh's paramount role in initiating and perpetuating a multiplicity of Sufi expressions. This insight advances a more comprehensive understanding of the internal functioning of Sufi communities, Sufism in general and the Naqshbandi in particular. By implication, my research finding also highlighted an ancillary, yet relevant point.

Foundational to the broad, empirical diversity, lies the inherent flexibility of religion itself. As discussed, Islam, and especially Sufism, intrinsically allow multiple possibilities of

interpretation and implementation. Considering this feature in light of the Shaikh's profound level of authority, a multifaceted range of Sufi expressions ought to be anticipated. If the very nature of religion permits creative adaptation by its practitioners, and individual Shaikhs have been endorsed to realise such changes within a broadly established system, then the wide range of Sufi manifestations can be appropriately articulated and contextualised. In essence, the Shaikh's power to shape the community under his leadership is not solely based on a historically evolved Sufi paradigm, but is implicitly located within the inherent malleability of religious systems themselves. While Sufism validates the Shaikh's independent activity, the innate construct of Islam as a religion gives him permission to operate in diverse ways.

8.5. Suggestions for Further Research

Any long-term ethnographic project tends to raise more questions than it answers. The limitation of time, energy and scope naturally restricts possible domains of investigation. Based on the findings in this study, I have identified three specific areas that I recommend for additional research. First, in this thesis I made the choice to interweave women's voices on an equal plane with those of my male informants, since Hulusi's female dervishes had a relatively equal status to their male counterparts. Furthermore, my ability to generate sufficient quantity and quality of data from this group was limited, and in Faruki's case impossible. This choice, however, inevitably resulted in not having adequately examined some promising nuances. Since I left the field in good standing, other researchers should be able to visit the same communities I examined. Consequently, my study could be complemented by an investigation that highlights the distinct differences between male and female perspectives. I expect that such a project would be best suitable for a female researcher, and could disclose some relevant discoveries that would advance my own study and further contribute to the field.

The second area that was raised by my research relates to transnational Sufi groups operating in Bosnia. From secondary literature, interviews and personal observation, it became evident that particularly Turkish Sufis were noticeably influential. This manifested itself either through actual groups operating beyond the control of the IC and TC in the country itself, or through connections to transnational networks and visiting Shaikhs. I suggest that research which investigates the degree of influence that these foreign Sufi actors have on shaping Sufi religiosity in Bosnia, ought to produce important findings. This study would additionally be interesting if it was compared to the impact of other transnational groups, such as Wahhabi networks. The investigative question could explore which group was more successful and why.

Due to Sufism's historic moorings in Bosnian Islam and culture, I anticipate that these neo-Sufi groups would be more acceptable to the local population, but if research proved otherwise, the resulting implications would be significant.

Finally, this thesis helped me to reflect on charismatic leadership studies in a new and exciting way, since general studies on charisma resemble the leadership of Shaikhs (Brockopp 2005: 129). This was not my intention, but an unintended consequence, alerting my attention to an important area for further research. A brief survey of sources shows the emergence of a growing body of literature that is contributing to advancement in this field, and has inspired charismatic research to cross into various multidisciplinary perspectives to provide new insights (Riggio 2011: 4). Even with the proliferation of the study of charismatic leadership, gaps remain (Conger 2012: 24). There is a definite need to conduct original anthropological research to offset the current imbalance (Lindholm 2013).[176] If the scope of inquiry is intentionally narrowed to the religious discipline, focusing on leader characteristics, follower dynamics, institutionalization mechanisms and sources of legitimizing charisma within Sufi leadership, a prominent contribution could be expected.

Vying for authority is not new or unique to Islam. Religious scholars, various schools of law, philosophers and Shaikhs have all tried to justify the right to the title "heirs of the prophet", and thereby validate their authority (Takim 2006: 33). Sufi leaders have arguably been the most successful group to combine all the essential elements of charismatic endorsement and obtain irrefutable acceptance by followers who believe their claims (Oliver 2012: 153). They capitalize on the past, the present and offer ultimate hope for the future. While maintaining transcendent validation, Sufi leaders do not reject external structures and traditional institutions. This goes against Weber's formulation that charisma essentially rejects tradition (1968: 23 – 24). By deliberately embracing institutionalization and traditional frameworks, their authority is actually augmented through those means that ordinarily diminish charismatic legitimacy (Dow 1978: 83 – 85; Miyahara 1983: 372).

For Sufi Shaikhs, tradition plays a prominent role in guaranteeing their authority, since they inherit historic legitimization by being the final link in the "recognized chains of command" connecting them back to the Prophet (Salvatore 2018: 165). Moreover, unlike

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[176] The challenges for fieldwork based research of charismatic leaders within a religious framework includes gaining access to leaders, psychological pressures of research, ambiguity in defining terminology, as well as the scientific emphasis on the rational versus emotional and transcendent research domains (Hong 2000).

traditional charismatic leaders (Oakes 1997: 37), Sufi Shaikhs do not refuse worldly involvement, but are actively participating in society (Salvatore 2018: 162). In fact, the role of the Shaikh is as much a transcendent responsibility, as it is social (Takim 2006: 54). In summary, due to some unique characteristics in the case of charismatic Shaikhs, an in-depth study of charisma in the context of Sufism could generate new knowledge in this important field. Although my suggestions regarding further research on women's voices, transnational Sufi groups and Sufi leadership do not comprise an exhaustive list, they are likely to produce promising results.

This final chapter offered a concise review of my research journey by summarizing the most salient elements that comprised the core of this study. I evaluated the overall strength of the evidence presented, revisited the flow and significance of each chapter, highlighted the specific nature of my limited contribution to the body of knowledge and offered suggestions for further research. Having started this enquiry with a journey metaphor, I wish to end correspondingly. This, however, is challenging, since the investigation and participation in human lives inherently prohibits a conclusive and definitive arrival. In light of this, the chapter merely ends with an acceptable stopping point, knowing that more wayfaring lies ahead.

APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH PRIMARY INFORMANTS

Shaikh Hulusi's Men	Interview ID	Location	Interview Dates
Samir Hatkić	DAH#1	Tekija	July 2, 2015, #1
	DAH#2		August 26, 2015, #2
	DAH#3		Sept. 1, 2015, #3
	DAH#4		April 19, 2016, #4
Emir Kalender	DAH#5	Tekija	June 18, 2015, #1
Midhat Maglajlija	FNH[177]	Tekija	*Multiple interviews*
Emir Sijamhodžić	DAH#6	Tekija	Nov. 15, 2015, #1
	DAH#7		Nov. 25, 2015, #2
Nedžad Bečirević	DAH#8	In his home for supper	Aril 24, 2015, #1
	DAH#9	In a Café	April 11, 2016, #2
	DAH#10	In a Café	August 22, 2016, #3
Imran Veljan	DAH#11	In a Café	Sept. 3, 2015, #1
	DAH#12	Tekija	Sept. 18, 2015, #2
	DAH#13		Sept. 30, 2015, #3
Zajim Kruško	DAH#14	Tekija	August 4, 2015, #1
	DAH#15		August 9, 2015, #2
	DAH#16		Nov. 25, 2000, #3
Emin Adis Salkić	DAH#17	Tekija	June 9, 2016, #1
Damir Osmanović	DAH#18	Tekija	August 27, 2015, #1
	DAH#19		Sept. 1, 2015, #2
	DAH#20		April 14, 2016, #3
Haris Hadžić	DAH#21	In a Café	Oct. 15, 2016, #1

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[177] Midhat is a key informant. See field notes referencing chart in Appendix C.

