

## **ISLAMIC CULTURE IN THE BALKANS (EMPHASIZING ALAWITES' ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BALKANS)**

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Islamic culture and civilization have a history of more than thousand years in the Balkans. Verifying the historical background of the arrival of Islam and Islamic currents in the Balkans, recognition of ethnicities and races, analysis of the situation and position of Muslims in the region, evaluation of new developments in the Balkans, study and recognition of socio-cultural and religious challenges in the Balkans, opportunities and threats in the field of culture and science in the region and other issues are important points that must be noticed in this research in order to be utilized for the expansion of Islamic culture and renovation of Islamic civilization in the Balkans. This paper is trying to answer the following questions: What is the background of Islamic culture and civilization in the Balkans and what were the factors of its development? The findings of the research are based on descriptive-analytic, library studies and field observations which show the particular position of Islamic culture and its role in the civilization of the region in the past and present.

**Keywords:** *Islamic culture and civilization, Balkan Muslims, Alawites, Islamic works, Iranian culture, expansion of Islam*

## ***1. Introduction***

The Balkan countries, in Southeastern Europe, have been taken into consideration of civilizations due to their outstanding nature, human, economic, cultural and political features. The strategic and geopolitical position of the Balkans as a gateway to the West, ethnical and cultural diversity of this region, the presence of followers of various religions and culture with peaceful coexistence and cultural, educational and scientific capacities have made this area important. The oldness of more than a thousand years of Muslim and Alawites in this region, existence of countries with indigenous Muslims such as: Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia, Macedonia and Bulgaria, spiritual and emotional inclination towards the Ahl al-Bayt and their interest in the works of Islamic theosophists, mystics and Persian literary luminaries distinguished the Balkans from other countries. The civilization background, language and culture of Iranian and cultural and racial affinity between Iran and some the Balkan tribes are outstanding points that increase the importance of this region.

In this article, first, generalities and definitions of culture, civilization and Islamic civilization are discussed and then the Balkans area is introduced, the presence of Islamic culture and civilization in different periods are explained and the role of Muslims particularly Alawites in the progress of the region is described. This article is the result of field studies, objective observations and library research that will have an analytical, historical and descriptive approach to the subject of Islamic culture in the Balkans. The results of the article show that Islamic culture has been able to bring about a great and unique civilization in a wide area of the world including the Balkans over several centuries.

## ***2. Generalities***

The Islamic culture and civilization is a collection of Islamic beliefs and values that manifested in the progress of science and art and it emerged in social and political institutions among the nations and people who accepted Islam as their religion.

### ***2. 1. Definition of Culture***

“Culture” in the Persian language is called “Farhang” and in the Arabic language it is called “Thaqafah”, which is a controversial word with different definitions. Culture mostly means intellect and knowledge from a lexical point of view, but it has different meanings, such as, goodness, education,

greatness, virtue, dignity, glory, wisdom, art, knowledge, cognition, jurisprudence and Sharia (Ashuri 1978: 17). In his book *Islamic History and Civilization* Ali Akbar Velayati wrote:

Culture is a collection of tradition, lore and morals of an individual or a family of tribes, whose adherence to these matters, distinguishes them from other tribes and clans. In other words, culture is a set of beliefs of a particular individual or group. Since beliefs are mental, the culture has no objective aspect (Velayati 2005b: 19).

## 2. 2. *Definition of Civilization*

There are various meanings and definitions of “civilization”; for instance, archaeologists have called civilization the existence of “works of art and antiquities”. Historians have considered “civilization” as the “past heritage” of a society that is passed on to the next generation. Politicians have interpreted it as the “establishment of foreign relations” and the “good running” of the country’s internal affairs (Mohammadi 1994: 47).

Civilization is, in a way, an advanced level of culture in which technology, science and political life have found sufficient growth, and its manifestations are the existence of social classes, specialization, and emergence of cities, arithmetics and writing (Halabi 1993: 17). Will Durant writes relating to the definition of civilization:

Civilization can be considered in its general form, as a social order that results to cultural creativity and continue (Durant 1991: III/48).

