

Reflections

The Arabic Cultural Influence on the Balkans: An Outline

Enes Karic

The Case

It was with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation from Dr. Yahya Mahmud bin Junayd and Dr. Awadh al-Badi to be with you today. I am very happy to be able to speak to you on this special occasion about an important and very large topic: the Arabic cultural influence on the Balkans. I am particularly glad to be speaking on this theme in the hall of this eminent institute, the King Faisal Centre for Islamic Studies and Research.

I will begin by saying that I shall not deal at length with either the history or the geography of the Balkans, for I am justified in assuming that the audience I am addressing today is familiar with these, at least in outline. I shall therefore proceed at once to the topic itself.

Arabic and Islamic influences began to reach the Balkan peninsula well before the Turks and the start of Ottoman imperial rule in the fifteenth century. Museums throughout the Balkans still contain items from the period of the first contacts of the Balkan peoples with the Arabs of Sicily, southern Italy, and al-Andalus. We thus find Arabic utensils, for example the *ibrig*,¹ which we also call *ibrik*, with exactly the same meaning in Bosnian as in Arabic. It is the same in the Serbian and Croatian languages, too.

The archives of Dubrovnik contain a large collection of Arabic manuscripts that show clearly what kind of goods were traded between Arab traders and those of the Balkans over many centuries. But Arab traders did not only bring with them Arabic customs, books, items, ideas, and principles; the Slavs themselves, who served first in the military with the Arabs

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of al-Andalus and then with those of Sicily and southern Italy, also spread the influence of Arabic culture throughout the Balkans.

Trading contacts were made mainly through the seaports, and it was by these routes that cultural influences also spread. For all that, the Arabic cultural influence began to spread more emphatically with the arrival of Islam in the Balkans. Many peoples of the Balkans began gradually to fall within the ambit of the Islamic cultural sphere.

From the fourteenth century onward, the Arabic language, terminology, expressions, literature, and books – in a word all the important dimensions of Arabic and Islamic culture – spread with great rapidity throughout the Balkans. Why was this so? The answer lies primarily in the fact that the Balkans came within a new cultural and civilizational ambit at that time. The Balkan region experienced profound transformations. Many peoples of the Balkans embraced Islam as their faith and their worldview. With the spread of Islam came the spread of Islamic principles, notions, and Arabic words and cultural influences. And together with this transformation of the spiritual life came profound changes in the material life.

Traded goods, military equipment, books, household goods, clothing, types of food, cosmetics, medicines – all of this reached the Balkans not only from Turkey but also from the Arabic East, which is to say, taken as a whole, from the Islamic East. And, all of these goods were known by their Arabic names. To this day we have thousands of Arabic words and terms relating to science, faith, literature, trade, housing, clothing, cosmetics, medicine, and cookery in the Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, and other languages of the Balkan region.

Thousands of Arabic Words and Expressions

When speaking of the Arabic cultural influence on the Balkans, then, one must begin with Arabic words. Through their contacts with the Arabic East over the centuries, the Balkan peoples adopted thousands of Arabic words and phrases. All of these words and phrases entered the numerous languages of the Balkans and took up permanent residence there. To give you a brief demonstration of this, I invite you to take a brief look in a traditional Muslim house in the Balkans, where the host wants to offer you *ikram*, that is, to welcome you as his guest.

The room where guests sit with the host, with its rich decorations, is known to this day as the *divan*. We have also turned this Arabic word into a verb, *divaniti*, which in Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian means “to enjoy

pleasant conversation” while sitting in the *divan* or some other attractively furnished place. In the traditional Bosnian house, you will usually be served *kahva* and *serbet* (sherbet). We too use the Arabic word *qahwah* (coffee), while we use the Arabic word *sharbah*, in the form *serbet* or *serbe*, to denote a sweetened non-alcoholic drink.