Shaikh Hulusi's Men	Interview ID	Location	Interview Dates
Husein Ismar Resić	DAH#22	Tekija	Sept. 24, 2015, #1
	DAH#23	Hotel lobby	Oct. 7, 2015, #2
	DAH#24	Tekija	Nov. 17, 2015, #3
Muhamed Aščerić	DAH#25	Tekija	Nov. 30, 2015, #1
	DAH#26	In a Café	Aug. 11, 2015, #2
	DAH#27	In a Café	Aug. 12, 2015, #3
Ibrahim Dizdarević	DAH#28	In Zenica during my visit of another tekija being built	August 8, 2016, #1
Osman	DAH#29	In Zenica during my visit of another tekija being built	August 8, 2016, #1
Hišam ef. Hafizović	DAH#30	Tekija	Aug. 2, 2017, #1

Shaikh Hulusi's Women	Interview ID	Location	Interview Dates
Aida Hadžić	DAH#31	Tekija	Sept. 21, 2015, #1
	DAH#32		Sept. 25, 2015, #2
	DAH#33		Nov. 17, 2015, #3
	DAH#34		April 15, 2016, #4
Mediha	DAH#35	Tekija	August 25, 2015, #1
Sabina	DAH#36		August 25, 2015, #1
Una Glamočija	DAH#37	In a Café	Sept. 6, 2015, #1

Ehlimana Mušija	DAH#38	In a Café	Sept. 6, 2015, #1
	DAH#39	Tekija	Nov. 17, 2015, #2
Anida	DAH#40	In a Café	Sept. 10, 2015, #1
	DAH#41	Tekija	Sept. 19, 2015, #2
Meliha Garazalić	DAH#42	In a Café	Sept. 10, 2015, #1
Sanela Mujanović	DAH#43	Tekija	Oct. 3, 2015, #1
Irma Alimanović	DAH#44	Tekija	Oct. 6, 2015, #1

Shaikh Faruki's Men	Interview ID	Location	Interview Dates
Ahmed	DAF#1	In a Café	Sept. 4, 2015, #1
Abdurrahman	DAF#2	In a Café	Sept. 8, 2015, #1
	DAF#3		Oct 1, 2015, #2
Faris Pecar	DAF#4	In a Café	Aug. 17, 2015, #1
	DAF#5		Aug. 25, 2015, #2
	DAF#6		Oct 1, 2015, #3
Sadat	DAF#7	In a Café	Sept. 11, 2015, #1
	DAF#8		Oct 9, 2015, #2
Hazim Numanagić	FNF[178]	In his calligraphy shop	*Multiple interviews*
Haris	DAF#9	In a Café	Sept. 3, 2015, #1
	DAF#10		Sept. 18, 2015, #2
Muhidin	DAF#11	In a Café	Sept. 2, 2015, #1
	DAF#12		Oct 7, 2015, #2
	DAF#13		Dec. 1, 2015, #3

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[178] Hazim is a key informant. See field notes referencing chart in Appendix C.

Shaikh Ismail Ahmetagić	FNF[179]	In a Café	*Multiple interviews*
Amir	DAF#14	By his newsstand	Sept. 17, 2015
Mehmed Bajraktarević	DAF#15	In a Café	Oct. 5, 2015, #1
	DAF#16		Nov. 23, 2015, #2
Mevludin	DAF#17	In a Café	Nov. 29, 2015, #1
Nusret	DAF#18	In a Café	Aug. 11, 2016, #1
Halid Hoši and his brother	DAF#19	In the Car	April 21, 2016, #1
Remza Only female informant	DAF#20	At the calligraphy shop	Dec. 10, 2015, #1

ID Code:

DA = Dejan Aždajić

H = Hulusi

F = Faruki

FN = Field Notes Reference

OI = Other Informants

Note: In the case of the two main Shaikhs, as well as my key informants Shaikh Ismail, Hazim and Midhat, I refer to my interview dates with them in my field note referencing chart.

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[179] Ismail is a key informant. See field notes referencing chart in Appendix C.

APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH SECONDARY INFORMANTS[180]

Secondary Informants	Interview ID	Brief description	Interview Date
Asim Zubčević	DAOI#1	Professor at the Islamic University whose father was an intimate friend with Faruki. He knew the Shaikh during his childhood.	July 28, 2016
Jusuf Ramić	DAOI#2	Professor emeritus at the Islamic University who has been critical of Sufism and those students who are increasingly becoming interested in the subject.	July 29, 2016
Omer Nakičević	DAOI#3	Professor emeritus at the Islamic University who has been critical of Sufism. He has published several writings about Sufism.	July 29, 2016
Mehmed Karahodžić	DAOI#4	Independent Shaikh who from his youth has been part of various types of Sufi gatherings. He has known Faruki for over thirty years, but they had an argument a few years ago and are no longer on speaking terms.	July 28, 2016
Midhat Čelebić	DAOI#5	Independent Shaikh who with Faruki sat under the teaching of Halid Salihagić. He was both an imam and part of the Tarika Center. He has	July 28, 2016

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[180] In column three, I will briefly provide the background of each informant and highlight the reason for their selection. All my informants were purposefully chosen. Their validity was based on one or more of the following categories: 1) intimate knowledge of Sufism, 2) leadership of a Sufi community, 3) knowledgeable about Shaikh Faruki and/or Hulusi, 4) employed by the Islamic Community, but exhibiting a positive affinity toward Sufism, 5) employed by the Islamic Community, but exhibiting a negative attitude toward Sufism. I intentionally selected those informants who were most likely to provide the highest epistemic value of data, which would enable a higher quality of analysis and contextualisation of my primary sources.

		known both Hulusi and Faruki for many years.	
Adnan M Bevrnja	DAOI#6 DAOI#7 DAOI#8	Independent journalist and writer who has published several works on Sufism. He has been a follower of Halid Salihagić and has known Faruki for many years. They are not on speaking terms and he is very critical of Faruki.	Aug. 3, 2016, #1 Aug. 18, 2016, #2 Aug. 29, 2016, #3
Hafiz Selim	DAOI#9	Imam whose three children are Faruki's dervishes.	Aug. 4, 2016
Džemal Salkić	DAOI#10 DAOI#11	Imam and Shaikh who has written on Sufism and has extensive knowledge about the topic both theoretically and practically. He also knows a lot about Hulusi, since he knew him before he became a Shaikh.	Aug. 8, 2016, #1 Aug. 12, 2016, #2
Sead Halilagić	DAOI#12	Shaikh and Secretary of the Tarika Centre. One of the most knowledgeable people regarding Sufism in the country.	May 25, 2016
Rusmir Mahmutćehajić	DAOI#13	Respected professor and writer, who is known as a perennial philosopher, Sufi sympathizer and social activist. He knows Hulusi and has a very negative opinion about his social engagement and legitimacy as a Shaikh.	Dec. 17, 2015
Luan Strinić	DAOI#14 DAOI#15	A Shaikh, who received his initiation and diploma from the same Shaikh as Hulusi. He knows him well, but is	April 29, 2015, #1 Sept. 1, 2016, #2

		critical of his choice to look for further legitimization with another Shaikh.	
Edin Kukavica	DAOI#16	A Shaikh, who received his initiation and diploma from the same Shaikh as Hulusi. They are good friends, and I have frequently seen him as a guest of honour at Hulusi's tekija.	Aug. 9, 2016
Sirija Hadžimejlić	DAOI#17	Shaikh and President of the Tarika Centre.	Oct 10, 2016
Ćazim Hadžimejlić	DAOI#18 DAOI#19	One of the most well known Shaikhs in the country due to the size of his following and the monthly publication of the Sufi magazine "Kelamu' Šifa'. His father Mesud gave Hulusi the Shaikh diploma.	Oct 4, 2016, #1 Oct 10, 2016, #2
Džemail Ibranović	DAOI#20	Imam and Shaikh who wrote his doctoral thesis on Sufism.	Aug. 12, 2016
Esad Bazdalić	DAOI#21	Well-known Sufi, who has been around for a long time and has a reputation of "knowing everyone".	Aug. 12, 2016
Sejid Đozić	DAOI#22	Imam and Shaikh who is the treasurer of the Tarika Centre.	Aug. 29, 2016
Muharem Omerdić	DAOI#23	Author and intellectual who has written extensively on Sufism. When he was the director of the religious and educational department of the IC for over thirty years prior to his recent retirement, he tried to give Sufism a legitimate voice and official support. He is personally sympathetic toward	Aug. 25, 2016

		Sufism as a cultural and spiritual force, but is very critical of its current state in Bosnia.	
Muamer Durmišević	DAOI#24	Independent Shaikh, who has known Faruki for many years. He frequently sits with him and has been part of the community, but has not officially given an oath to Faruki.	Aug. 18, 2016
Ferid Dautović	DAOI#25	Main Imam of Sarajevo who often attends special events at Hulusi's tekija. He supports Sufism as part of the cultural expression of Islam in Bosnia and is a self-proclaimed Sufi sympathizer.	Aug. 16, 2016
Ibrahim Begović	DAOI#26	Head of the IC education department, who is in charge of the institutional oversight of the TC and all of its activities. He is not overly sympathetic toward Sufism.	Aug. 17, 2016
Sulejman Kurtanović	DAOI#27	Imam and Faruki's long-term friend.	Sept. 5, 2016
Osman Ejubović	DAOI#28	Independent Sufi who sat with Faruki under the teaching of Halid Salihagić for many years. He is antagonistic toward today's expression of Sufism in general, and Faruki in specific.	Aug. 22, 2016
Sedad Dizdarević	DAOI#29 DAOI#30	Professor at the University of Islamic Studies specializing in Sufism and Persian studies.	Aug. 29, 2016, #1 Aug. 31, 2016, #2