Based on Samuel Huntington’s point of view, civilization is the highest cultural classification and the broadest level of cultural identity (Huntington 1995: 47). Ibn Khaldun considers civilization as the socialization of the human being. Another thinker considers civilization as a set of moral and material factors that give society the opportunity, for each of its individuals, at any stage of life, from childhood to old age, to do cooperation for growth (see: Durant 1991: V/69). Civilization is the outcome of cultural elevation and the acceptance of social order. Civilization is about leaving Bedouin-life and stepping on the path of institutionalizing of social affairs or as Ibn Khaldun said: civilization is development and construction. According to Ibn Khaldun, a society, by establishing sovereignty and accepted-order, constituting government positions in order to observe the maintenance of order and turn from the state of individual life to urban life, has obtained eligibility of “civilization to bring about perfection of human virtues such as science and art” (Velayati 2005a: I/32).

### *2. 3. Islamic Culture and Civilization*

Culture is related to the word of civilization and sometimes they are used interchangeably, or each one is used in a way that its meaning can be seen in others. Civilization pays more attention to the appearance of social life, but culture relates to meaning part of life, because the two are often together in social life and it is difficult to separate the material one from the spiritual one. Thus, when we say Islamic civilization, we mean those features of social life that are affected by Islam. Yes, sometime when they say Islamic civilization, they mean the civilization of Muslims; because those who have established civilization are Muslims.

With the advent of Islam and its rapid widespread among nations and peoples which attracted various human cultures, a strong and huge structure of human culture and civilization was established. Different nations and races participated in creating it. They succeeded in creating a civilization called "Islamic civilization" with new Islamic values and criteria (Jadidibanab 2007: 39).

Islamic civilization is the common heritage of the peoples and nations whose land Islam once penetrated and played a great role in the construction and flourishing of Islamic civilization. Thus, Islamic civilization does not belong to a particular race, nor is it a national civilization that belongs to a particular people, but it includes all racial and ethnic groups that have contributed to its emergence, prosperity and expansion (Zarrinkub 2008: 31).

### *3. The Balkans and Their Location*

The Balkan Peninsula in Southeastern Europe is surrounded on the east by the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea, on the west by the Greek Sea and the Adriatic Sea, on the south by the Mediterranean Sea, and on the north by the Alpine Dinar, Transylvanian Alps and the Hungarian Plain. It is said: the name of the Balkans it has taken from the Balkans Mountains, which stretch from central Bulgaria to eastern Serbia. This name was derived from Turkish languages and means "a series of wooden mountains". The Serbian thinker Trajan Stoyanovich believes that the word "The Balkans" has Persian roots and means a high house or a high mountain. This word has been translated from Persian into Turkish and then into Serbian. The word Balkans was first used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by German geographer Johann August Swein. In 1831, George Thomas Capel Major wrote a book entitled "Notes on a Journey to the Balkans"; the region he named the Balkans did not have another name in the past (Stoyanovich 1968: 93).

The Balkans have always had a special place as one of the important security, strategic and economic regions in the international system; so, during

the last centuries, it has been constantly noticed by the great world powers and has not been spared from their invasion. The Balkans are known as part of the Great Maritime Wall between Europe and Asia. This great sea wall includes the Scandinavian countries, Italy, Greece and the Balkan Peninsula and continues towards Asia. This region has historically been one of the most important central regions (in terms of historical events of the last three centuries) and in fact, it has been the way of communication between East and West. This position has been established since the Russian intervention in Europe and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

For thousands of years, the Balkan Peninsula has been the only transit point for people and even an invasion of the region. Some historians and archaeologists believe that the people of the Balkans have always had extensive trade relations with other nations. The Balkan nations communicated with Iran and China in the East via the Silk Road. In addition to the relation through land, they had relations via the sea. Therefore, there were strong relationships between them in the field of economic, political and military in the East and in the West (Ziyayi 2003: 63).