You will see that your host pours the coffee from a *dezva*, which in Bosnian means *jazwah*, the usually copper, narrow-necked utensil in which the coffee is made. After being served with coffee you could ask for *duhan*, and any Bosniac, Serb, or Croat would understand what you mean by this Arabic word for tobacco, and offer you a cigarette. The host might offer you tobacco from his pocket, which in Bosnian is *dzep*, the Arabic *jayb*. It is the same word in Serbian and Croatian too. No other local word is an effective substitute for the word *dzep*.

It is very likely that your host will offer you *halva*, which in Bosnia and throughout the Balkans is a sweetmeat made of wheat dough and oil. Halva comes from the Arabic word *halawah* or *halawiyat*, which also indicates a kind of sweet made of dough and oil. The host will probably bring you the *halva* in a dish known in Bosnia as a *sahan*, which is, of course, an Arabic word.

If you look around the rooms of your Bosnian host, you will notice many a *sedzada*. Thus we in Bosnia, too, use the word *sajjadah* for a prayer mat, and the word has become completely naturalized here.

Taking a stroll around Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina, you will even find streets with Arabic names. For example, Mudzeliti mali and Mudzeliti veliki are two streets in the centre of Sarajevo that acquired their name from bookbinders, and we in Bosnia often call a bookbinder *mudzelid*, from the Arabic *mujallid*. Sarajevo is, of course, full of shops, which we call *ducan*, from the Arabic word *dukkan*. The city is also full of small streets, which we call sokak in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. This, of course, is *zuqaq*, a word that one hears every day in Arabic. The word *dzada*, too, is very much present in the Bosnian and Serbian languages; it would be hard to find anyone in Bosnia, Serbia, or Montenegro who did not know that this Arabic word, *jaddah*, means road.

In addition to all of this, the entire Balkans is full of place names (toponyms) of Arabic origin. For example, if you travel west from Sarajevo, you soon come upon an attractive town called Ilidza. It acquired its name from its curative mineral springs. The people recognized that the water had healing properties (*iladz*, in Arabic *‘ilaj*), and gave the place the

name *Ilidza*. Indeed, any source of mineral or curative waters in Bosnia is often liable to be named *ilidza*.

As you travel around Bosnia and Serbia, and indeed in other Balkan countries, you will find numerous military fortresses known as *kule* (sing. *kula*). Here, too, one may recognize an Arabic word: *qal'ah*.² The Arabic word *waqf*, which is *vakuf* in Bosnian, has also become the name of many towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are the towns of Gornji Vakuf (Upper Waqf), Donji Vakuf (Lower Waqf), Kulen Vakuf, and so on. Balkan towns with a Muslim population had a *musala* (Arabic: *musallah*), or place where people prayed *bajram namaz* (the 'Id al-Fitr prayers) together in large congregations or *dzemat* (Arabic: *jama'at*). In Bosnian, *musala* means literally a place of prostration, the place where *namaz* or *salah* is prayed. There is a street in Sarajevo named Musala, where the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina is now located.

It would take us a very long time to enumerate all of the Arabic words that we Bosniacs use every day in the Bosnian language, and which are also used by the Serbs and Croats in their languages. It is relevant to mention that words such as *duhan*, *dzep*, *kahva*, *kana* (henna; Ar. *hinna'*), *kula*, *sedef* (mother of pearl; Ar. *sadaf*), *sifra* (cipher; Ar. *jifr*), *tarifa* (tariff; Ar. *ta'rifah*) have no adequate, let alone accurate, substitute in Bosnian, Serbian, or Croatian. (And speaking of *kna* or *kana*, I must tell you that the Muslim population in the Balkans uses henna on the occasion of traditional weddings. To this day the custom survives of coloring the hair, hands, and feet of the bride with henna. In many places in the Balkans, this is regarded as an "Islamic" custom).