Mensur Valjevac	DAOI#31	Professor who wrote a biography on Halid Salihagić, and is intimately familiar with a variety of Sufi groups around the country.	Aug. 29, 2016
Ibrahim Babić	DAOI#32	Librarian and Sufi, who has been involved in Sufism in Bosnia for forty years.	Aug. 29, 2016
Mufid Garibija	DAOI#33	Architect and Sufi sympathizer, who sat under the teaching of Halid Salihagić.	Sept. 27, 2016
Fuko Sikirić	DAOI#34 DAOI#35	Independent Sufi, who is well connected in a variety of Sufi circles. He has known Hulusi and Faruki for many years.	April 21, 2015, #1 June 4, 2015, #2
Fatima Lačević	DAOI#36	Philosophy professor, who was recommended to me as a secondary informant by Shaikh Hulusi.	Oct 12, 2016
Ahmed Husić	DAOI#37	Professor and author, who wrote his doctoral thesis on Sufism.	Sept. 9, 2016
Ibrahim Ahmetagić	DAOI#38	Brother of Shaikh Ismail, who is in charge of all communication and coordination between the TC and IC. He is overtly critical of the state of Sufism in Bosnia, as well as Faruki and Hulusi.	Oct 11, 2016
Rešid Hafizović	DAOI#39	Professor of Tasawwuf and a well-known scholar of perennial philosophy and Sufism. I was not able to conduct an interview with him, but we corresponded via email.	Aug. 10, 2016

APPENDIX C – FIELD NOTES REFERENCING SYSTEM

Field Notes with Hulusi's Community	Date and ID Code FNH	Field Notes with Faruki 's Community	Date and ID Code FNF
The *bejat* gathering at Tekija Blagaj[181]	May 8, 2015 – FNH#1[182]	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	February 8, 2015 – FNF#1
Tekija and special *dhikr*	May 15, 2015 – FNH#2	Tekija, *dhikr* and sermon	May 7, 2015 – FNF#2
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	May 18, 2015 – FNH#3	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	May 15, 2015 – FNF#3
Tekija visit	June 1, 2015 – FNH#4	Interview with Shaikh Ismail at a Café	May 19, 2015 – FNF#4
Tekija and interview with Midhat	June 13, 2015 – FNH#5	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	June 3, 2015 – FNF#5
Tekija and interview with Midhat	June 14, 2015 – FNH#6	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	June 5, 2015 – FNF#6
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	June 18, 2015 – FNH#7	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	June 8, 2015 – FNF#7
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	June 25, 2015 – FNH#8	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	June 12, 2015 – FNF#8
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	June 27, 2015 – FNH#9	Tekija, Ramadan and dinner with the Shaikh	June 18, 2015 – FNF#9
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	June 29, 2015 – FNH#10	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	June 26, 2015 – FNF#10
Tekija visit	July 2, 2015 – FNH#11	Calligraphy studio and interview with Hazim	July 1, 2015 – FNF#11
Tekija, sermon and interview with Midhat	Aug. 2, 2015 – FNH#12	Interview with Shaikh Ismail at a Café	July 22, 2015 – FNF#12
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	Aug. 4, 2015 – FNH#13	Tekija and *dhikr*	July 23, 2015 – FNF#13

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[181] This *tekija* is located close to the town of Mostar, which is about a two-hour drive from Sarajevo.
[182] Before officially arriving at Hulusi's community as a researcher and doctoral candidate, I have privately visited his community and attended a variety of religious performances over the course of about five years.

Yearly event for Bosnian martyrs	Aug. 6, 2015 – FNH#14	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi with Shaikh Faruki	July 31, 2015 – FNF#14
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	Aug. 7, 2015 – FNH#15	Calligraphy studio and interview with Hazim	Aug. 5, 2015 – FNF#15
Tekija and interview with Midhat	Aug. 9, 2015 – FNH#16	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Aug. 7, 2015 – FNF#16
Tekija and interview with Midhat	Aug. 11, 2015 – FNH#17	Tekija and *dhikr*	Aug. 9, 2015 – FNF#17
"Day of the Tekija" celebration and sermon	Aug. 14, 2015 – FNH#18	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 10, 2015 – FNF#18
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Aug. 16, 2015 – FNH#19	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Aug. 11, 2015 – FNF#19
Tekija and interview with Midhat	Aug. 17, 2015 – FNH#20	Tekija and *dhikr*	Aug. 13, 2015 – FNF#20
Tekija and interview with Midhat	Aug. 18, 2015 – FNH#21	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Aug. 14, 2015 – FNF#21
Tekija and *dhikr* (no Shaikh)	Aug. 21, 2015 – FNH#22	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 18, 2015 – FNF#22
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Aug. 30, 2015 – FNH#23	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 19, 2015 – FNF#23
Tekija visit	Sept. 4, 2015 – FNH#24	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 21, 2015 – FNF#24
Tekija and *dhikr*	Sept. 6, 2015 – FNH#25	Tekija and *dhikr*	Aug. 23, 2015 – FNF#25
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Sept. 11, 2015 – FNH#26	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 24, 2015 – FNF#26
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	Sept. 15, 2015 – FNH#27	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 25, 2015 – FNF#27
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Sept. 18, 2015 – FNH#28	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 27, 2015 – FNF#28

Tekija, sermon by Hulusi and interview with Midhat	Sept. 20, 2015 – FNH#29	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Aug. 28, 2015 – FNF#29
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Sept. 27, 2015 – FNH#30	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 31, 2015 – FNF#30
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Oct 2, 2015 – FNH#31	Interview with Shaikh Ismail at a Café	Sept. 2, 2015 – FNF#31
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Oct 4, 2015 – FNH#32	Tekija and *dhikr*	Sept. 3, 2015 – FNF#32
Tekija visit	Oct 11, 2015 – FNH#33	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Sept. 4, 2015 – FNF#33
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Nov. 6, 2015 – FNH#34	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Sept. 9, 2015 – FNF#34
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Nov. 8, 2015 – FNH#35	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki; Tekija and *dhikr*	Sept. 10, 2015 – FNF#35
Tekija and interview with Midhat and Hulusi	Nov. 10, 2015 – FNH#36	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Sept. 11, 2015 – FNF#36
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Nov. 13, 2015 – FNH#37	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Sept. 15, 2015 – FNF#37
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Nov. 15, 2015 – FNH#38	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki; Tekija and *dhikr*	Sept. 17, 2015 – FNF#38
Tekija and women's meeting	Nov. 17, 2015 – FNH#39	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Sept. 18, 2015 – FNF#39
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Nov. 20, 2015 – FNH#40	Interview with Shaikh Ismail at a Café	Sept. 21, 2015 – FNF#40
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Nov. 22, 2015 – FNH#41	Tekija *dhikr*, with a special ceremony of honouring Shaikh Ismail	Sept. 24, 2015 – FNF#41

Tekija Council meeting	Nov. 25, 2015 – FNH#42	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi with Shaikh Faruki	Sept. 25, 2015 – FNF#42
Tekija visit	Nov. 27, 2015 – FNH#43	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Sept. 30, 2015 – FNF#43
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	Dec. 2, 2015 – FNH#44	Tekija and *dhikr*	Oct 1, 2015 – FNF#44
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Dec. 11, 2015 – FNH#45	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Oct 2, 2015 – FNF#45
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	Dec. 13, 2015 – FNH#46	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Oct 5, 2015 – FNF#46
Tekija and special *Šebi Arus* celebration[183]	Dec. 18, 2015 – FNH#47	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Oct 6, 2015 – FNF#47
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	March 4, 2016 – FNH#48	Tekija and *dhikr*	Oct 7, 2015 – FNF#48
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	March 13, 2016 – FNH#49	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Oct 9, 2015 – FNF#49
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	March 18, 2016 – FNH#50	*Mevlud*[184] celebration at Shaikh Ismail's brother's house	Oct 10, 2015 – FNF#50
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	April 1, 2016 – FNH#51	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Oct 12, 2015 – FNF#51
Tekija and special Ramadan celebration	April 7, 2016 – FNH#52	Calligraphy studio with Hazim	Nov. 3, 2015 – FNF#52
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	April 10, 2016 – FNH#53	Calligraphy studio with Hazim	Nov. 4, 2015 – FNF#53
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	April 12, 2016 – FNH#54	Tekija and the *dhikr*	Nov. 5, 2015 – FNF#54
Tekija visit	April 14, 2016 – FNH#55	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Nov. 6, 2015 – FNF#55
Jummah prayer	April 15, 2016 – FNH#56	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Nov. 9, 2015 – FNF#56

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[183] This is the commemoration of Rumi's death, but also known as his "wedding day".
[184] *Mevlud* (mawlid) is a popular Bosnian celebration, which commemorates the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.

Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	April 17, 2016 – FNH#57	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki; Tekija and *dhikr*	Nov. 12, 2015 – FNF#57
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	April 22, 2016 – FNH#58	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Nov. 13, 2015 – FNF#58
Tekija, *dhikr* and no sermon	May 15, 2016 – FNH#59	Calligraphy studio at Hazim	Nov. 16, 2015 – FNF#59
Tekija visit	May 17, 2016 – FNH#60	Tekija and *dhikr*	Nov. 19, 2015 – FNF#60
Tekija, *dhikr* and *hajdarija* ceremony[185]	May 20, 2016 – FNH#61	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Nov. 23, 2015 – FNF#61
Tekija visit and interview with Midhat	May 25, 2016 – FNH#62	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Nov. 25, 2015 – FNF#62
The bejat gathering at Tekija Blagaj	May 28, 2016 – FNH#63	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi with Shaikh Faruki	Nov. 27, 2015 – FNF#63
Tekija, *dhikr* and sermon by Midhat	June 5, 2016 – FNH#64	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Nov. 30, 2015 – FNF#64
Tekija visit	June 8, 2016 – FNH#65	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Dec. 3, 2015 – FNF#65
Tekija, sermon by Hulusi and interview	June 12, 2016 – FNH#66	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Dec. 7, 2015 – FNF#66
Tekija visit	June 15, 2016 – FNH#67	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Dec. 9, 2015 – FNF#67
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	June 16, 2016 – FNH#68	Tekija and *dhikr*	Dec. 10, 2015 – FNF#68
Tekija visit	July 27, 2016 – FNH#69	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi with Shaikh Faruki	Dec. 11, 2015 – FNF#69
Tekija and sermon by Hulusi	July 29, 2016 – FNH#70	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Dec. 14, 2015 – FNF#70
Tekija visit and interview with Hulusi	Aug. 4, 2016 – FNH#71	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Dec. 18, 2015 – FNF#71

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[185] The *hajdarija* is the green vest that all of Hulusi's dervishes wear. It is typically bestowed after the official *bejat* ceremony, but it can also be given to a dervish who verbally expressed his desire to follow the Shaikh.

Tekija visit	Aug. 7, 2016 – FNH#72	Calligraphy studio with Hazim	March 1, 2016 – FNF#72
Tekija visit	Sept. 2, 2016 – FNH#73	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	March 2, 2016 – FNF#73
Ramadan celebration and sermon by Hulusi	Sept. 14, 2016 – FNH#74	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	March 3, 2016 – FNF#74
Tekija visit	Sept. 20, 2016 – FNH#75	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	March 4, 2016 – FNF#75
Tekija visit	Sept. 27, 2016 – FNH#76	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	March 11, 2016 – FNF#76
Tekija, *dhikr* and New year celebration	Oct 2, 2016 – FNH#77	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	March 17, 2016 – FNF#77
Tekija visit and interview with Hulusi	Oct 13, 2016 – FNH#78	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	March 18, 2016 – FNF#78
Ašura celebration and sermon by Hulusi	Oct 14, 2016 – FNH#79	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	March 22, 2016 – FNF#79
Tekija and interview with Hulusi	July 30, 2017 – FNH#80	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki; Tekija and *dhikr*	March 31, 2016 – FNF#80
"Day of the Tekija" celebration	Aug. 11, 2017 – FNH#81	Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	April 1, 2016 – FNF#81
Tekija, interview with Hulusi and Midhat	Aug. 13, 2017 – FNH#82	Calligraphy studio with Hazim	April 6, 2016 – FNF#82
Email exchange with Ernad	July 21, 2015 – FNH#83	Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	April 7, 2016 – FNF#83
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	April 8, 2016 – FNF#84
		Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi with Shaikh Faruki	April 15, 2016 – FNF#85
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	April 18, 2016 – FNF#86
		Interview with Shaikh Ismail at a Café	April 20, 2016 – FNF#87

		Tekija and *dhikr*	April 21, 2016 – FNF#88
		Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	April 22, 2016 – FNF#89
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	May 16, 2016 – FNF#90
		Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	May 20 2016 – FNF#91
		Tekija and a special *dhikr*	May 21, 2016 – FNF#92
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	May 23, 2016 – FNF#93
		Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	May 27, 2016 – FNF#94
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	May 30, 2016 – FNF#95
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	June 1, 2016 – FNF#96
		Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi with Shaikh Faruki	June 3, 2016 – FNF#97
		Tekija and the beginning of Ramadan	June 5, 2016 – FNF#98
		Calligraphy studio with Hazim	June 8, 2016 – FNF#99
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	June 9, 2016 – FNF#100
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	June 14, 2016 – FNF#101
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	June 16, 2016 – FNF#102
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	July 26, 2016 – FNF#103
		Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	July 29, 2016 –

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			FNF#104
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 4, 2016 – FNF#105
		Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Aug. 5, 2016 – FNF#106
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 9, 2016 – FNF#107
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 11, 2016 – FNF#108
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 17, 2016 – FNF#109
		Tekija and *dhikr*	Aug. 18, 2016 – FNF#110
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 24, 2016 – FNF#111
		Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Aug. 26, 2016 – FNF#112
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Sept. 1, 2016 – FNF#113
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Sept. 2, 2016 – FNF#114
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Sept. 5, 2016 – FNF#115
		Going for a long walk with Shaikh Faruki	Sept. 8, 2016 – FNF#116
		Going for a long walk with Shaikh Faruki	Sept. 16, 2016 – FNF#117
		Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Sept. 20, 2016 – FNF#118
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Oct 4 2016 – FNF#119
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Oct 5 2016 – FNF#120

		Tekija and Ibn ʿArabi	Oct 7 2016 – FNF#121
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Oct 12 2016 – FNF#122
		Going for a long walk with Shaikh Faruki	Oct 14 2016 – FNF#123
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	July 31, 2017 – FNF#124
		Calligraphy studio and interview with Hazim	Aug. 3, 2017 – FNF#125
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 7, 2017 – FNF#126
		Calligraphy studio and Shaikh Faruki	Aug. 12, 2017 – FNF#127
		Email exchange with Ismail	Dec. 6, 2015 – FNF#128
		Email exchange with Ismail	July 21, 2016 – FNF#129

An Explanatory Note on Field Notes Content

I have purposely included a variety of data sources under my field notes referencing system in order to ensure that the detailed description remain as clear, consistent and comprehensive as possible. Included in my field notes are notes that I have taken during my attendance of public lectures by Hulusi and the weekly Ibn ʿArabi discussions led by Shaikh Ismail. I also incorporated all interviews and conversations that I conducted with Shaikh Faruki and Shaikh Hulusi, as well as those with my two key informants connected to Faruki, Shaikh Ismail and Hazim, as well as Midhat, who was my key informant with Hulusi's community. Each fieldwork date provided in the chart above has been transcribed and analysed in detail and can be made available upon request. The abbreviated description in column one and three is intended to provide a brief contextual reference in order to improve the efficiency of the referencing system, but it does not depict a comprehensive portrayal of all the salient elements that might have occurred during that particular fieldwork occasion. It is apparent from the chart

that the number of fieldwork dates with Faruki was significantly higher than with Hulusi. This was a deliberate research strategy due to the research dynamics that I encountered in the field and my desire to achieve the highest standard of validity in data production. Since I was comparatively more limited with the number and sample size of individuals with whom I could conduct formal interviews with Faruki's community, I intentionally attempted to overcome this challenge by both increasing my presence in the field and the quantity of data I could gather through participation and observation. This strategic approach provided me with a wide enough range of data, which enabled me to conduct a rigorous and balanced comparative analysis of both research communities.

The following table provides an additional visual summary of the types of data represented by my field notes:

Shaikh Hulusi and His Community	Shaikh Faruki and His Community
Lectures by Shaikh Hulusi	Ibn ʿArabi Readings and Discussion
Interviews with Key Informant Midhat	Interviews with Key Informants Hazim and Shaikh Ismail
Interviews with Shaikh Hulusi	Interviews with Shaikh Faruki
Informal Conversations with Dervishes	Informal Conversations with Dervishes
Observations and Personal Impressions	Observations and Personal Impressions

APPENDIX D – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS THAT EVOLVED DURING RESEARCH[186]

I. Context Questions:

    a. What is the background of the Sufi community: History, *silsila*, structure, finances, activities, *dhikr*, recruitment and social interaction?

    b. What is the background of the Shaikh?

        i. How did he become a Shaikh?

        ii. Who were his teachers?

        iii. What are his strengths and weaknesses?

        iv. What is his teaching emphasis?

        v. How does he interact with dervishes and understand his role in their lives?

        vi. Thoughts and opinions on the Shaikh?

    c. What is the background of the dervish?

        i. General: Age, social position (wealth, education, employment, social activities marriage); previous religious experience/knowledge about Sufism?

        ii. Motivation for becoming a Sufi (salvation, meaning, morality, identity, guidance, spirituality, community, adventure)?

        iii. How do you experience the Shaikh and his role in your life?

        iv. How does Sufism influence the rest of your life outside the tekija?

