

Rituals and Group Solidarity: An Ethnographic Case Study

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Since Durkheim (2002 [1912]), it has been recognised that ritual can serve as a means of strengthening intra-group solidarity. Mutual help and emotional arousal connected with rituals may help the participants cope with adversities. Collective rituals have thus become one of the tools for adapting to environmental conditions. Several theories try to clarify the mechanism by which this adaptation happens.

One's investment of time, money, and other personal resources into collective activities, including rituals, may serve as a commitment signal and thus enhance group solidarity. However, rituals are not the only way the group members signal their commitment. Therefore, the fundamental question is whether rituals offer anything unique compared to other types of joint coordinated activity.

Atran and Henrich (2010) provide a hypothesis based on some of the characteristics of rituals that observed all over the world. According to them, religious rituals often involve various components to promote faith and devotion by stimulating certain emotions. The primary tools in this context are music, rhythm, and synchronization of body movements.

In this ethnographic case study from Bosnia, I compare three confessional communities (Sunni Muslims, Roman Catholics, and Sufi dervishes). They inhabit the same geographic area but differ in the character of their ritual performances regarding synchronization and use of rhythmic activities. The highest degree of in-group solidarity is expected in the group whose rituals involve rhythm and synchronization of body movements to the greatest extent.

Keywords: ritual, group solidarity, synchronization, rhythm, commitment signalling

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Introduction

The disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, accompanied by war in the 1990s, was followed by an economic transformation that resulted in the increasing marginalisation of several industrial areas. One such industrial region was Central Bosnia, a mountainous region north of Sarajevo that roughly overlaps with today's Central Bosnia Canton and Zenica-Doboj Canton. Within Yugoslavia, it was a region dominated by heavy industry (mainly metallurgy).

Metallurgy has been an economic sector that was affected by the restructuring of the economy on a global scale, not only in the former Yugoslavia. Part of this restructuring has involved the relocation of the greater industry to other locations (e.g., from Europe and North America to Asian countries), with many locations previously dominated by metallurgical production being marginalised.

The course of deindustrialisation in post-socialist countries, including the former Yugoslavia, has been different from the Western world, with the strongest impact coming after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the transformation of centrally controlled economies into market economies. A non-negligible factor that must be taken into account, especially in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was the military conflict of 1992–1995. That conflict was accompanied not only by material damage to infrastructure but also by fundamental changes in group loyalties (Podoba, 2006). Subsequent developments led to the emergence of a state with a very complicated political system in which clientelist groups linked to dominant political parties were the main beneficiaries. The population of central Bosnia thus faced both economic and social marginalisation, which has been caused, among other things, by the disappearance of a large number of jobs formerly associated with heavy industry.

In order to adapt to this situation, Bosnians have adopted a combination of adaptation strategies that can be grouped into roughly three intertwined types. For a large part of the inhabitants of the central Bosnian industrial towns, the primary solution was to move abroad or at least to the country's capital, Sarajevo. For those who stayed in the region and did not find employment, there are basically two sets of labour activities that are often combined: firstly, self-employment, sometimes in the so-called grey economy, and secondly, various types of subsistence activities supplemented by casual labour. However, all three options have a common denominator, which is the use of personalized networks (Boissevain, 1974). Belonging to a denominational group and having regular involvement in its collective religious activities plays a major role in the formation and utility of these networks. Indeed, the post-war environment of Bosnia and Herzegovina also displays a phenomenon familiar from other societies affected by war conflicts, i.e., a high degree of both religious (Henrich et al., 2019) and ethnic (Maček, 2009) mobilization.

Thus, the main goal of this article is to use the results of my ethnographic fieldwork to show how participation in religious activities helps Central Bosnians to cope with the threats resulting from social and economic marginalisation. This work is based on the fundamental assumption that religious groups, as a result of promoting

intra-group cooperation, are a catalyst for the expansion of personal networks that allow access to resources not otherwise available to the individual. I expect the level of intragroup cooperation to be higher in those groups that require a greater investment of members' personal resources, such as time, energy, emotional commitment, or finances. At the same time, the promotion of intragroup cooperation by investing one's own resources for the benefit of the group is expected to be supported in some groups by group religious rituals characterized by specific features, in particular, synchronization of movements and vocal expressions, and the use of rhythm. These two aspects – investment of own resources and synchronization during ritual performances – may be closely linked.