I do not want to linger too long on this subject, but I must just say that Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs continue to this day to use in their everyday speech such Arabic words as *belaj* (trouble, accident; Ar. *bala'*), *dever* (distribution of a deceased's small change to the poor; Ar. *dawr*), *dzelat* (executioner; Ar. *jallad*), *hajvan* (cattle; Ar. *hayawan*), *insan* (human being, man; Ar. *insan*), *musterija* (customer, purchaser; Ar. *mushtari*), *inad* (defiance; Ar. '*inad*), *fajda* (benefit, gain; Ar. *fa'idah*) and so on. All of these are words in which, even when they are not identical to the Arabic, the echo of the Arabic roots are clearly audible.

If we have a road accident, for example, we say "*Imali smo belaj*" – "we've had an accident." If someone behaves improperly, in Bosnia we say to him to this day "*Ponasaj se kao insan, a nemoj biti hajvan*" – "behave like a human being, not like an animal." It is common for shopkeepers and market traders to say "*Danas smo imali mnogo musterija*" –

“we had a lot of customers today,” meaning that they sold plenty of goods.

Some valuable papers and fine dictionaries have been written in this part of the world on Arabic words in the Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian languages.³ One of the best known is the dictionary by Professor Abdulah Skaljic.⁴ He studies the use and number of Arabic, Turkish, and Persian words in Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian with amazing results. It can be said with full justification that there are thousands of Arabic words in these languages. This alone speaks volumes for the major cultural influence of the Arabic language in the Balkans.

According to Skaljic, Arabic words and terminology are to be found in Bosnian in the following fields:

- Religious life and customs (Allah, Islam, *tespih* [rosary; Ar. *tasbih*], *tedzvid* [art of Qur’an recitation according to the correct principles of pronunciation; Ar. *tajwid*], *ramazan*, [Ar. *Ramadan*], *zekat* [obligatory alms; Ar. *zakah*], *hadz* [pilgrimage to Mecca; Ar. *hajj*], *sehadet* [witnessing; Ar. *shahadah*]).
- Personal names (Muhamed, Ahmed, Salih, Hatidza [Khadija], Fatima, Alija [‘Ali] etc). Bosniacs to this day are still almost always given Arabic (i.e., Muslim) names. A glance at Sarajevo’s telephone directory shows that the most common name for men is Muhamed, followed by Alija, Omer, Hasan, and Husejn and so on. Among women, the most common name is Fatima, followed by Hatidza and Aisa
- Law, administration, and affairs of state (*hak* [right, just, true; Ar. *haqq*], *kadija* [judge; Ar. *qadi*], *haps* [prison; Ar. *habs*], sultan, *mutesarif* [regional governor; Ar. *mutasarraf*]).
- Army and military expressions (*asker* [soldier; Ar. ‘*askar*], *kula*, *hendek* [defensive trench; Ar. *khandaq*], *musir* [marshal; Ar. *mushir*]).
- Weapons and other equipment of war (*sablja dimiskija*, a Damascene sword, from Ar. *Dimashq*).
- Architecture, buildings, and building materials (*bina* [building; Ar. *bina’*], *kube* [dome, cupola; Ar. *qubbah*]).
- Trade and money (*musterija*, dinar, dirham).
- Crafts, craftsmen, and tools of their trades (*sat* [clock or watch] and *sahacga* [watchmaker; from Ar. *sa’ah*], *sarac* [leatherworker; Ar. *sarraj*], *cevapcija* [kebab maker, from Ar. *kabab*], *abadzija* [tailor, from Ar. ‘*aba*], *makaze* [scissors; Ar. *maqass*]).

- Vessels, household goods, and related items (*sahan* [copper dish or plate; Ar. *sahn*], *ibrik*, *mastrafa* [drinking glass; Ar. *mishrabah*], *hasura*, *dolap* [shelved wall cupboard; Ar. *dulab*]).
- Clothing, shoes, jewellery, and make-up (*dzuba* [black mantle worn by Islamic religious officials; Ar. *jubbah*], *nanule* [wooden clog; Ar. *na'layn*], *kna*, *surma* [kohl]).
- Food, drink, and spices (*tufahija* [apples cooked in syrup and filled with walnut stuffing; Ar. *tuffahiyah*, from *tuffah*, apple], *halva*, *pasulj* [beans; Ar. *bisillah*, peas], *serbe*, *rakija* [plum or other fruit brandy; Ar. *'araq*], *kadaif* [sweetmeat of fine vermicelli-like threads in syrup; Ar. *qataif*]).
- Names of animals (*bulbul* [nightingale], *hudhud* [hoopoe], *akreb* [scorpion; Ar. *'aqrab*], *zirafa* [giraffe]).

