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# Ibn Arabi, Malami-Bayrami Dervish Order and the 17th Century Ottoman Balkans

İbn Arabî, Melamî-Bayrâmî Tarikatı ve 17 Yüzyılda Osmanlı Balkanları

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#### **Abstract**

The controversy concerning the spiritual legacy of Muhy al-din ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240) in the intellectual life of the Ottoman Empire reached its peak in the first decades of the 17th century. It is only natural that the most important protagonists in the related discourse were members of dervish orders whose teachings were more deeply influenced by the work of the magister magnus, Halwati and Bayrami in particular. The same years also witnessed an endeavour on the part of Malami-Bayrami order to be reconciled with the state authorities and the orthodox ulema, and to regain its prestige which had been seriously imperilled by a chain of trials and eventual persecution of its heterodox protagonists Isma'il Ma'shuqi (d. 1538), Husam al-din Anqarawi (d. 1557), and lastly Malami qutb Hamza Bali (d. 1573) and his Bosnian followers. Especially active were two Balkan murids of Hamza Bali's successor Hasan Qabaduz (d. 1601): Husayn Lamakani (d. 1625), and 'Abd Allah Bosnawi (d. 1644). The latter was the most fervent defender of Ibn 'Arabi and apologist of wahdat al-wujud among his Ottoman contemporaries, and was generally known as commentator of Ibn 'Arabi's magnum opus Fusus al-Hikam.

Keywords: Ibn Arabi, Sufism, Ottoman, Balkans, Malami-Bayrami.

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### Öz

Muhyuddîn ibn 'Arabi'nin (ö. 1240) Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun entelektüel hayatında bıraktığı manevi mirası üzerine tartışmalar 17. yüzyılın ilk on yılında zirveye ulaşmıştır. İbn-i Arabi'nin öğretilerinde, Şeyh-i Ekber'in eserinin en fazla etki bıraktığı tarikatların (özellikle Halvetî ve Bayrâmî) üyelerinin, ilgili diyalogda en önde gelenler arasında olmaları gayet doğaldır.

Söz konusu dönem Melamî-Bayramî tarikatının devlet otoritesi ve ulema ile barışma teşebbüsüne denk gelmekteydi. Adı geçen tarikatın itibar kazanmasında Hamza Bali'nin halifesi Hasan Kabaduz (ö. 1601)'un Balkan asıllı müritleri olan Hüseyin Lamekanı (ö. 1625) ve Abdüllah Bosnevi (ö. 1644) önemi büyüktür. Ibn 'Arabi'nin Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki çağdaşları arasında vahdet-i vücûdun en önemli savunuculardan sayılan Abdüllah Bosnevî, İbnü 'I-Arebî'nin başyapıtı Fusûsu'I-Hikem'ın şarihi olarak alelumum ün kazanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İbnü'l-Arebî, Tasavvuf, Osmanlı, Balkanlar, Melami-Bayrami.

The question of legitimacy of the theosophical teachings of the great Andalusian mystic Muhy aldin ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240) and scepticism concerning its conformity with the Islamic orthodoxy had been raised very early, and it led to a warm dispute between its supporters and opponents already in the Great Master's lifetime. The closeness between the Deity and the human as conceived in wahdat al-wujud sounded as blasphemy.

The formal organisation and the establishing of the corpus of mystical teachings of the biggest dervish orders in the Ottoman Empire coincide either with the period of the raise and expansion of the state (as Halwati, Bayrami, Naqshbandi, Baktashi) or with the period immediately preceding it (Qadiri, Mawlawi), so the sufism in the early Ottoman state had been already influenced by the teachings of the great Andalusian. Wahdat al-wujud had its propagators among the state authorities and the religious intellectuals, as well as dissidents. Good examples were Dawud al-Qaysari (d. 1350), renowned scholar and lecturer at the first madrasa in Iznik, who wrote the first Ottoman commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Davud-i Qaysari, 1300 h., 2015), or Badr al-din Simawi (d. 1420), author of the controversial Waridat (Dindar, 1975), deeply under Ibn 'Arabi's influence. The authors like Yigitbashi Wali (d. 1504-5), Jamal al-din Ishaq Qaramani (d. 1526-7), Nur al-din-zade (d. 1574), Sheikh Uftade (d. 1580) in their writings conveyed their devotion to the work of the magister magnus. Although confined to a narrow circle of highly distinguished intellectuals who could read Arabic and understand hermetic language of the great mystic, the debate pro et contra Ibn 'Arabi continued.