### *3. 1. Religion and Denomination in the Balkans*

The existence of numerous ethnic groups, languages and religious groups has given a special feature to this region. The separation of Christianity in 1054 AD has constantly changed the Catholic and Orthodox religions of the Balkans. Greeks, Bulgarians, and Serbs in the southern, eastern and central Balkans are Orthodox, while Croats and Slovenes in the western part are Catholic. This division has divided the two mentioned sections into two different religious worlds (Nasr Isfahani 2002: 49). The people of the Balkans can be categorized into three groups from religious point of view: the Orthodox Christian group which includes Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians, Macedonians and the people of Karabakh. The second group is Muslims who form about 15 percent of the population of the Balkan Peninsula. There are also a large numbers of Muslims who live in “Thrace” which is now part of Turkey. The third group is Catholic Christians. Eastern Europe and the Balkan Peninsula have enjoyed and prospered from rapid expansion of Islam in terms of historical ties with Western Asia, especially during the domination of the great Ottoman Empire in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In general, the Muslim minority has lived for more than centuries in the Eastern European countries, including the Balkans, especially Bulgaria, Albania, Bosnia, Montenegro, Cyprus, Greece and Macedonia. Kosovo and Sanjak, which lies between Serbia and Montenegro. Bulgaria and the Republic of

Macedonia also have Muslim citizens who make up the minority of population in these areas.

### 3. 2. *Islam in the Balkans*

There are numerous opinions relating to the arrival of Muslims and Islam in the Balkan Peninsula that can be mentioned in the following.

Some say: Muslims entered the Balkans for the first time in the first centuries of history of Islam, during the Fatimid rule with the conquest of the island of Sicily (Lewis 1995: 28). Muslims have traveled and lived in the Balkans since the beginning of Islamic history that can be for thousands of years. However, in addition to the fluctuating social and political presence of Muslims throughout the ages that was outstanding in Spain, Sicily, and the Balkans, the Islamic civilization has helped the intellectual, artistic, and other cultural resources of Western Europe (Peach & Vertovec 2001: 43).

The other group said that Iranians – mystics, Sufis and merchants – spread Islam in the Balkans and they documented the existence of Takayas (places for religious ceremony) monasteries dating back up to a thousand years, in books and manuscripts in the Turkish and Persian languages in the library of Qazi Khusraw-beg in Sarajevo. There is also some other evidence like religious school of Aladdin al-Thani in Kosovo as well as the old Albanian Takayas, Persian manuscripts with religious content which relate to the past centuries (Ghorbanpour Delavar 2012: 21).

However, due to the fact that the Silk Road extended to the city of Dubrovnik, which was very active, Iranian traders and Iranian culture had infiltrated the region before the arrival of Fatimids. Iranians had left lasting effects on the culture of the region. Therefore, the presence of Iranians in the Balkans has long been widespread and influential. The Mongol invasion of Iran caused the migration of Iranian merchants, mystics and scholars to Konya, through this, Iranian culture spread with the help of merchants, religious sects, and religious missionaries.

It has also been said: Islam in Eastern Europe had begun to spread long before the Ottoman invasion (Katani 2004: 59).

There is another opinion in this connection that the Ottoman rulers began their advance towards the Balkan Peninsula and southeastern Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Before the Ottomans, a group of Turkic tribes of the Sari Saltuc tribe, who had fled Khurasan from the Mongol invasion, entered the Balkans in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and established Islamic communities that constituted of 10 to 12 thousand people in the city of Dubrouja. Following the conquest of “Edirne”, the migration of Turkish Muslims from Anatolia to Roman Empire (the European part of the Ottoman Empire) began. The Ot-

tomans created a treaty with Christians and Jews in the Balkans as the People of the Book and in the meantime many Christians, such as the Bogomils, converted to Islam. The Ottoman rulers established their rule as the kings of Islam in Bulgaria and Serbia (Musawi Bojnurdi 2004: 265).

The first traces and marks of Islam and Islamic civilization in the Balkan Peninsula trace back to the Middle Ages. The emergence of the first Islamic community coincides with the first invasions of the Slavic tribes on the Balkan Peninsula. A Bosnian scholar, Hajiyahich says:

This is a fact that the emergence of Christianity in the Balkans is almost coincident with the presence of Islam (Ziyayi 2003: 61).