According to Skaljic, Teufik Muftic, and others who have researched this field, there are also many words in the Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian languages that relate to the following fields: geographical and topographical terms, and streets; agriculture, forestry, and stock-raising; hunting; medicine and hygiene; astronomy; music and games; civic titles, social class, occupations, and professions; the names of parts of the human and animal body; colors; scents; metals, minerals, and chemical elements; fabrics, embroidery, and thread; types of leather; means of transport; family relationships; nature and natural phenomena; time and the calendar; and abstract and other nouns.

It is hardly necessary to mention that educated people in the Balkans who are, for example, expert in astronomy know perfectly well that the words *el ferkad* (two bright stars of Ursa Minor; Ar. *al-farqad*), *el-diedj* (the North Star; Ar. *al-jadi*), and *elakreb* (Scorpio) are in fact words of Arabic origin used in astronomy to name stars or constellations.⁵ As this example shows, we in Europe read the skies in large part through the medium of the Arabic words that are used for astronomical conceptual instruments.

The Distribution of the Arabic Alphabet in the Balkans

After this general reference to the large number of Arabic words and terms in Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian (observations which hold good in large part for Macedonian, Bulgarian, and certain other Balkan languages as well), permit me to make the claim that all of these terms, for the most

part, arrived as a result of the spread of literacy by means of the Arabic language and alphabet.

During the past 5 or 6 centuries, the Bosniacs have written thousands of treatises and books in Arabic, of which hundreds still survive in good condition. I should like to remind you that members of the Bosnian ulama and religious people in general, as well as poets, mystics, and members of the administration as a whole, for centuries used only Arabic, Turkish, and Persian when speaking or writing about Islam. Our libraries, in particular the Gazi Husrev Bey library, are full of valuable manuscripts written in these languages, many of them by Bosniacs. This superb cultural wealth is evidence that Bosnia and the Balkans were, and still are, part of the literary and scientific patterns of the Islamic East from its mature period.

Professor Hazim Sabanovic has published a major encyclopedic work on the Bosniacs who wrote treaties on philosophy, theology, mysticism, and other subjects in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, or whose poetry was sung in these languages.⁶ These works, of which the majority are in Arabic, deal mainly with *tafsir*, *hadith*, theology, grammar, syntax, semantics, poetry, prose, history, *tasawwuf* [Sufism], and other topics.

Thus, we in Bosnia and in the Balkans have long been familiar with the Arabic alphabet and language, and still to this day have specialists in all fields of Arabic and Islamic studies. These specialists understand spoken or written Arabic. To say this is, of course, nothing new. Calligraphy in the Arabic alphabet is certainly very dear to us. Hundreds of thousands of Muslim houses in the Balkans have at least one *levha* with fine arabesques adorning the white walls.

What is perhaps not so well known to you here is that we in Bosnia also used the Arabic alphabet in writing books in our own Bosnian language. This dates from the early twentieth century. Our religious leader, Mhemed Dzermaludin Causevic (1870-1938), one of our greatest scholars during the Austro-Hungarian period, commissioned one of his friends, a printer named Agof Effendi Zeronian, to cast Arabic letters and make special letters for the letters that exist in the Bosnian but not in the Arabic language, such as P, p, , , C, C, Lj, and so on.

This script is known in Bosnia as *arebica*, and was used in printing a large number of religious books, such as primers of the Islamic faith (*akaid* [Ar. 'aqā'id]). Causevic intended thereby to overcome the crisis that had arisen in our Muslim society with the coming of Austro-Hungarian rule and the Latin script, to which the Austro-Hungarians accorded preferential treat-

ment. Causevic took this step in hopes of saving the Arabic script and using it for written works in Bosnian.