The dispute pro et contra Ibn 'Arabi took a new dimension at the beginning of the 17th century instigated by the religious zeal of Mehmed Qadi-zade (d. 1635), a student of religious conservative Mehmed Birgiwi (d. 1573), who denounced some "novelties" like consumption of coffee and tobacco, and persuaded Murad IV (d. 1640) to take cruel measures to suppress them. Targeted were also some extreme ritual practices of certain dervish brotherhoods, notably body-mortification of Rufa'is and dawran (standing dhikr) of Halwatis. On the other side of the polemic were Halwati sheikh 'Abd al-Majid Siwasi (d. 1639) and his disciples. Katib Chelebi (d. 1657), a contemporary, in his Mizan al-Haq fi Ihtiyar al-Ahaqq (2008) lists sixteen points of conflict. The most discussed issues were usage of coffee and tobacco, cult of saints, utilization of music and dance in religious ceremonies etc., but also two questions concerning Ibn 'Arabi and his adherents: an unclear issue regarding the faith and post-mortem destiny of the Pharaoh (Ernst, 1985) and, surely more serious, should Ibn 'Arabi be regarded as unbeliever i.e. apostate. Eventually, ideological dispute turned to public unrest. The fundamentalists tried an attack on

dervish convents in 1656 and had prepared a general massacre. The new grand vizier Kopruli Mehmed (d. 1661) calmed down the situation exiling leaders of the conservatives.

Surely, the struggle had also an important social dimension. Faqi(h)s, as the conservatives were called by the populace, had found support mainly from poor madrasa students and tradesmen, also by the provincial second rate religious intelligentsia aspired to positions of preacher in big Istanbul mosques, occupied by influential, predominantly Halwati sheikhs who enjoyed sultans favour. Both sides kept supporting their positions writing treatises and epistles. Mehmed Ustuvani (d. 1661) wrote a treatise condemning raqs and sama (Kitâb-ı Üstüvânî 1802). Ibrahim Halabi's (d. 1549) attitude towards Ibn 'Arabi is clearly visible from the title of his book: Tesfih al-gabi fi tanzih Ibn 'Arabi / Exposing the Stupidity of Vindicating Ibn 'Arabi. (Ms. Süleymaniye Ktp., Reşid Efendi, nr. 1437/13)

The response came chiefly from Halwati and Bayrami circles. So the mentioned 'Abd al-Majid Siwasi defended sama in 2 works: Bida'at al-va'izin (Ms. Süleymaniye Ktp., Kılıç Ali Paşa, nr. 1032/2), and Leta'if al-Azhar wa Laza'iz al-Asmar (Ms. Süleymaniye Ktp., Mihrişah Sultan, nr. 255). Aziz Mahmud Hudayi (d. 1628) (Mektûbât, Ms. Süleymaniye Ktp., Fâtih, nr. 2572) and Husayn Lamakani (d. 1625) (Ilić, 1999) sent letters to the mufti of Belgrade Muniri Belgradi (d. 1635) claiming that the practice was strictly in keeping with the orthodox Shari'a. The both epistles were widely distributed. They cited supporting examples from Islamic thinkers like Gazzali, Suhrawardi, Ibn Farid and Mawlana Jalal al-din and a confirmed hadith maintaining that the Prophet had approved the dance of the Ethiopian tribes and had even participated in it, together with Lady 'Aisha. Here is also involved the question of terminology. The accusers generally used a derogatory word raqs stressing its profane appearance. The defenders consistently used the word dawran.

Shaykh al-Islams as highest authorities in religious affairs were giving a vague approval of Ibn 'Arabis teachings, especially after de facto official confering the honor to Shaykh al-Akbar by Selim I (d. 1520) upon the conquest of Damascus. So Ibn-i Kamal (d. 1534) issued a fatwa condemning the lack of respect to Ibn 'Arabi (Atay, 1986). Abu Su'ud (d. 1574) rejected good part of accusations against Ibn 'Arabi offering a bizarre explanation that some heretical ideas were later interpolated by a malevolent Jew (Tek, 2008). Because of his deep animosity towards sufism and particularly Ibn 'Arabi and Mawlana, Muhy al-din Mehmed Chivi-zade (d. 1547) was dismissed from the position of shaykh al-Islam in 1539. However, all mentioned scholars were unified in condemnation of sama. Ibn-i Kemal wrote a treatise proving its blasphemy: Risalat fi Tahqiq al-Raqs, and a related fatwa was issued also by Abu Su'ud. Mehmed Wani (d. 1685) explicitly prohibited the practise.