The assumption thus constructed may seem obvious at first sight. According to many works in sociology of religion (for an overview, see Hillenbrand, 2020), religious groups tend to be more cohesive than secular groups, and cohesive groups are characterized by greater cooperation. One possible explanation is that a religious community requires more personal involvement from its members and can eliminate free riders more effectively (Iannaccone, 1994). At the same time, the higher costs invested by individual members of the community represent a higher degree of commitment to the group. However, the requirements of the religious community have to be adequate – they must not be too lenient nor too strict. Under this condition, the commitment of community members returns to them in the form of greater support from others (Stark, 1996).

Currently, much of the research on ritual-cooperation relationships is based on an evolutionary paradigm (see, e.g., Atran, Henrich, 2010; Xygalatas et al., 2013; Wilson, 2010). The evolutionary approach does not dismiss the findings from social anthropology or sociology; rather, it sets these findings into a common explanatory framework. Evolutionary explanations are especially required when the action or belief seems at first sight to be costly or even harmful to the individual but nevertheless persists steadily in different human cultures. In this context, Wilson (2010) distinguishes between “factual” and “practical” realism. Factual realism refers to beliefs that empirically and adequately describe the world, without taking into account the practical value of such beliefs. In contrast, practical realism refers to beliefs that are practically useful regardless of their factual correctness. In that case, when the practical benefit (utility) of a belief is greater than the cost of maintaining it (due to its possible factual incorrectness or being purely fiction quality), then Wilson (2010: 41) argues that the belief has a chance of prevailing in the population.

An important research question in this context is why people are willing to invest their resources in religious acts. It is in religious acts that practical realism, as Wilson described it, can manifest itself. The motivations of members of religious communities to engage in these acts stem from metaphysical beliefs that may be inconsistent or even contradict each other, but when seeking an evolutionary explanation for them, their practical benefits are key. One possible explanation for acts such as rituals or other costly acts of piety (e.g., fasting, celibacy, etc.) is that they are signals of commitment that are difficult to fake (Bulbulia, 2004, 2008; Irons, 2001; Sosis, Alcorta, 2003).

Richard Sosis (2004, 2005) directly uses the terminology of costly signals here, which he adopts from behavioural ecology. Costly signalling theory assumes that these behavioural manifestations are hard-to-fake signals by which other group members are reliably able to recognize the otherwise unobservable characteristics of the signalling individual. However, Henrich (2009) and Bulbulia (2008) point to some problems with the theory of costly signals. Bulbulia (2008) therefore presents an alternate version of the theory, in which he emphasizes that one of the important unobservable characteristics communicated by hard-to-fake religious acts is the commitment to the group. These signals do not necessarily have to be costly, but they must be associated with a strong emotional experience that is not easy to pretend. Henrich (2009) adds that for a valid explanation, these manifestations of religious behaviour must be placed in the context of cultural evolution.

Signalling within religious groups refers to whether an individual has acquired certain beliefs, that is, mental representations. These beliefs can be acquired in the process of cultural learning. Therefore, according to Henrich, it is necessary to take into account the processes of cultural transmission. Instead of costly signalling theory, the concept of *credibility enhancing displays* (CREDs) (Henrich, 2009; Atran, Henrich, 2010: 22) seems more appropriate here. The function of acts such as emotionally intensive rituals, fasting or celibacy, according to Henrich, is to support the propagation of religious ideas and conceptions that contradict empirical experience, intuitions, or even logic. Although religious leaders or members of a congregation usually cannot demonstrate the truth of a particular religious claim, they can demonstrate the depth of their conviction in its truth. Henrich suggests that originally the tendency to trust the source of empirically unverifiable information, as long as that information is accompanied by CRECs, developed entirely outside of religious content; it extended to religious content secondarily (Henrich, 2009).

However, the case I focus on in this study is not an example of this type of cultural transmission. Rather, participants in rituals performed on a weekly basis in a closed group (whether as a new applicant for membership or an established member of the group) do not try to communicate to others any content of faith but to reassure others of their own credibility and commitment to the group. The greater willingness of group members to cooperate with each other, as compared with people outside the group, is a result of the trust fostered through ritual performance. However, ritual performances seen as displays supporting the group member's commitment is not the only mechanism promoting the willingness of other group members to cooperate. In addition to it, there is another mechanism directly related to the nature of collective rituals or similar activities which gives them their specific form and is theorized to be directly involved in increasing cooperation. This mechanism directly involves the evoking and strengthening of certain emotions. It is about the use of rhythm and collective coordination of movements and vocal expressions (especially in the form of singing). In this regard, Atran and Henrich (2010: 23) point to the well-known fact that it is precisely religious and, to some extent, nationalist mobilization (for example, in the form of military training) that has developed various tools to promote faith and

devotion through the stimulation of certain emotions. They argue that belief in contents that are not amenable to empirical verification are deepened and affirmed in a community in which various collective emotions are purposely evoked using music, rhythm and synchronisation. They base this claim on several empirical findings.