The Arabic alphabet spread in Bosnia and the wider Balkans very rapidly, thanks above all to the Qur'an. For centuries, children learned the Arabic alphabet in the *maktabs* of the Balkans so as to be able to read and recite the Qur'an.

I must pause here to recall that the title of this talk today is the *Arabic* cultural influence on the Balkans, and not the *Islamic* cultural influence. Despite this, I must say something about translations of the Qur'an into Bosnian and Serbian, although translation of the Qur'an is in itself a major subject requiring a separate lecture.

The first, and so far the only, translation of the Qur'an into Serbian was made by the Serbian priest Mico Ljubibratic. The translation was published in Belgrade in 1895 (without the original Qur'anic text). The first translation of the Qur'an into Bosnian was made by Causevic and Hafiz Muhamed Pandza, and was published in Sarajevo in 1937 along with the original Qur'anic text. That same year, but in Mostar, a translation of the Qur'an by Ali Riza Karabeg was published (without the Arabic text of the Qur'an).

Subsequently, in 1975, yet another translation of the Qur'an into Bosnian was completed, this time by the pen of Besim Korkut, and published by the Oriental Institute. Another two translations of the Qur'an into Bosnian have since appeared: one by the engineer Mustafa Mlivo (1995) and one by myself (1995), which is a great honor for me.⁷ Once again, I must emphasize that the topic of Qur'an translations in the Balkans, like that of Islamic studies in the Balkans, requires a separate lecture.

Now, to return to Arabic literature and its influence in the Balkans.

The Influence of Arabic Literature

From the very start of the closer cultural encounter, Arabic had its own ardent protagonists in Bosnia and the wider Balkans. In addition, Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs have been mastering the Arabic language and writing Arabic dictionaries and grammars for centuries. If we confine ourselves only to more modern times and to brief dictionary-style references, we shall note that many scholars included among their works Arabic grammars of great merit. Among them, special mention should be made of the following professors: Alija Kadic, Alija Bulic, Sacir Sikiric, Mehmed Handzic, Muhamed Pasic, Besim Korkut, Teufik Muftic, Rade Bozovic, and Omer Nakicevic.

The name of Teufik Muftić stands out among Bosnian Arabists for his numerous contributions to the study of Arabic, and in particular because of his comprehensive textbook of Arabic grammar and monumental Arabic-Bosnian dictionary. The first edition of this work was published in Sarajevo in 1973, with the title *Arapsko-srpskohrvatski rječnik* (Arabic-Serbocroatian Dictionary).

From the very first encounters of the Balkans with the Arabic cultural universe, Arabic poetry has occupied a high place among the poetry of the world that was studied in this region. Where pre-Islamic Arabic literature is concerned, the *Seven Mu‘allaqat*⁸ is particularly popular in Bosnia, and has often been published in excerpts and parts. The most recent translation is that of Dr. Esad Duraković (pending from the press). The epic poem on Antara is also well known in Bosnia, and has several times been the subject of comment within the context of broader literary treatises. Arabic poetry from the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid periods has also been translated into Bosnian and Serbian.

As regards Islamic poetry in Arabic, the influence of Ka‘b bin Zuhayr’s *Qasidai Burda* has been particularly marked. This *qasidah* has often been translated into Bosnian in part or in whole. Hifzija Suljkić has translated early Islamic *qasa’id*, as has Dr. Jusuf Ramić, who has also written a long treatise on the *qasidah* as a genre.⁹ The *Qasidai Burda* is often recited in Arabic in Bosnia. It is hardly necessary to mention that we in Bosnia are very familiar also with the *qasa’id* of Hassan ibn Sabit, Ibn al-Mu‘azza, and many other Arab poets. These *qasa’id* are often recited, usually in part only, during the Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and other formal occasions.