Some of the most enthusiastic supporters of Ibn 'Arabi were of Balkan origin. The most important were Halwatis Sofyalı Bali Efendi and 'Ali Dede Bosnawi, Bayramis Husayn Lamakani and 'Abdullah Bosnawi.

Shaykh Bali Efendi from Sofia (d. 1553) was born in Strumica in Macedonia and according to Evliya Chelebi (Book III) belonged to a Yörük tribe, and to the family of the Prophet. At list one of two claims is highly dubious. After finishing his studies he entered the service of Qasim Efendi, shaykh of 'Ali Pasha convent in Istanbul. Induced by his murshid and a dream in which Ibn 'Arabi himself asked Bali to compose a commentary on Fusus al-Hikam, Bali Efendi wrote his most important work: Sharh al-Fusus (Bâlî Efendi, Şerhu'l-Fusûs, İstanbul 1309, s. 395). After spending a time as shaykh of Zeyrek dervish convent in Istanbul, he moved to Sofia where he died. He played an important role in spreading Halwatism in the Balkans.

However, among his works the one which was the most widely distributed was his treatise on atwār-i sab'a (latent realities). The tractate was published on several occations in Turkey. The

concept is cornerstone of the wahdat al-wujud ontology, the latent realities (al-  $a \Box y \hat{a} n$  al-thābita), being the second stage of emanation (al-  $ta \Box ayyun$  al-thānī) from God's divine unity (wahdat), the realities hidden in God's primordial knowledge of the potentialities i.e. the non-existing ( $ma \Box d\bar{u} m$ ) matrix for the world of existence (mawjūd), roughly comparable with Plotinus' primordial logos or upper stage of the anima mundi.

Sofyalı Bali raised the famous sufi Muslih al-din Nur al-din-zade of Plovdiv (d. 1573) whose halifa was 'Ala al-din 'Ali Dede ibn Mustafa al-Bosnawi (d. 1598), born probably in Mostar or Nevesinje in Herzegovina. After completing his studies in Mostar and Istanbul, he entered the Halwati order. On return from pilgrimage he settled as shaykh of the convent erected by mausoleum of Sulayman Qanuni in Szigetvar, hence his pseudonym Shaykh-i Turbe or al-Sigatwari. In the same city he died. 'Ali Dede wrote more then 10 mystical treatises, the most important being Muhadarat al-Awai'l wa Musamarat al-Awakhir, a work of historiographic and astrological character. (1310 h.) Another work, Hawatim al-Hikam, is composed of 360 questions and answers, for every day in year, in the field of tasawwuf, Islamic law and dogma. Ibn 'Arabi is quoted almost on every page. The work was printed in Cairo in 1896. (Kahire 1314). On the Ibn 'Arabi's concept of insan al-kamil is based his treatise Risala fi Bayan Rijal al-Ghayb (Kasumović, 1981). A PhD thesis on his mystical work was defended at Sarajevo University (Kasumović, 1987).

The supporters of wahdat al-wujud par excellence were the members of Malami branch of the Bayrami dervish order which owes its existence due to the split made by a group related to 'Ömer Dede Sikkini (d. 1475) which seceded from the main orthodox stream of Aq Shams al-din (d. 1459), after the death of Haji Bayram-i Veli in 1430.

The beginning of the 17th century and the dispute between the Qadizade and Siwasi factions coincides with the time when Malami-Bayrami order made efforts to be reconciled with the state authorities and the orthodox 'ulama and to try to regain its prestige seriously imperilled by a chain of trials and eventual persecutions of its heterodox protagonists Ismail-i Mashuqi (d. 1538), Husam al-din Anqarawi (d. 1557), and most recently Malami qutb Hamza Bali (d. 1573) and his Bosnian followers. It was particularly true for the time of Hasan Qabaduz from Bursa, another halifa of Husam al-din Ankarawi who inherited the honour of qutb after Bosnalı Hamza Bali and before Idris-i Mukhtafi (d. 1615). Qabaduz had no charisma of his predecessor nor of his succesor but saved heads of his dervishes, as well as his own. He has left no written works, Mustaqim-zade in his Risala-yi Malamiyya-i Shuttariyya mentions him in few words (Tek, 2007), La'li-zade in Sarguzasht (Lalizade 2001) does not mention him at all.

He had, however, raised two important disciples who were also on the line of shari'a and regained respect to the order. The first one, Lamakani, among his murids had very important personalities like grand vizier Farhad Pasha (d. 1595) or Bosnian governor Kurshunjuzada Mustafa Pasha (d. 1636). The second one was 'Abd Allah al-Bosnawi (d. 1644), known also as Sharih al-Fusus.