The Sufi denominations and Takaya have also existed for a long time in the Balkans, especially in Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Serbian Sanjak, Bulgaria and neighboring areas. Their emergence dates back to the pre-Ottoman period in the Balkans. They spread their ideology in this part of the Balkan Peninsula after they strengthened the Ottoman rule. There are still alive and active Sufis in some areas, including Kosovo and Albania.

The Alawites and Sufis played an important role in the establishment and spread of Islamic culture in Yugoslavia and beyond Yugoslavia. The harshness of social conditions, interests of the Ottoman government and the expansion of reclamation did not play the sole major role in the development of Sufism and monasteries, emirates, inns and strengthening their position, but also cultural, educational, religious and civilizational factors played a great role in the expansion of this region (Nasr Isfahani 2002: 149). During the communist era, the former Yugoslavia with 92% Muslims in Kosovo, 50% Muslims in Macedonia, 81% Muslims in Sanjak, 25% Muslims in Montenegro, 50% Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, had long been under the control of Muslims (Mehdiu 2009: 81).

#### ***4. The Expansion of Islamic Culture in the Balkans and Europe***

##### *4. 1. The Impact of Islamic Culture and Civilization in Europe*

The Islamic culture and civilization after its emergence established a civilization whose fame and manifestations pervaded a large part of the world of that day and later. Europe in the Middle Ages and sometime after that owed its intellectual, scientific and cultural life in many ways to Islam; this means that the heritage of ancient knowledge and philosophy was introduced to Europe through the achievements of Muslims. The first factor for penetration of Islamic culture, its civilization and then its scientific achievements to Europe,

must have been the conquests of the Muslims in the lands of Europe. After the conquest of Spain and some surrounding areas, Muslims and Europeans interacted closely with each other and influenced each other. The Crusaders' attacks on Islamic regions also brought Muslims and Christians together and affected Christians by the moral and religious characteristics of Muslims. Thus, they got familiar with Islamic teachings and brought Islamic culture with them when they returned to Europe.

This interaction between Muslims and Christianity brought about all types of alterations in the areas under Muslim's influence. This was followed by an unprecedented development in agriculture, industry, arts, urban planning, philosophy, science literature and way of life in various dimensions. For example, Arabs brought advanced farming and irrigation systems to Spain. The existence of Arabic words related to irrigation in some European languages is one of the proofs of this. Following this transformation, a variety of agricultural products which includes grains, vegetables and fruits, flourished in Spain (Montgomery Watt 1999: 21).

In addition to the above mentioned evidence, there were relationships between some European governments and Islamic rulers that provided the basis for the transmission of Islamic culture. "Charlemagne had diplomatic relations with Harun al-Rasheed as much as he had with his other enemy who ruled the Umayyads of Spain. Thus, the vast and powerful knowledge of the Islam may have been transferred to Europe", says William Montgomery Watt (*ibid.*).

One of the determining factors in medieval history, especially in the philosophical and scientific thought in the West, was the emergence of Islam and the familiarity of Christians with it; in such a way that talking of the medieval history of the West is incomplete without mentioning its connection with Islam. Because, in the Middle Ages, a scientific and cultural connection was established between the Islamic world and Western Christianity. To understand this relationship and its impact on each other is very important. Muslim books were translated in the twelfth century and Europeans utilized Islamic philosophy, science and art. They became acquainted with parts of Greek heritage through Muslims.

Muslims have lived and traveled throughout Europe since the beginning of Islamic history. As part of Europe, Andalusia was the most brilliant civilization in Europe for centuries. In Eastern Europe Islam has spread to central Europe from the fifteenth century onwards. Undoubtedly, Islamic civilization has contributed to the intellectual, artistic and cultural development of Europe (Velayati 2005a: IV/ 403). However, in recent centuries, a group of writers, due to the contribution of Islamic civilization to the development of Europe, consider Islam as the third pillar of European civilization along with

the two pillars of Greek-Roman and Judeo-Christian. They see the modern Europe indebted to Islamic civilization (Peach & Vertovec 2001: 43).