I must note particularly here that under the influence of the Arabic *qasidah* and *ilahiyah*, there emerged here in the Balkans our own home-grown *qasa’id* and *ilahiyas* in Bosnian and Albanian. The topics of our local *qasa’id* are the faith, Prophet Muhammed, the value of piety, the meaning of life and death, the transience of this world, and similar topics. The *ilahiyat* and *qasa’id* of many sheikhs are well known in Bosnia, for example those of Sheikh Sirri. In our time, Dzermaludin Latic stands out as our finest author of *qasa’id* and *ilahiyat*. The form of the Bosnian and Albanian *ilahiyat* and *qasa’id* is the Arabic couplet (*bayt*). The influence of Arabic poetry could not be more recognizable. In addition to these, Arabic poetry influences Bosnian poetry in the form of the quatrain (*rubā‘i*).

One must particularly emphasize here that in Bosnia, as in the wider Balkans, Arabic poetry of an edifying nature (*adab*) is popular. In this connection I should like to mention that, for centuries, al-Mawardi’s famous

Adab al-Dunya wa al-Din was studied in the elite Gazi Husrev Bey madrasa in Sarajevo.

More than 100 years ago, Mehmed-beg Kapetanovic Ljubusak compiled a major two-volume work of verses, sayings, and proverbs entitled *Istocno blago* (Treasures of the Orient).¹⁰ It includes hundreds of edifying Arabic verses in the original. It can be concluded that Ljubusak wrote his work with the assistance of such Arabic works as *Kutub al-Amthal* and *Kutub al-Shi'r*.

Many modern Arab poets have been translated into Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian, among them Abdurrahman al-Beyati, Nazik al-Malaik, Shawqi Dayf, and Taufiq al-Hakim. As regards classical Arab poets, several of our Arabists have translated Abu al-'Ala al-Ma'arri, Sulejman Grozdanic has translated *Risalat al-Ghufuran* into Bosnian, and Daniel Bucan has translated part of *Luzum ma la Yalzam*.

The hikaya is another classic form of Arabic literature that has had a marked influence on literature in Bosnia and the wider Balkans. Our Bosnian literature includes hundreds or even thousands of *hikayat* of Arabic origin or that we have acquired by means of multiple metamorphoses from the literary heights of the Arabic language. The following hikayat are particularly well known: *Hikaya o Ibrahim Pejgamberu* (*Hikayah* of Abraham the Prophet), *Hikaya o Ismail Pejgamberu* (Ismail the Prophet), *Hikaya o Ejjub Pejgamberu* (Ayyub [Job] the Prophet), and so on. I should like to make special mention of the fact that we also have a *Hikaya Smrt Hazreti Fatime* (The Death of Fatima). All of these *hikayat* have been composed by Bosniacs, based upon their knowledge of Arabic works of history, literature, and the like.

Of course, we also have many other *hikayat*, acquired via Arabic literary prose works, that deal with the themes of good and evil, death, the transience of this world, and so on. All of these *hikayat* have penetrated deeply into our culture and literature. *Hikayat* are particularly favored in traditional Muslim circles. Bosnian men of letters, among them Alija Isakovic, Resad Kadic, and Nedzad Ibrisimovic, have used the *hikayah* form in their numerous books. It is necessary to point out here that the difference between philosophical *hikayat* and religious hikayat is perfectly well known in the Balkans. Men of letters in the Balkans usually use the philosophical *hikayah*, while the ulama use the religious *hikayah*, such as those quoted by al-Ghazali in his works or by al-Samarqandi in the work *Tanbih al-Ghafilin*. Recently, several novels have been written in Bosnian under the influence of storytelling (the recounting of *hikayah*).

Here I should like to mention in passing that we in the Balkans have for centuries now had oral storytellers whose role is identical with that of the *qussas* or *musamirun* in Arabic culture. Our storytellers are often illiterate but know thousands of verses and tales. Avdo Mededovic, a Muslim from the Sandzak (which now belongs partly to Serbia and partly to Montenegro), knew tens of thousands of verses by heart, but he was illiterate. His book, *Zenidba Smailagic Mehe* (The Wedding of Smailagic Meho) was published recently. The activities of our storytellers emerged and developed in large part under the influence of the Arabic *qussas* and *musamirun*, both having the same role and telling the same stories.