The association of specific musical structures with specific basic emotions (anger, sadness, fear, and joy) has been demonstrated in an experimental study with children as young as 3 years old (Trainor, Trehub, 1992). This finding is followed by other research suggesting that synchrony is involved in promoting prosocial action (Gelfand, Caluori, Jackson, Taylor, 2020). For example, a developmental aspect is highlighted by Kirschner and Tomasello (2010) in an experimental study, where they confirmed that joint music-making among 4-year-olds increases subsequent spontaneous cooperative and helping behaviour. They compared this effect with a control group in which children engaged in social and linguistic interaction to the same extent but without music. Several studies conducted with adults also show the same effect. Valdesolo and DeSteno (2011) show that when rhythmically synchronized, research participants perceived other participants as being more like themselves, while also eliciting more compassion and altruistic behaviour than those who were not synchronized. These findings support the view that the primary function of synchrony is to mark others as similar to oneself and provide empirical evidence that synchrony-induced affiliation modulates emotional responses and altruism. Wiltermuth and Heath (2009) show that strangers who were instructed by experimenters to perform a rhythmic activity (marching, singing, or dancing) synchronously were more likely to cooperate frequently in group tasks than those who performed such activities in a non-synchronous manner (e.g., marching vs. walking freely in a group). This effect was also true for cooperation requiring action at one's own expense.

However, not all experimental studies have found an effect of synchrony on cooperation, especially when other intervening variables were taken into account. Cohen, Mundry and Kirschner (2014) show there is a trend toward higher cooperation in groups exposed to religious priming compared to those exposed to secular priming. Thus, neither a main effect from synchronized drumming nor an interactional effect from drumming and religious priming was found. The results suggest that behavioural synchrony alone is not sufficient to increase cooperation. Contrastingly, some studies show that synchrony can also promote conformity (Dong, Dai, Wyer, 2015) or even destructive obedience of group members to authority (Wiltermuth, 2012).

These and other research results are summarized in the work of Gelfand et al. (2020), who conclude that ritual synchronization can increase cooperation and coordination within a group but also increase obedience, groupthink, and weaken group creativity. However, under certain ecological and historical conditions that require a high degree of in-group coordination, both aspects of the phenomenon can manifest adaptively.

Based on the literature summarized above, I expect higher levels of within-group cooperation in those religious communities whose rituals are characterized by higher

costs. Further, I anticipate an even more pronounced effect when rituals are characterized by the aforementioned features of communal chanting, synchronized movements, and purposeful use of rhythm.

Fieldwork, locality and its inhabitants

With this aim in mind, I analyse data obtained by participant observation of three types of religious communities inhabiting a common social space in the particular municipality. Two of the communities are Muslim (Sunni Muslims and members of Sufi dervish orders) and the third is Roman Catholic. The fieldwork consisted of repeated short-term field visits (initially in Sarajevo, later in the mountain towns of central Bosnia). These stays generally took place in the summer and winter months (July to September in summer, January to February in winter) between 2012 and 2021 (with the exception of 2020, when travel was not possible due to the Covid-19 pandemic). The original, though not always successfully implemented, intention was to spend at least three months of total time in the field each year. During my various stays, I focused on processes of ethnic mobilization, group identification, and, especially, strengthening intra-group solidarity. The research was based on qualitative methods, mainly participant observation and in-depth interviews with local residents.

However, despite several years of repeated research visits, my position in the field has not shifted much from that of an (admittedly sympathetic) visitor. This disinterest represented a certain advantage in neutrality, for instance, my research participants could not assign me to any of the local ethno-religious groups. My neutral status as a sympathetic foreigner was also underlined by my linguistic abilities: although I have sufficient command of the local language for the purposes of ethnographic research, it is immediately obvious from my accent that I do not come from Bosnia.

However, my neutral status conversely was also a major source of research limitations. The locals constantly perceived me as coming from a privileged background, due to my status as an employee of a university in Slovakia, a member state of the European Union. Moreover, the country from which I came to Bosnia was not affected by the Balkan war, and the negative impact of economic transformation experienced in Slovakia has been very mild compared with the countries of the former Yugoslavia. As a result, I have not directly experience the existential threat that the locals faced. Our worlds of experience thus had only a slight overlap.

Neighbourhood (*komšiluk*) as a general pattern of cooperation in central Bosnia

Membership in religious groups is not the only organizing principle that explains cooperation among the inhabitants of the mountain towns of central Bosnia. Family and kinship ties, neighbourhood, and relationships of other types (classmates,

military service buddies, etc.) concern all inhabitants of the region, regardless of confessional affiliation, even though these relationships are also often organised on a confessional basis. As a representative example of a pattern of cooperation that is common to all inhabitants of the region, here I will take a closer look at the neighbourhood (*komšiluk*).