'Abd Allah al-Bosnawi maintained a friendly relationship with 'Abd al-Majid Siwasi, he even wrote a 60 pages long commentary on one his qasida, and, according to Sarı 'Abd Allah (d. 1660) in his Jawharat al-Bidaya wa Durrat al-Nihaya (Ms. İstanbul Üniversitesi Ktp., TY 3792.) claims that 'Abd Allah was also his murid. During the same period Lamakani was in friendly correspondence with Idris-i Mukhtafi, obviously knowing his hidden identity (Ilić, 1999).

We do not possess too much information regarding Husayn Lamakani, except his birthplace, Budapest, and that after completing his studies, probably in Istanbul, he entered the Bayrami order and has spent almost whole life in Istanbul, as shaykh of the tekke in the courtyard of Shah Sultan Mosque in Davud Pasha, Istanbul. Wahdat al-wujud is the central theme both of his

Diwan, published in 1999, and of his 5 short treatises and a long poem. It is visible also from the titles: Insan-i Kamil, Risala-i Wahdat, Etvar-i Sab'a etc. (Ilić, 1999)

In his treatise on divine love entitled simply Risale-i tasavvuf Lamakani depicts both love and piety as a simple physical principle of mutual attraction between a part and the whole.

"The essence of all existing (ashyā□) is the creative love (tawajjuh-i ījādī), and the word of creation, "be" (kun) is its expression. The words "I was the hidden treasure and I wanted to be known so I created the world" (Kuntu kanzan mahfiyyan fa-ahbabtu an uʻrafa fa-khalaqtu al-khalqa) are aiming at this. Love is the reason for the creation. And the source of love is Allah. Know that the source of all loves is this self creating attraction. There could be no love between two persons if they do not share unity in their essence, their state, or their attributes. The expression of the attraction to the part are Allah's words 'He loves them' (yuhibbu-hum). The attraction from the side of the part is expressed in words 'they love Him' (yuhibbūna-hu). This means that the Essential Beauty was attracted to its own beauteousness as a whole and with all its elements. The world is a mirror in which the Owner-of-all-Beauty could look and see Himself." (Ms. Biblioteca Vaticana, Vat. Turco 335, f. 8b)

Husayn Lamakani was famous for his 'wise letters' (makātīb-i □ārifāna) adressed to other sheikhs or some of his murids. In the letter written to his murid Qurshunjibashı-zāde Mustafa Pasha (d. 1636/7), who was 4 times appointed the governor of Bosnia, Lamakani interprets the Koranic verse 'Those who overcome anger and forgive the people. And God likes benefactors.' (III, 134) Lamakani teaches about necessity of forgiveness and overcoming the anger. A man has no right of revenge, since God is the only one who is unerring and hence the only who can judge.

"Paticularly in the moments of anger it is necessary to restrain yourself and say 'La hawla wa la quwwata illā billāh" and talk as gently as possible. For, is it not possible that the person whom we will reproach stays by God on a higher rank than we do? Even if somebody offends us we have to hold ourselves back from hatred and hostility, in accord with the Koranic verses 'those who forgive the people' (wa 'afin 'an al-nās'), just as did the Lion of God, the head of the believers Ali b. Abu al-Talib, who even his murdered did not treated as enemy, and even promised to enter the paradise togeher with him." (Ms. Sarajevo, Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 3049, f. 15a)

In another letter written to vizier Ferhad Pasha, serdar of Iran, who twice ascended the honour of sadrazam in the reign of Murat III and Mehmed III, Lamakani guides his disciple to what he should do to gain God's favor and learn his place by Him. He quotes the hadith 'The one who wants to learn his place by Allah, should learn the place of Allah by him' (Man arāda an ya = lam manzilata-hu 'ind Allah fa-ya = lam manzilat Allah da-hu).

In the man God likes only His own features, His own words, and His own deeds i.e. God likes only Himself. The man has to purify himself from all attributes which do not belong to the Lord. In his words one has to follow the words of the revelation, in his deeds to submit himself completely to Gods' will.