In our academic circles, it is believed that the Arabic hikaya became part of Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatia literature in the Balkans through the medium of *The Thousand and One Nights* and *Kalila wa Dimna* by Ibn Muqaffa'. Educated people in the Balkans were already reading *The Thousand and One Nights* many years ago, and we now have several translations of the work both in Serbian and in Bosnian. The finest translation of *The Thousand and One Nights* is that of Dr. Esad Durakovic, a professor of Arabic language and literature at the Faculty of Philosophy (Humanities), published in 1999 by NIPP Ljiljan. *Kalila wa Dimna* was translated into Bosnian by Besim Korkut more than 40 years ago and is a favorite text for reading in schools. As for *The Thousand and One Nights*, it can be said that this work has had a great influence on our Balkan writers.

Here I should like to mention Dzevad Karahasan, who recently obtained the highly regarded European Herder Prize for his novel *Sahrijarov prsten* (Shaharyar's Ring). He used motifs from *The Thousand and One Nights*, but in the shape of the skillful and intelligent introduction of a civilized and cultured dialogue between West and East. He followed this up with his novel *Istocni diwan* (Oriental Divan), of which the central figure is al-Muqaffa'. A favorite of writers and philosophers in the Balkans is Ibn Hazm and his *Ring of the Dove* (Tawq al-Hamama). Teufik Muftic translated this work 10 years ago.

I think I shall be making no mistake when I say that the Arab literary hero Juha is well known in the Balkans, albeit under the name Nasruddin Hojja, for the Arab figure of Juha reached us via the Turkish figure of Nasruddin Hojja and took on additional local traits. Many stories of an educational and humorous nature are told here of Nasruddin Hojja or Juha, and some 10 years ago the writer Alija Isakovic published a collection of these stories.

Through Arabic poetry, the *ilahiyah*, the *qasidah*, and the *hikayah*, dozens of Arabic proverbs have entered the Bosnian and Serbian languages

in literal translation. For example, the proverb “time is money” is a direct translation of the Arabic “*al-mawaqitu la tushtara bi al-yawaqit.*” I think that even I, and certainly people better qualified than myself, could write an entire book on the influence of Arabic proverbs on our literature in Bosnia and in the Balkans as a whole.

History and Philosophy

Works of history and philosophy in Arabic are well known in the Balkans, but none can compare for popularity with Ibn Khaldun’s *Muqaddimah*. Teufik Muftic’s recent translation of the work into Bosnian is currently going to press. Daniel Bucan had already translated parts of the *Muqaddimah* into Croatian in Zagreb, and Hasan Susic likewise into Bosnian in Sarajevo. Ibn Hisham’s *Sirah* was translated 2 years ago by Mustafa Prljaca and was recently published in Sarajevo. Usama ibn Munqiz’s *Kitab al-Ibrah* (Book of Moral Lessons), about the Crusades and Salahuddin al-Ayyubi, was translated and published in Belgrade 15 years ago.

Many of our historians have adopted Ibn Khaldun’s methodology in interpreting the history of the world. Hilmo Neimarlija, after studying Ibn Khaldun, began to study the German philosopher Oswald Spengler, and has published numerous studies on the subject in Bosnian.

I should like to make special mention here of the classical authors of philosophy who are the most sought-after here in the Balkans: al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina, and al-Farabi. Daniel Bucan, in Zagreb, recently made a fine translation of al-Ghazali’s *Tahafut al-Falasifah* and Ibn Rushd’s *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, both of which were published in handsome editions. He has also translated al-Farabi’s *Kitab al-Huruf* and Ibn Sina’s *Kitab al-Tanbihawa al-Isharat*. Many other philosophical works written in Arabic have been translated.