The neighbourhood is a very important social institution in Bosnia in terms of cooperation. Its importance is also expressed by sayings such as *komšija bliži od brata* (a neighbour is closer than a brother) and *kuću ne čuva brat nego komšija* (your house is not guarded by your brother, but by your neighbour). Neighbourhood cooperation is typically organized on the basis of generalized reciprocity (Sahlins, 1972), which distinguishes it from other types of relationships in which symmetrical reciprocity prevails. In the Sarajevo *mahala*¹ environment, many manifestations of cooperation took the form of an apparent “pure gift”, with reciprocation having no explicit terms. One such expression of helpfulness was, for example, the frequent sale on credit in the local mixed-goods shop. The owner knew that some of her neighbours had very irregular incomes (it was not uncommon between 2010 and 2015 for even employees of state-owned companies to be paid their salaries only once every three or four months, and even then, not always in full). She therefore had no problem selling food and drugstore goods to such neighbours, even for a few weeks, with the understanding that they would bring the money when they had it. She did not charge anything extra for the service; rather, she would still sometimes give people who came to pay off a debt a small gift, such as a cake or ice cream. Then, at the beginning of the summer, when the first heat came, her neighbours made an awning for the shop so that the sun did not shine directly on the fruit on display. I learnt of other similar expressions of mutual help that were also part of *mahala* life. An individual reluctant to engage in these transactions gradually gains a negative reputation and the withholding of help from others (Mentel, 2013).

In the mountainous areas of central Bosnia, similar expressions of reciprocity in cooperation between neighbours appear in almost all spheres of life. A typical example is the voluntary mutual assistance in some chores (archaically called *moba*, more modern *akcija*). These are usually agricultural or construction works that need to be done quickly and require many people. Those who come to help in this way usually bring their own tools, while the recipient's household duty is to provide food and drink. Neighbours also commonly cooperate in the self-help maintenance of the macadam roads leading to their villages above the town. Similarly, there was a case where neighbours from nearby settlements helped the owner of a local restaurant to put out a fire and subsequently reconstructed the damaged part of the restaurant.

As Bringa (1995: 70) points out, in the normative model, *moba* is a unidirectional transaction, so no reciprocation is expected. According to my observation, in practice,

1 A residential district of an Ottoman town characterised by compact buildings usually around a mosque, an elementary school (*mekteb*) and a bakery. In Ottoman urbanism, the mahalas surrounded the market centre (*čaršija*), to which they were connected by radial streets (Zukić, 2000).

however, neighbours are very attentive to who engages and to what extent in similar work. Avoiding cooperation results in social penalties in the form of withheld help, to offer hospitality, and, most importantly, in the spreading of a negative reputation (Mentel, 2013). However, although *komšiluk* establishes a moral obligation to cooperate with neighbours regardless of denominational differences (Bringa, 1995), a significant part of cooperation happens precisely on the basis of belonging to the same denomination simply because of a religiously homogenous settlements.

In addition to cooperation in various urgent chores, a very important form of social exchange within the *komšiluk* is the demonstrating of hospitality (*gostoprinstvo*; Bringa, 1995: 68). This hospitality refers not only to ordinary mutual visits “just for coffee”, but especially to ritualized visits in connection with family or religious festivals. These are often associated with the bringing of various gifts. Typically, Muslims distribute cakes to all neighbours (irrespective of denomination) on *Ramazanski Bajram* (the feast ending the month of Ramadan; *Eid al-Fitr*) and a portion of meat from a sacrificed ram on *Kurban Bajram* (the feast of the sacrifice; *Eid al-Adha*). Catholics, on the other hand, tend to give out cakes to their neighbours (again, regardless of denomination) during Christmas (*Božić*) and Easter (*Uskrs*). Similar visits related to the celebration of religious holidays are described in detail in the literature depicting life in Bosnia before the war in the 1990s (Bringa, 1995). However, these traditions persist into the present day, despite emigration. Many people living in the diaspora return to their hometowns on the aforementioned holidays to take part in the exchanges described above.