II. Main Questions:

    a. What is the goal of Sufism?

        i. Can non-Sufis reach the goal?

        ii. Why are you following this path? What motivates you?

    b. What is the role of the Shaikh?

        i. Is it possible to attain the goal without the Shaikh?

    c. How do you attain proximity to God?

        i. How to purify one's motives? (Going from self-interest to pure)

    d. What is the role of love on the spiritual journey?

    e. What is the role of knowledge on the spiritual journey?

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[186] These questions are not representative of all the questions that I asked during my fieldwork, but merely constitute a sample of the broadest categories of my investigation.

i. What is the role of knowledge and closeness?

f. What is the role of the *dhikr*?

i. How does the *dhikr* cleanse the heart? How do you feel during and afterward?

ii. Do you experience closeness to God through the *dhikr*?

iii. Do you experience cleansing or love through the *dhikr*?

g. What is the relationship between the Tarika Center and the Islamic Community?

i. How should Sufis be involved in society?

III. Questions conducted during my follow-up visit:

a. Tell me about *hizmet* and *tevhid*

b. What did you mean saying that the goal is not God but knowledge of God?

c. What do you think about tomb visitations?

d. What is your connection to Turkey, involvement in society etc.?

e. Where does the authority of the Shaikh come from?

APPENDIX E – CODES FOR ANALYSIS

In the beginning of my ethnographic fieldwork, I started with a preliminary set of questions based on my previous informal fieldwork experience and extensive reading that focused on understanding the role of love among living Sufi practitioners, which comprised my original research inquiry. Throughout the initial phase of research, I intentionally attempted to resist premature commitments to a particular theory or expected result, suspend personal judgment and remain open to unanticipated findings (Blum 2012: 1032). This helped me to avoid selective observations and a premature arrival at predetermined conclusions. Bracketing my assumptions also made it possible for me to permit my fieldwork to drive the emerging narrative, even if this narrative gradually began to change my research focus. As my observation and corpus of collected data became increasingly refined, I realised the emergence of new and unexpected issues, which caused my provisional questions to begin diminishing in importance. As I continued to immerse myself in the field and learn about my communities, I continuously readjusted and adapted my questions as I returned to gather more data.[187] Emerson describes the importance of such flexibility as follows, "Rather, in order to pursue promising empirical and theoretical leads, fieldworkers move constantly from observation and analysis to conceptual refining and reframing and then back to seek new forms of data relevant to their emerging theoretical concerns and categories." (2001a: 284) The development of new questions was therefore directly resulting from the narrative encountered in the field.

Throughout the process I set aside specific days when I was not doing fieldwork to engage in a continuous and evolving examination of what I discovered in my transcribed data sets. Julien defines this course of action as follows, "Content analysis is the intellectual process of categorizing qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories, to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables or themes." (2008: 120) I found this cumulative approach useful, as it helped me to derive layers of meaning from my data, develop a deeper understanding of my research context, identify specific phenomena and devise deliberate strategies of how to proceed further. This procedure was also useful for me to regularly evaluate the quality and validity of my data collection, the varied observations obtained and the level of detail that I was able to collect. This is crucial in assessing the accuracy of the ethnographic account in order to avoid misrepresentation. Whenever I identified a blind spot, bias or conditions in the field that made it difficult for me to gather a

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[187] For an example of some of the questions that I asked in the field, see Appendix D.

varied and rich enough sample of data, I designed deliberate strategies to minimize these obstacles. In addition to data analysis and thematic categorization, I also consulted relevant secondary literature to help me understand my research context better, provide new ideas and ground my specific research in already existing theoretical constructs.

During this analytic practice, I developed a provisional set of emerging themes to which I assigned a specific code. I then proceeded to methodically organise interview data, observations and memos that thematically belonged to the appropriate code. As my analysis developed and became more systematic, it was necessary to engage in an iterative process of adjusting and renaming codes, as well as shifting particular texts to those codes that were more representative of their internal content. As this process continued, additional categories emerged, to which I consequently assigned a new representative code. My focus on specific topics was naturally limited by my observations and data collection in the field, and as my understanding of the importance of certain themes developed throughout my investigation and continuing immersion, I purposely set out to find additional valid evidence about these topics. The result of this long-term strategy of regular data analysis, followed by systematic, informed and intentional new data collection, resulted in further layers of understanding and refinement. Upon completing my fieldwork data collection and the initial ongoing labelling and coding, I then went through a second phase of re-evaluating and re-examining the vast corpus of material I gathered in order to ensure thematic consistency and determine the hierarchical importance of each theme for inclusion in this project. After loading my interview transcripts, observations and other textual data into the NVivo program, I realised that this process was for me personally not beneficial. Having engaged in manual coding for almost two years has trained me to identify themes and find similar texts far more efficiently on printed paper, rather than using computer software.

Due to this realisation, I decided to complete my coding and analysis manually in order to identify any patterns or connections I might have missed. From this careful reading emerged a natural progression of themes, which eventually became the outline of this thesis. I also noticed the weakness of certain important thematic data sets, which I identified as crucial to achieve a reliably representative and comprehensive portrayal of my research context. In order to reach a greater degree of validity and a sufficient amount of rigor that would strengthen my chapters, I decided to revisit my two research communities to gather more relevant data and test some of my findings back in the field. Due to the trust and good relationships that I had with my research participants, they were glad to welcome me back and answer any questions.

This purposive visit and additional data collection helped to clarify and confirm my findings. After organising the new evidence under the appropriate thematic codes, I was now ready to finalize the exact content of my thesis outline and the most suitable order in which to present my findings. The chart below represents the main thematic codes and pertinent sub-codes that emerged from my data analysis.

Table of Thematic Codes

I.   THE SHAIKH

1. General information about the Shaikh

   a)   His personal background, character

   b)   Shaikh's legitimization

   c)   Characteristics of a true Shaikh

   d)   Teaching emphasis

   e)   Social involvement

2. General thoughts about the Shaikh

   a)   Follower legitimization

3. Role and responsibility of the Shaikh

   a)   The need for a Shaikh: guide, doctor, teacher

   b)   His goals

   c)   His authority

   d)   His influence to shape, contextualise and adapt

   e)   The protecting/changing of *usul* (principles, regulations, rules)

4. Criticisms about the Shaikh

   a)   True and false Shaikhs

   b)   Gradation of Shaikhs

   c)   No need for a Shaikh

   d)   Data from secondary informants on Hulusi and Faruki

5. Emerging differences

II.   THE TEKIJA

1. General information

2. Member information

   a)   Recruitment

   b)   Motivation to follow the Shaikh

   c)   The Shaikh's children

3. Meetings and events

4. Organisation

    a)   Mission

    b)   Public and private

    c)   Focus on form and focus on teaching

III.   DATA CONCERNING COMING CLOSE

1. Closeness is the ultimate goal

    a)   God's book

    b)   The importance of *tevhid*

2. Closeness through knowledge

    a)   Knowledge as the highest goal

    b)   Knowledge acquired by reason

    c)   Knowledge acquired by the heart

    d)   Secret knowledge

3. Closeness through love

    a)   Motivation and means of travel

    b)   Experience of love

IV.   MEANS OF ATTAINING PROXIMITY TO GOD

1. Obedience, submission and commitment to the Shaikh

    a)   The importance of *hizmet*

    b)   *Rabita*

2. Self-discipline, ritual and supererogatory prayers

3. Knowledge and its application

    a)   Importance of sincerity

4. Journey versus goal

V.   RITUALS

1. The Dhikr

    a)   Cleanses the Heart

    b)   Dhikr and Closeness

    c)   Dhikr and Experience

    d)   Different types of dhikrs, quantity and quality

2. *Bejat* ceremony

    a)   *Silsila*

    b)   *Teslimijet*

APPENDIX F – SIMPLIFIED *SILSILA* OF FARUKI AND HULUSI[188]