"Now my dear, to learn one's place and rank by God means to avoid act, speech and features which God dislikes and does not want. You say, I am a slave of God and I love Him. Which words, deeds and attributes you have got rid of, for His love's sake. In regard for what you gave up, you measure your rank by God. You ask me which of our features God dislikes? God does not like words, deeds, and attributes but His own and likes nobody except Himself. Therefore the messenger of God said: Allah likes only Himself (La yuhibb Allahu gayra Allah.)" (Ms. Istanbul, Süleymaniye ktp., Halet Ef. 800, f. 140a)

Having in mind the atmosphere of religious intolerance towards the heterodox dervish orders and unorthodox practices in frame of religious ceremonies, it is easy to understand why the most popular among Lamakani's letters was an epistle written to Ibrahim b. Iskender Muniri Belgradi,

Halwati sheikh and a prominent theologian of his time who died in the reign of Ahmed I (1603-1617). The letter is actually a response to Muniri's letter in which he condemns rags and sama.

"Indeed, in our tariqat there are no music and dance, but many worthy men of God, and perfect sheikhs come together and perform sama and dawran. Many respectable and learned men attend such rituals and not only that they did not forbid them, but they also enjoyed themselves in listening to music and in being attracted by the divine attraction. Following their example, we also do not prohibit such rites. The messenger of God also did not consider it appropriate to condemn the dance of an Abyssinian tribe, and watched it together with Lady Aische. It is testified thahe did not oppose even when some of ashabs got up and joined the dance." (Ms. Istanbul, Millet ktp., Emiri Şer'iyye 1051)

The most fervent defender of Ibn 'Arabi and justificator of wahdat al-wujud among his Ottoman contemporaries was 'Abd Allah 'Abdi ibn Muhammad al-Bosnawi, born in 992 (1584). Safvet-beg Bašagić (Bašagić, 1912) knows that his birthplace was Livno in Herzegovina, but he does not cite the source. He also wrongly identifies 'Abd Allah Bosnawi as a mystical poet called Gaibi. The mistake was transmitted by several researchers, most recently by Abdullah Kartal (Kartal, 1994), and Christopher Shelley (Shelley, 1995). After finishing his studies in Bosnia and Istanbul, 'Abd Allah moved to Bursa where entered the Bayrami-Malami order and became murid of Hasan Qabaduz. Later traveled to Egypt and Mecca, where contributed to the expansion of the order in the East. On return from the pilgrimage he has spent a period by the grave of Ibn 'Arabi in Damascus. Later he settled in Konya where died in 1644 and was buried next to Sadr al-Din Kunawi (d. 1274), Ibn 'Arabi's stepson.

'Abd Allah al-Bosnavî was a prolific writer. According to Mehmed Tahir (Tahir, 1333 h.) he left behind more than 60 titles, mostly short treatises on different mystical issues, commentaries on Koranic verses, or citations from Islamic tradition, even some verses. However, the work which acquired him an outstanding reputation was his commentary on the Ibn 'Arabi's magnum opus Fusus al-Hikam, named Tajalliyat 'Ara'is al-Nusus fi Manassat Hikam al-Fusus (Lifting the Veil from the Brides of the Divine revelation on the Sublime Thrones of Wisdom) written in Turkish and later translated by the author himself in Arabic. The Turkish version has been translated in English 1991 by Bülent Rauf, but wrongly ascribed to Ismail Haqqi al-Bursawi (Ismail Haqqi Bursevi, 1986-1991). The Arabic version was recently translated in Bosnian by Rešad Hafizović (Abdulah-efendija Bošnjak, 2011).

Abdullah Kartal (Kartal 1994) counts, together with Commentary on Fusus and its translation altogether 68 works ascribed to 'Abd Allah al-Bosnawi, which he tentatively groups in 4 categories: 27 from the field of tasawwuf, 23 from tafsir, 11 from the field of literature, and 7 others. Some of treatises are very short and obviously being hashiyyas (marginal notes) on some of his own works, where the author felt a need for further explanation.

As one can expected, all his epistles are concerned with the elaboration of Ibn 'Arabi's metaphysics of the divine Essence and the divine Existence, the teaching of two universes, one being the Universe of Absolute Non-Existence (\$\subseteq\$ālam al-ghayb al-mutlaq\$), unreachable and uncomprehensible, the second being the Universe of the Visible (\$\subseteq\$ālam al-shahāda\$), the world which could be witnessed and felt, through the notions of time and place, both connected with the endless line of degrees of self-disclosing Deity.

In spite of the rich spiritual heritage of Ottoman Bosnia inspired by the work and life of the great mystic, the related field appears to be still not adequately researched. I sincerely hope that the newly awaken and still growing interest in Ibn 'Arabi and in sufism in general, both in Turkey and in the West, will draw more attention to the topic, and encourage new research's.

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