Muslims have been superior for centuries to all the worlds in science, industry, philosophy, art, ethics and higher social systems, but others have reaped the benefits of their harvest. Undoubtedly, it is possible to climb the peak of human civilization by reviving the foundations of Islamic civilization and becoming the torchbearer of the world in scientific movement. We read in the book of *Man in the Pursuit of Civilization* that the followers of the Church benefited from science and knowledge of Muslims when they travelled and were associated with those who were hated by Europeans. In another part of this book, the author says: “Do not forget that Arabs and Muslims had a great share in the foundation of Europe and brilliant civilization that emerged from the darkness of the medieval millennium” (Pahlow 1956: 103). We read in the book of *Islam According to Voltaire*: “Arab Muslims from the very first centuries of Islam became the instructors of Europeans in all sciences and technologies of that day” (Hadidi 1995: 39).

#### *4. 2. The Role of Alawite and Sufi Denominations to the Spread of Islamic Culture and Civilization in the Region*

Even before the conquest of the Balkans by the Ottomans, Islam had entered this region and the missionaries from different Sufi sects such as Mawlawia, Naqshbandiyya and Bektashi, etc. provided the ground for Islamism. The conquest of the Balkans by Ottomans caused them to have more tendencies towards Islam (Qods 2000: 39). Mujahideen of Sufis came to Anatolia from the East, Central Asia and the regions of Greater Khurasan to promote Islam (Haddad Adel 2003: 419). They also provided evidence to support their claim. They say: in 1260 AD (one hundred years before the arrival of the Ottoman army), a man named Sheikh Sari Saltuk along with forty Turkmen Sufis emigrated to Dubruja and other parts of the Balkans to spread Islam in these areas. Their activities were intensified to the point that their monasteries expanded to Dubroja, Macedonia, Albania and other parts of the Balkans as far as the Adriatic coast and northern Sweden (Nasr Isfahani 2002: 146). At the present time, there are still places as shrines which are somehow associated with Sheikh Sari Saltuk and are active now after many years since their arrival in these areas such as Takayas in some countries. These people believe that Sari Saltuk is a Sufi from the Bektashi sect who came to this region from Haj Baktash Vali to propagate his religion. For example, in the old town of Kruja in Albania, where most of the inhabitants are Alawites, there is a Takya called Sari Saltuk on top of the mountain towering over the city which is more than five hundred years old and people try hard to get to that place.

Jashar Rexhepagic states in this connection: "The duty of the Dervish sects and their Takayas is not limited to religious affairs; rather, sheikhs have played an important role in the cultivation, growth and dissemination of philosophical thought, literature, especially Albanian, Bosnian and Turkish poetry" (Rexhepagic 2003: 3). The spirit of mysticism and Sufism in the Bosnian region, in comparison with other regions, has become an indigenous culture and has gained an important place in the religious views of the people and understanding of Islam. They accept Sufis' signs as principles of Islam such as; love of Ahl al-Bayt, honoring the days of Ashura, special worship of the Nights of Decree (*Laylat al-Qadr*) particular ceremony of Badr night (Badr war), wedding night (Mawlana's death ceremony) and recitation of Masnawi are some of the signs of Islamic culture there (ibid.: 70).

One of the most significant issues that the followers of the Alawite denomination of the Balkans adhere to is the curtsy of the Prophet's household, especially Amir al-Mu'minin Ali ibn Abi Talib, Imam Hussein, holding of Muharram and Ashura programs. Surely, the most important factor for the spread of Islamic civilization and expansion of Alawite's notion and culture in this area was the event of Karbala and its consequence.

#### 4. 3. Iranian Culture and Civilization in the Balkans

Iranian culture and civilization has received great influences from Islamic culture and civilization for the past thousands of years. The clear example in this connection is the collection of Iranian works that have been prepared by religious and literary dignitaries in recent centuries; what can be seen in them clearly are Islamic signs. The presence of Iranian culture and the Persian language in the Balkans trace back to ancient Iran, which was connected to the Balkans through the Silk Road before the advent of Islam. After the conquest of Bosnia and Albania by the Fatimids of Egypt, Iran became closer to the Balkans through religious ties. During the history, Oriental literature, especially Iranian culture and literature, have been translated into local languages by Balkan scholars. In this way Iranian culture and literature have influenced the culture of this region.