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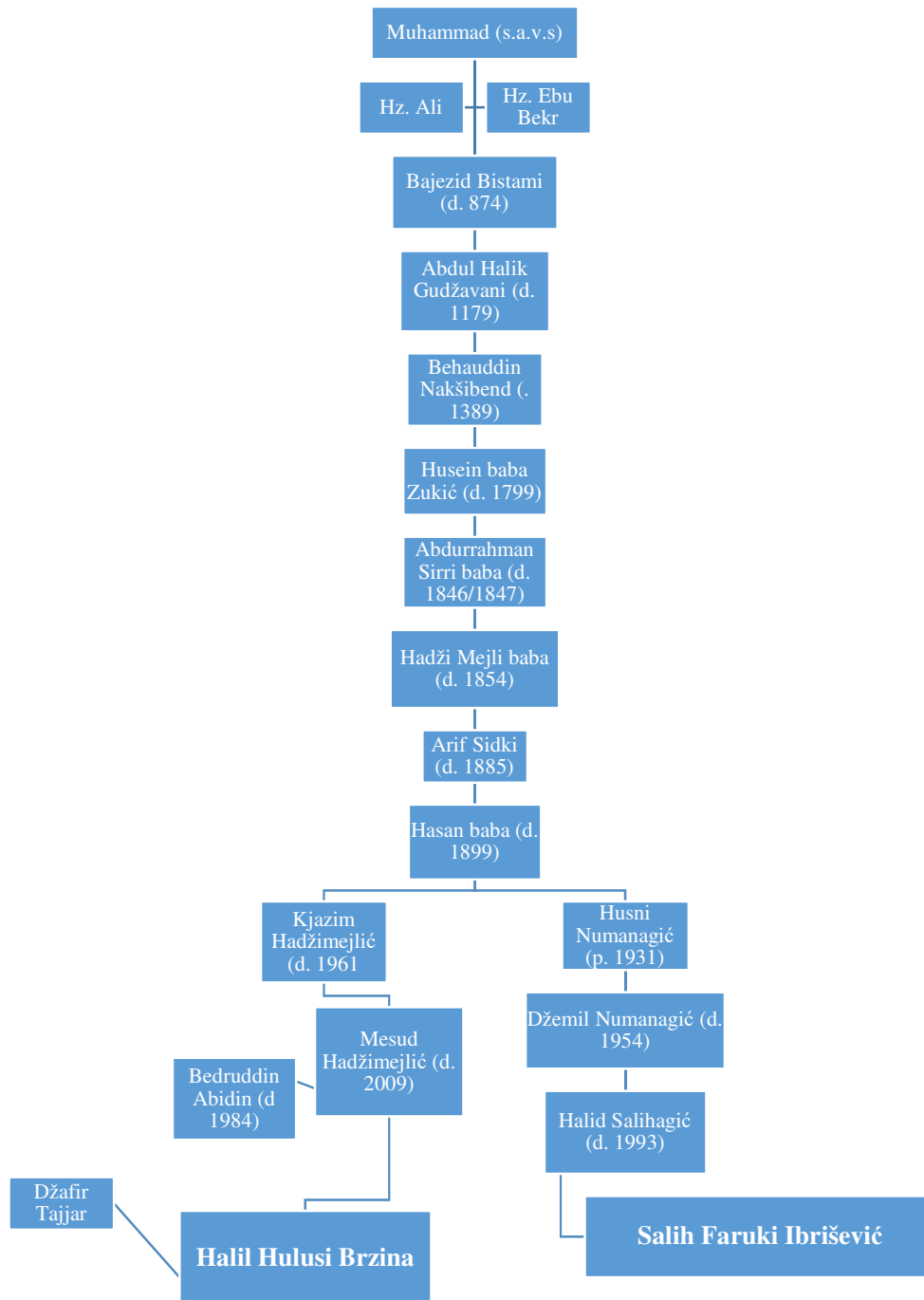
[188] For sources on the *silsila*, see: (Hadžimejlić 2009b; Hadžimejlić 2016; Hadžimejlić 2014; Hadžimejlić 2015; Gačanović 2014; Numanagić 2013; Ćehajić 1986; Valjevac 2013).

بــــم الله الرحمن الرحيم

ISLAMSKA ZAJEDNICA U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI

RIJASET

Broj: 03-03-1-403/12
datum, 30. rebiu-l-evvel 1433. h.g.
22. februar 2012.g.

Na osnovu člana 51. i 52., a u vezi sa članom 71. Ustava Islamske zajednice, Rijaset Islamske zajednice je na četvrtoj redovnoj sjednici održanoj 24. rebiu-l-evvela 1433. h.g., odnosno 16. februara 2012. godine, donio sljedeću

U R E D B U
O TARIKATSKIM REDOVIMA

Član 1.

Ovom Uredbom uređuje se položaj tarikatskih redova u Bosni i Hercegovini (u daljem tekstu: tarikatski redovi) u okviru strukture Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini (u daljem tekstu: Islamska zajednica u BiH).

Član 2.

U okviru Islamske zajednice u BiH organiziraju se tarikatski redovi u skladu sa Ustavom Islamske zajednice.

Osnivanje tarikatskih redova se vrši autonomno u skladu sa pravilima tarikata, a aktivnosti tarikatskih redova moraju biti u skladu sa šerijatskim propisima uz obavezu pridržavanja hanefijskog mezheba u okviru ehli-sunetskog pravca te u skladu sa tradicionalnim usulom pojedinog derviškog reda.

Tarikatski redovi, kao i svi njihovi članovi, dužni su poštovati organizacionu strukturu i normativne akte Islamske zajednice te čuvati ugled Islama i Islamske zajednice u cjelini.

Član 3.

Tarikatski redovi djeluju u strukturi Islamske zajednice u okviru Tarikatskog centra.
Tarikatski centar je nadležan za zikr i iršad.
Tarikatski centar predstavlja jedinstvenu i autonomnu formu udruživanja tarikatskih redova.

Član 4.

Tarikatski centar ima status pravnog lica, a procedura upisa u registar pravnih lica Islamske zajednice jednaka je proceduri koja je predviđena za osnivanje i upis drugih pravnih lica Islamske zajednice.

U strukturi Islamske zajednice Tarikatski centar će imati status udruženja.

Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini • RIJASET
Adresa: Zelenih beretki 17; 71000 Sarajevo, Bosna i Hercegovina • Tel (centrala): **387 (33) 553-000, 664-493 533-172, 532-255 • Fax: **387 (33) 441-800 • Transakcijski račun: 1602005500015065 kod Vakufske banke d.d. Sarajevo
www.rijaset.ba

APPENDIX H – EVIDENCE OF ALL *TEKIJAS* AND PLACES THAT CONDUCT A *DHIKR* SERVICE IN BiH

MUFTIJSTVO SARAJEVSKO

EVIDENTIRANE TEKIJE ILI MJESTA ODRŽAVANJA ZIKIRA

RB	MEDŽLIS	TEKIJA ILI MJESTO ODRŽAVANJE	IME PROČELNIKA	REGISTROVAN KOD TARIKATSKOG CENTRA
1.	FOJNICA	1.Tekija šejh Husejin baba Zukić	Husejin-ef. Hažimejlić	Da
2.		2.Tekija šejh Sirri babe na Oglavku	Kenan-ef. Sikirić	Nije poznato
3.	KAKANJ	1.Privatna kuća i džamija u Kraljevoj sutjesci	Sulejman-ef. Čeliković	Nije poznato
4.		2. Prostor za klanjanje u poslovnom kompleksu poduzetnika Faika Delića	Husejn-ef- Juhić	Da
5.		3. Tekija Kaderijsko-rifaijskog reda-Obre "Dergah Salemi Bosnevi Zuhuri"	Mahir-ef. Alajbegović	Nije poznato
6.		4. Privatni prostor u ul. Malente Bošnjaka, Nakšibendijako-halidijska tekija	Muris-ef. Hadžić i Abdurrahman-ef. Zukana	Ne
7.	SARAJEVO	1.Rifaijski medžlisi zikr u džamiji Ulomljenica	š. Edin Kukavica	Da
8.		2. Hadži Sinanova tekija	š. Sead Halilagić	Da
9.		3. Nakšibendijska tekija Potok	v. Ekrem Fočak	Da
10.		4. Nakšibendijski medžlisi zikr u džamiji Bakareva	v. hfz. Vehbija Šećerović	Da
11.		5. Nakšibendijska tekija Kahrimani	š. Luan Strinić	Da
12.		6. Nakšibendijski medžlisi zikr u džamiji Igman	v. Haris-ef. Hadžić	Da
13.		7. Nakšibendijska tekija Mejtaš	š.Halii Brzina	Da
14.		8. Rifaijska zavija Pofalići	š. Mustafa Čajlaković	Da
15.		9. Kadirijska zavija Misoča-Ilijaš	š. Edžnan Alić	Da
16.		10. Nakšibendijska zavija Malešići	v.Ahmed Mustafić	Da
17.		11.Nakšibendijska tekija Vratnik	Midhat ef. Čelebić	Ne
19.		12. Kaderijska tekija Čeljigovići	Kapo	Ne