Arabic Sufi works by Hasan al-Basri, Junayd, Bistami, Ibn al-‘Arabi, and others have been translated in part or in whole into Bosnian works. Resid Hafizovic has translated Ibn al-‘Arabi’s *Fusus al-Hikam* (The Bezels of Wisdom), which was very well received by the public. Sufi poetry is very highly regarded in educated Muslim circles in the Balkans, and the poetry of Ibn al-Farid and many other Sufi poets enjoys great respect here.

Contemporary Arabic Literature

The poetry of Emir Shaqib Arslan was popular in Bosnia, especially between the two world wars. Many of Arslan’s poems were published,

together with his treatises on the Arabic and Islamic worlds, during the first half of the twentieth century.

In modern times, much has been done to translate contemporary Arabic literature in the Balkans. Taha Hussain is very popular in Bosnia, and his work *al-Ayyam* has been translated into Bosnian by Nijaz Dizdarevic with the title *Dani*, which has the same meaning (Days) as the Arabic original. The second edition of this translation appeared in the year 2000, showing that this is a book that people in Bosnia and the Balkans enjoy reading.

Nagib Mahfuz was much translated into Serbian as soon as he was awarded the Nobel Prize. I should also like to mention here Khalil Gibran, many of whose books have been translated and published in Zagreb. Dr. Esad Durakovic also recently edited many of Gibran's works in Sarajevo. The most popular of his works in the Balkans is *Al-Nabi* (The Prophet).

In recent times, many Bosniacs have written valuable doctoral dissertations on Arabic literature. Dr Ahmed Smajlovic defended his dissertation, entitled *Falsafat al-Istishraq wa Asaruha fi al-adab al-'arabiy al-mu'asir*, in Cairo in 1974. Dr. Jusuf Ramie defended his dissertation, entitled *Usrat al-Muwaylihi wa asaruha fi al-adab al-'arabiy al-hadith*, in the same city the following year. Durakovic, our finest and most productive scholar of Arabic literature, has written (in Arabic) a fine study on Arabic literature in the diaspora (*mahjar*).

Finally, if this can be said to be the final word, I would say that our Bosniac poets are so much under the influence of Arabic poetry that with many of them, one can recognize at every step the distant genes of Arabic poetry. Thus, for example, Hadzem Hajdarevic writes of many things in his seven books of poetry, but his central theme is water. Why water? Because water is both the inner and the external world. Water is both visible and invisible. It is a great symbol, the sign of Allah, the Almighty Creator.

We in the Balkans owe an immense amount to Arabic cultural influences, which have enriched us beyond measure.

Notes

1. The transcription of Arabic words and terminology here is phonetic, not scientific, according to modern conventions of transcription for English-speaking readers (author's and translator's note).
2. Alkalaj, a well known Jewish surname in Bosnia and Herzegovina, derives from the Arabic word *qal'ah* (fortress).

3. For example, the outstanding analysis by Teufik Muftić, *Prilog semantičkom izučavanju arabizama u srpskohrvatskom jeziku* (POF [Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju] [Contribution to the Semantic Study of Arabisms in Serbo-Croatian, Supplements on Oriental Philology], nos. 18-19 (1968-69).
4. Abdulah Skaljic, *Turcizmi u srpskohrvatskom-hrvatskosrpskom jeziku* (Turkisms in Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian) (Sarajevo: 1973).
5. In European languages, these three terms are usually written as *Pherkad*, *Algedi*, and *Acrab*.
6. Hazim Sabanovic, *Knjizevnost Muslimana BiH na orijentalnim jezicima* (Sarajevo: 1973).
7. The first edition of Besim Korkut's translation of the Qur'an included the original Arabic text of the Qur'an, as does my 1995 translation.
8. The oldest complete collection of pre-Islamic Arabic poems of the type known as *qasidah*, which usually have a rigid tripartite structure (translator's note).
9. Jusuf Ramic, *Obzorja arapsko-islamske knjizevnosti* (Sarajevo: 1999).
10. Mehmed-beg Kapetanovic Ljubusak, *Istocno blago*, 2 vols. (Sarajevo: 1988).