Although the expansion of the Persian language in the Balkans was attributed to Ottoman domination, it should not be ignored that the ancient Slavs may have brought some of the Aryan linguistic, intellectual, and cultural elements from their habitats to the Balkans. We also should not neglect the role of Greeks, Manichaeans, Nomans, and Buglamia group in this connection. Following the Achaemenid domination, the Mehr religion and Manichaean religion entered Turkic lands and spread to Central Asia. Nasser Khusrow also reported that in the city of "Akhlát", in Central Asia, three languages were spo-

ken: Tazi (Arabi), Persian, and Armenian (Qobadiyani 1956: 7). Considering the influential presence of Iran in the Balkans along history, I will mention briefly some examples and then the current status of Iranian culture and literature there, which are the same as Islamic culture and civilization.

#### 4. 3. 1. Iranian Culture in the Balkans after Islam

In his book, Ali Dawani, an educated scholar, points out that the Silk Road was active and extended to the town of Dubrovnik in western Bosnia and southern Croatia, but even before the entrance of Fatimids in Bosnia, Iranian traders and Iranian culture infiltrated there and left lasting traces in the region. Iranian presence has become more colorful since 1075 onwards. The Seljuks, who were influenced by Iranian culture, came to power in the Anatolian region in this year and promoted Iranian-Islamic culture. The Mongol invasion of Iran caused the migration of Iranian merchants, mystics and scholars to Konya and widespread Iranian culture with the help of businessmen, religious sects, religious missionaries and Sufis from East Asia to Central and Western Europe (Dawani 1992: 11).

Shevko Omerbashich, the Mufti of Zagreb, who is a prominent scholar of the region's history, said in the late 1990s: "Before the entrance of Ottoman Turks to the region, a large number of people in the region were Muslims (Shi'a). The first group of Muslims in the region who were influenced by Iran were Shi'a and followers of the Esmaeili denomination (Asayesh & Agharazi Darmani 2009: 121).

#### 4. 3. 2. Transfer of Islamic and Iranian Culture to the Balkans during and After the Ottoman Arena

Persian culture and literature had a special place among kings, commanders and armies of the Ottomans and played a significant role in its development and expansion. Bogdanovich said in this regard: "Iranian culture entered Yugoslavia with the Ottoman troops and a quarter of the 3,000 Eastern words in the languages of these regions are Persian" (Bogdanovich 1966: 983).

The Mongol invasion of Iran in the 12<sup>th</sup> century caused the migration of great poets and Sufis from Iran to Central Asia. The great men (like Mawlana) had a wide cultural influence on the behavior and future of the Seljuks and the Ottomans. By the transfer of power from the Seljuks to the Ottomans, the Persian language in addition to the upper social classes, widespread to the monasteries and the folklore culture of people (Aminian 2006: 58). Even reciting Shahnameh gave credence to Ottoman poets, courtiers and soldiers. Hundreds of Persian-speaking poets found their way into the

Ottoman court (Riyahi 1990: 23). The official language (correspondence) of Seljuk and Ottoman periods was Persian. Therefore, under such cultural atmosphere of widespread Persian language, Bosnia came under control of the Ottoman Empire. Lord Kinross relating to the "Conqueror Sultan Mohammad" who triumphed Bosnia said:

Mohammad the Conqueror was more culturally interested in the East, especially in Iran, than the West. He was attracted to Iranian Shiism and its Dervishes. He read Persian and showed special compassion for the Iranian particularly in the field of government that aroused the jealousy of the Turks. Ottoman poets had chosen Persian poetry, especially Ferdowsi's epic poems and Hafez's lyric poems as model (Kinross 1994: 163).

Ottoman commanders, officials' tendencies to Sufism encouraged particularly Iranian mysticism which was manifested in Mawlawi, Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya's denominations (whose founders were also Iranians). The presence of Sufism in the long history among people and its influence on them led to the creation and perpetuation of Sufism which was mainly rooted in Iran. Its followers had a deep devotion and inclination towards the Ahl al-Bayt. In this way, Iran's cultural interaction with the region continued in the absence of the Iranians, but by the Ottomans and then Sufi sects. The poems of Mulana, Hafez and other Iranian poets were recited in Persian (Aminian 2006: 62).

Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization extended for centuries by efforts of great literature, Albanian mythical and national heroes such as: Naeem Farashari and his family, Vaji Bukharaei who is a talented translator of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, Tahir Dizdari, a great Albanian scholar, author and writer of *Dictionary of Oriental words in Albanian*, Van Noli and others. In this region of the Islamic world and in the heart of the Green Continent.

#### 4. 4. Ways to Expand and Modernize Islamic Culture and Civilization in the Balkans

The reconstruction of Islamic civilization is not achievable by words and proposing a plan. If Islamic civilization wants to be saved from stagnation and reach its peak, a set of factors must go hand in hand to actualize this ideal (Zamani Mahjoub 2009: 135). "Returning to Islam" is the most important strategy for the modernization and developing of Islamic civilization. One of the most crucial factors in the renovation of Islamic civilization is the redoubled efforts of Islamic scholars and scientists. The second significant factor in this relation is the efforts of Islamic officials and Islamic governments. The

self-confidence of Muslims in the field of science, politics, economic and cultural determines outline and direction, that is to say, Muslims must redouble their efforts in order to achieve growth and development in all fields, while believing in their abilities. It is also significant to establish religious organizations against sectarianism to open a window for spreading pure Islam that can lead to Islamic civilization in the region.

### **5. Conclusion**

This writing mentioned the history of Islamic civilization and culture in the Balkans that traces back to more than a thousand years ago. It also declares the role of early Islamic conquests, migration of Alawite sects, attacks of Ottoman Turks in the past and the wave of Islamic awakening around the world and the Balkans in the present era that increased the Islamic vision of Muslims and spread of Islamic culture. The reconstruction and spread of Islamic culture and re-civilization in Europe, particularly in the Balkans is not far from reality.

Muslims and Islamic countries must know the material and spiritual possibilities of the Islamic world, then adopt a clear and purposeful strategy to modernize Islamic civilization through utilizing all their strength and power. Muslims have always relied on Sharia and made a civilization; today also, they may make an Islamic civilization by returning to Islam and practicing its teachings. The Balkans region has many capacities, background of Islamic civilization and numerous works of Islamic culture that can be used to spread Islamic culture. It is crucial to have mutual respect for other religions, peaceful coexistence and good interaction with individuals with different ideas to create a context of peaceful life and friendship. The spirit of Islamic religion is to establish peace, security and provide health at the light of religion and spirituality.

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## **Razvoj islamske kulture na Balkanu s posebnim osvrtom na ulogu alavita**

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Islamska kultura i civilizacija prisutne su na Balkanu na različite načine duže od hiljadu godina. Utvrđivanje istorijske pozadine pojave islama i različitih islamskih pravaca na Balkanu, analiza etničke pripadnosti balkanskih muslimana, njihovog stanja i položaja u regionu, preispitivanje novih smernica razvoja Balkana, prepoznavanje društveno-kulturnih i verskih izazova na Balkanu i glavnih potencijala i pretnji na polju kulture i saznanja u regionu i slična pitanja – predstavljaju važne teme koje moramo uzeti u obzir u ovom radu i iskoristiti ih u modelima obnove i razvoja islamske kulture i civilizacije na Balkanu. U ovom radu pokušaćemo da odgovorimo na sledeće ključno pitanje: Koje su to pozadine utemeljenja islamske kulture na Balkanu i šta su bitni elementi njenog razvoja? Rezultati ovog istraživanja zasnivaju se na opisno-analitičkim i bibliotečkim studijama i na terenskim zapažanjima koja potvrđuju poseban značaj islamske kulture i civilizacije u razvoju ukupnog regiona u prošlosti i sadašnjosti.

**Ključne reči:** *islamska kultura i civilizacija, balkanski muslimani, alaviti, islamska baština, iranska kultura, razvoj islama*