EVIDENTIRANE TEKIJE ILI MJESTA ODRŽAVANJA ZIKIRA

19.		13. Kaderijska tekija Aneks	---	Ne
20.		14. Kaderijska tekija Pazarić	..	Ne
21.		15. Nakšibendijska tekija – halidije, Ilidža-		Ne
22.	SARAJEVO	16. Nakšibendijska tekija Ilidža -	Salih ef. Ibrišević	Ne
23.		17. Nakšibendijski medžlisi zikr u džamiji Obhodža	---	Ne
24.		18. Rifaijski medžlisi zikr u džamiji Golobrdica	Radić Adis	Ne
25.		19. Nakšibendijska tekija Vratnik	Midhat ef. Čelebić	Ne
26.	VISOKO	1.Privatna tekija	Sirrija-ef. Hadžimejlić	Da
27.		2. Pertačka džamija	Hfz. Zilko-ef. Žolja	Da
28.		3. Visočka tekija	Ibrahim Trako	Da
29.		4. Mekteb u Hlapčevićima	Kaldija Džemal	Da
30.		5. Privatni objekat u džematu Zbilje	Smajić Muhamed	Ne
31.		6. Privatna kuća	Bukurević Senad	Ne
32.		7. privatna tekija-aktivna samo za ramazan	Hadžimejlić Muhamed	Ne
33.		Šadrvanska džamija	Sejjid-ef. Đozić	Da
34.	OLOVO	1.Tekija" Šejh Mehmed-ef. Hafizović", Gornje Olovo	Nijaz Džindo	Da
35.		2. Zavija u selu Lišei	Salih Delahmetović	Da
36.	VAREŠ	1. Rifaijsko-bedevijska tekija Vareš	Azmir Muftić	Da
37.	KISELJAK	1. Džamija u Gromiljaku	Hamza-ef. Berbić	Da
38.		2. Džamija u Višnjici	Mirza-ef. Bilić	Ne
39.		3. Džamija u Duhrima	Mustafa-ef. pašić	Ne
40.	BREZA	1. Iznajmljene prostorije dd Udarnik, Nakšibendije-halidije	Seid-ef. Silajdžić	Ne

NAPOMENA: Na području medžlisa **Kaljina i Gračanica k/V** nema evidentiranih tekija niti zikir halki.

Pripremio

Rijad Delić

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APPENDIX I – OFFICIAL LETTER BY THE IC GIVING ME PERMISSION
TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

بِسْـــمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ISLAMSKA ZAJEDNICA U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI
R I J A S E T
UPRAVA ZA VJERSKE POSLOVE

Broj: 02-08-2-2481/15
Datum: 11. juni, 2015./ 24. ša'ban 1436.

Šejh Halil Hulisi Brzina
Tekija Nakšibendijskog tarikata Mejtaš

Predmet: Preporuka za prihvatanje molbe za doktorsko istraživanje

Esselamu alejkum poštovani,

     Uprava za vjerske poslove Rijaseta Islamske zajednice u BiH toplo preporučuje šejh Halilu Hulisi Brzini da odobri doktorantu gospodinu Dejanu Aždajiću u svrhe njegovog doktorskog istraživanja pristup i boravak, shodno usulu i edebu, tekiji Nakšibendijskog tarikata Mejtaš. Također se preporučuje da shodno svojim aktivnostima važeni šejh Brzina odredi osobu – murida – koji će biti na usluzi za stručnu pomoć gospodinu Dejanu Aždajiću.

     Doktorant Aždajić iskazao je želju i spremnost da se bavi zanimljivom temom ljubavi u životu i praksi bosanskohercegovačkih nakšibendijskih sufija. Iz dostavljenog uvidjeli smo da mu je cilj predstaviti „živu vjeru", odnosno način i metod na koji vjera pomaže ovim ljudima da žive ispunjen i značajan život, sa fokusom na ljubav koju osjećaju i gaje prema dragome Bogu.

     U nadi da ćemo, na ovaj i slične načine, zajedničkim snagama svi zajedno doprinositi kreiranju stvarne slike života i vjerovanja kod bh. muslimana, srdačno Vas selamim,

Uprava za vjerske poslove
mr. Nusret ef. Avdibegović, direktor

Dostavljeno:
- *Naslovu*
- *Gospodinu Dejanu Aždajiću*
- *a/a*

APPENDIX J – OFFICIAL LETTER BY THE TC GIVING ME PERMISSION
TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

TARIKATSKI CENTAR U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI
71000 Sarajevo, ul. Halilbašića 18,
Broj:SH/031/15
Sarajevo,25.07.2015. god.

Dejan Aždajić
71000 Sarajevo
Trampina br.6

Predmet: **Istraživanje na izradi doktorske teze**

Uvaženi doktorant Aždajić Dejan,

Tarikatski sentar u BiH podržava sve znanstvene aktivnosti vezane za tarikat i tesavvuf te je saglasan da vam se odobri pristup prostoru Nakšibendijske tekije Mejtaš, Sarajevo i obavi predloženo istraživanje obrazloženo u vašem zahtjevu.

Pristup, boravak i intervjue sa pripadnicima nakšibendijskog tarikata u datoj tekiji je potrebno dogovoriti i usaglasiti sa starješinom tekije šejh Halil ef. Brzinom uz poštovanje usula, adaba, tekijskog programa rada i vremena koje pripadnici tekije mogu odvojiti za realizaciju navedenih aktivnosti.

Želim vam brzu realizaciju vrijednog istraživanja i uspješno okončanje ukupnog rada na izradi doktorske teze te ovim putem iskazujem svoju podršku datim aktivnostima.

TARIKATSKI CENTAR
Š. S... Halilagić, gen. sekretar

Dostavljeno: - Naslovu

- a.a.

APPENDIX L – MY PURCHASE OF A SACRIFICIAL LAMB ON BEHALF OF HULUSI'S HEALTH[189]

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[189] This was a gesture of goodwill and part of my exit strategy. It was well received, causing the Shaikh to give a public prayer of blessing on my behalf and an invitation to come back any time as an honored guest. (FNH#79)

APPENDIX M – PHOTOGRAPHS[190]

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[190] The order of photographs depict the following: Me with Hulusi, and Faruki; A Naqshbandi *dhikr* and the evening meal with Hulusi's community; A Naqshbandi *dhikr* and the Ibn ʿArabi group with Faruki's community. All photographs were taken by the author and by permission of the leadership.

APPENDIX N – AN EXAMPLE OF A BOSNIAN NAQSHBANDI *VIRD*[191]

<u>HU</u>

<u>FATIHA 4. TIMES</u>

Ilahi ente maksudi ve ridake matlubi Allahumme inni eseluke bike jā erhamer-Rāhimin.
Estagfirullah el azim ellezi lā ilahe illāhū el Hajjel Kajjume ve etubu ilejhi ....7 X[192]
ve neseluhut-tevbete vel magfirete vel hidajete lena ve tevfik innehū huvet-tevvābur-rahim fāfu annā jā fettahu jā Azizu jā Allah. .... 1 X[193]

FATIHA........................ 7. TIMES
IHLAS........................... 7. TIMES
MUAVEZETEJN............7. TIMES (Felek i Nas)
NUH SALAVAT............ 12. TIME
SIRRI FATIHA................1. TIME

NIJJET: Bismillahi ve bi tevfikillahi ve bi hidajetillahi ve bi inajetillahi ve bi šefa'ati Resulillahi ve bi himmeti pirina, Šah Muhammed Behauddin Nakšibend el Buhari kadesallahu sirrehu, ve bi idžazeti muršidina ve bi šehadeti halkillahi:

FALEM ENNEHU: LĀ ILĀHE ILLELLĀH ....3. TIMES (slowly)
LĀ ILĀHE ILLELLĀH ....500. TIMES
MUHAMMEDUR-RESULULLAH ....1. TIMES
ALLAH (ismi dželal).............................. 300. TIMES
HU (ismi džemal) ....121. TIMES
HAK...108. TIMES
HAJJ...118. TIMES
KAJJUM...156. TIMES
JA LATIFU...129. TIMES
JA KAHHAR...306. TIMES
SALAVAT ....1. TIME
FATIHA ....1. TIME

Allahumme salli ve sellim ve barik ve tefeddal ala esadi ve ešrefi nuri džemiil enbijai vel evlijai vel asfijai vel etkijai veššuhedai vel murseline ve ala alihi ve alejhim edžmein vel hamdulillahi rabbil alemin.[194] *Šejh Šefik Alić*

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[191] This *vird* was passed down by Shaikh Šefik Alić, a deceased Shaikh who was also greatly influenced by Halid Salihagić. (DAOI#10, 11)

[192] Translation mine: "My God, You are my goal and Your satisfaction is my task. I pray to you, O most merciful one. I seek forgiveness from Allah, the exalted one, the only God, the living, the sustainer, to You with repentance do I turn to." (seven times)

[193] Translation mine: "And I pray for our repentance and forgiveness and guidance and success, He is merciful and forgiving, therefore forgive You who solve all things, You who forgives all things, O Allah." (one time)

[194] Translation mine: "My God, save and blesse me, and endow me with all that is good and honorable and the most beautiful light from the Prophets, and all those who are sincere and submitted, the martyrs, the Prophet, his family and all of them, thank you Allah, the Ruler of all the worlds."

APPENDIX O – AN EXAMPLE OF A BOSNIAN *ILAHIJA*

AKO HOĆEŠ DERVIŠ BITI (If You Want to Be a Dervish) [195]

Ako hoćeš derviš bit
valja srce očistit (Allah)
Bogu širka ne činit
La ilahe illellah!

Grijehova se pokajat
na grijehe se ne vraćat
dragom Bogu robovat
La ilahe illellah!

Robovat je ljepota
neposlušat grehota
iskat plaću sramota
La ilahe illellah…

Slušaj što je emrullah
puno čini zikrullah
svijem srcem: Ja Allah
La ilahe illellah!

Ovaj svijet sad će proć
po dušu će melek doć
tu će nama bit pomoć
La ilahe illellah!

Nut pogledaj **Sirrije**
sve derviše miluje
i dan i noć kazuje
La ilahe illellah!

---

[195] This it is a famous *ilahija* by Shaikh Sirri Baba from the 19th century, with the title, "If You Want to Be a Dervish". Faruki wrote a book dedicated as a commentary on this poem (Ibrišević 2012). It lays out the requirements for dervishes to obey God, practice the *dhikr* continuously, to repent frequently and to love God.

APPENDIX P – GLOSSARY[196]

A Note on Transliteration and Pronunciation

The official languages used in Bosnia and Herzegovina are Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. Except some minor variations in pronunciation and vocabulary, they are virtually the same language. Serbian uses the Cyrillic script, while Bosnian and Croatian use the Latin script. The spelling is phonetic, which means that each sound of the alphabet has a corresponding letter. My research took place among Bosnian Muslims and was therefore limited to the use of the Latin alphabet. Below is a guide to transliteration and pronunciation. I am only introducing those letters that are either not part of the English alphabet, or whose pronunciation is significantly different in Bosnian.

a	a as in *father*
c	ts as in *hats*
č	ch as in *church*
ć	tch as in *chilly* (soft)
dž	j as in *gym*
đ	dj as in *gender* (soft)
e	e as in *bet*
h	h as in *loch*
i	e as in *bee*
j	y as in *yesterday*
lj	ll as in *million*
nj	n as in *new*
o	as in *shot*
r	*rolled with the tongue*
š	sh as in *shepherd*
u	u as in *cool*
ž	zh as in *treasure*

---

[196] I have chosen to use the Bosnian form of transliteration according to the frequency of the word used by interlocutors, or if it is presented in a direct quotation by one of my informants. Consequently, not all terms have been ascribed a Bosnian transliteration. This follows the standard ethnographic convention of staying close to the local language. When necessary, the Anglicized version of the transliteration has been included in parenthesis to assist the reader to identify the words. The development of this glossary is based on the following sources: (Škaljić 1973; Renard 2015; Netton 2010; Renard 2009; Skok 1972; Sulamī 2010).

ahlak (akhlāq) – good character, morals

alim (ʿālim) – learned man, scholar

arif (ʿārif) – a gnostic, someone who has realised God, he who possesses true knowledge

ašik (from ʿishq) – lover of God

ashura – the tenth day of Muḥarram commemorating the martyrdom of Hussein

batin (bāṭin) – the interior

bejat (bayʿa) – initiation, oath, bond, swearing of allegiance to a Shaikh's every command

bejtul makdis (bayt al-maqdis) – the site of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, from which Muhammad traditionally ascended into heaven during his "Night Journey"

bereket (baraka) – blessing, spiritual power

čehra – face, physiognomy

ćulah – a wool hat, often worn by Sufis

ders – teaching, lecture, instruction

derviš (dervish) – from Persian, a term denoting individual Sufis that may or may not be members of a Sufi Order

destur – permission, permit; giving a user authorization to access a particular resource

dhikr – recollection, invocation, remembrance, communal prayer ceremony

dova (duʿā') – personal prayer (to God), supplication

dunja – the material, passing world

džemat (jamāʿa) – group, community, congregation gathering for prayer

(para)džemat – The term was coined by the IC. *Paradžemats* are not within the jurisdiction of the IC. The prefix "para" is used to refer to illicit institutions that are in opposition to the IC

and can include Sufi groups, Wahhabis and others. By using this syntagm, the IC associates a pejorative meaning with these places of worship, and defines them as problematic

džennet (jannah) – lit. garden, heaven, paradise

džehri dhikr (jahri dhikr) – loud dhikr

edeb (adab) – proper moral conduct and upbringing, etiquette

evlija (awliyā') – friend of God, saint

evlad ('awlād) – children

fena (fanā') – annihilation, complete awareness of God

hajdarija – a cloak worn by dervishes

hal (ḥāl) – spiritual state, generally as a result of God's gift

halka (ḥalqa) – the Sufi circle during the *dhikr*; group of dervishes who associate themselves
            as followers of a particular Shaikh

himmet (himma) – resolution, determination, spiritual aspiration and fervor

hanika (khānāqah) – Sufi residential facility for prayer and other activities

ḥaqīqa – truth, divine reality

hizmet – service, servanthood

hizmećar – servant, server, attendant

ibadet (ʿibāda) – worship, devotion, ritual prayers, fasting and other good deeds

ibn al-waqt – a person who understands the times they live in and adapts accordingly

idžaza (ijāzah) – license conferring authority upon the Shaikh of an Order

ihlas (ikhlāṣ) – sincerity, uprightness

ihsan (iḥsān) – the doing of good for the good itself

ilahije – religious songs

ʿilm – intellectual, rational knowledge

isrā' – the night journey of the Prophet Muhammad, prior to Ascension

kasida (qaṣīdah) – religious songs in poetic form

keramet (karāmat) – miracle, wonder

kashf – unveiling, supernatural access to spiritual realities

marifet (maʿrifa) – mystical knowing that is beyond acquired knowledge through learning, the faculty of attaining such knowledge is often the heart

mekam (maqām) – station on the path to God, generally as a result of personal striving

mehabbet – an intimate conversation, love

mejt – dead, dead person

mevlud (mawlid) – festival celebrating the birth of the Prophet Muhammed

miʿrāj – the ascension of the prophet Muhammad

mubarek – blessed

mudžiza (muʿjiza) – miracle, display of power

murid (murīd) – someone who has committed himself to a Shaikh, a disciple, an initiate, a dervish

muršid (murshid) – a special spiritual guide who has been divinely sanctioned to lead others, synonym for Shaikh

nafilla (nafl prayer) – supererogatory, non-obligatory prayer

namaz – Persian for ritual prayer, predominantly used in Bosnia

nefs (nafs) – self, the soul, the lower soul, the ego

pir (pīr) – elder, spiritual director, the founder of a Sufi Order

qalb – the heart

rabita (rābiṭa) – heart connection, binding one's heart with the heart of the Shaikh

raqṣ – sacred dance

rijaset – executive body of the Islamic Community in Bosnia

ruja (ru'yā) – inward vision

sālik – a traveller who follows the spiritual path, wayfarer

samā – mystical concert and dance

sebur (ṣabr) – patience

šebi arus – the celebration of Rumi's death, also known as his "wedding day"

šerbe (sherbet) – a flavored sweet drink

shariʿā – the revealed law of Islam

sevap (ṯawāb) – divine reward

sergija – collection for a need, collection box

silsila – chain of spiritual succession, Sufi genealogy

sirr – secret

sufija (ṣūfī) – Sufi, mystic

tarikat (tarīqah) – a way, or path in Sufism, Sufi Order

tawajjuh – turning one's face and full concentration toward God, often done by visualizing the face of the Shaikh during the *dhikr*

tawba – repentance, seeking forgiveness

tekija (tekke) – a Sufi lodge

teslimijet – obedience, absolute surrender

tevhid (tawḥīd) – the profession of the Oneness of God, union with the Divine where a person can disappears in God

usul (usūl) – the root, foundation, source of a tradition, principles

uwaysī – initiation without the physical or temporal presence of a Shaikh

vakuf (waqf) – pious, charitable endowment of property or other goods

vilajet (wilāya) – authority to rule, domain of power

vird (wird) – prayer litany, daily recitations, often bestowed after initiation

waḥdat ash-shuhūd – unity of witnessing; experiential unity with God

waḥdat al-wujūd – unity of being; ontological oneness with God

zāwiya – complex dedicated to Sufi activities, small residence for a Shaikh

zahir (zāhir) – the exterior, outer

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Interview Sources: For a detailed explanation see appendix A and B
   a. Primary Interviews in Appendix A
   b. Secondary Interviews in Appendix B
2. Field Notes: For a detailed explanation see Appendix C
3. Textual Sources:

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