In these transactions, it is not important that the neighbours belong to the same religious group. On the contrary, mutual help and hospitality as part of the fundamental rules of *komšiluk* are usually the first arguments many Bosnians cite to explain the “good relations” between different ethno-religious groups. And yet, contemporarily, due to ethnically selective out-migration, ethnically homogeneous settlements are forming, so that families of the same religion often end up cooperating with each other within the neighbourhood by default. This dynamic was especially the case when Serb families left the territory of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina either to other entity within BiH (Republika Srpska) or abroad. However, ethnically selective migration also affects the ethnically Croatian population, which in some cases has left ethnically mixed settlements and to settle either in Croatia or the countries of the European Union. In the following section, therefore, we will look in more detail at the patterns of cooperation observed in relation to particular denominational groups.

Three religious communities

In Bosnia, three major confessional groups overlap with ethnic groups: Bosniaks (*Bošnjaci*) largely identify themselves as Sunni Muslims, Croats as Roman Catholics, and Serbs as Orthodox Christians. However, in the surveyed localities in the territory

of Central Bosnia and Zenica-Doboj Canton, the Serbian (or Orthodox) population does not even reach 2% according to the latest census (Popis stanovništva, 2016). And because of historical developments, Sufism is quite strongly represented within Islam in Bosnia in the form of several dervish orders (Alibašić, 2014). Certainly, members of the dervish order (*tarikāt*) are also typically Sunni Muslims in Bosnia, but this group is rather sharply defined within the broader Muslim community.

Although these religious groups are not homogeneous, they are distinguished quite clearly by the varying degree of investment their followers make in ritual activities. These investments consist of the expenditure of time, energy, and funds for the benefit of the religious group. A specific observable difference between the selected religious communities is found in the different incidence of communal chanting and synchronisation of movements within rituals.

The group with the lowest investment in religious activities (including rituals) in my comparison is that of the Sunni Muslims in central Bosnia who are not members of dervish orders. Although the majority of the population in the region adheres to Islam, they are mostly secularized Muslims. They usually have some religious items in their homes (e.g., the Qur'an and other literature, or Muslim calligraphy). They often regard these as artefacts that are more important to them as family heirlooms than as religious items per se. Even among those who declare themselves as devout Muslims, only a minority regularly attend mosque, and observing a strict fast during Ramadan or fulfilling other religious obligations is relatively rare. Some of them talk about the fact that they do not need to demonstrate their faith publicly. If they do take part in any public religious activities, it tends to be festivals of the local religious pilgrimage type, such as Ajvatovica or the Days of Bosnian Spirituality at the Karići Mosque in particular (Henig, 2012). Both events take place in central Bosnia (the former near the town of Prusac and the latter near the town of Vareš). This practice has been strongly criticized by followers of reformist Muslim branches, which the majority "traditional Bosnian Islam" adherents label as members of the Salafi movement (Alibašić, 2014; Karčić, 2010; Macháček, 2008).

Compared to many Sunni Muslims, the Roman Catholics I studied are much more involved in public religious activities. Such activities are especially related to Sunday and feast day services, where at least one family member is expected to be present. Frequent absences from Holy Mass immediately provoke questions initially focused on whether the absent person is medically well or present in the locality. Frequent non-attendance at services contributes to a diminishing reputation for the person concerned. In the field, I encountered many comments on this topic, both from Muslims and other Catholics or non-religious people. Many of them pointed out quite ironically that for Catholics it is not important to live an upright life, but to show up in church on Sunday, or at least in front of the church. This kind of criticism (including self-criticism or even self-mockery) can be seen as a part of a typical Bosnian sense of humour (see Maček, 2009; Orlov, 2021). Although claims like these are hyperbolas, it points to socially expected and sanctioned behaviour. In the larger settlements inhabited by Catholics, services are held every day; they are much less

attended during the week, and presence or absence at such daily services does not translate into an increase or decrease in reputation. More important for Bosnian Catholics in terms of reputation is attendance at religious pilgrimages, which are also attended by those living in the diaspora.

There are several pilgrimage sites in and around central Bosnia, such as the Shrine of Our Lady of Olovo (*Svetište Gospe Olovske*) in Olovo, the Shrine of St. John the Baptist (*Svetište sv. Ivana Krstitelja*) in Podmilačje near Jajce, as well as the somewhat more distant Shrine of Our Lady of Kondžilo (*Svetište Gospe Kondžilske*) on Kondžilo Hill near the town of Teslić in Republika Srpska. In addition to these explicitly religious pilgrimage sites visited by broad layers of believers, the annual military pilgrimage to Bobovac Castle is important for strengthening Croatian-Catholic ethno-religious identity (Katić, 2017). This pilgrimage was first held in 2002 at the initiative of the Bosnian Archbishop Cardinal Vinko Puljić, and later turned into a regular pilgrimage of Croatian members of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Oružane snage Bosne i Hercegovine*). The pilgrimage is held annually on the Saturday closest to 25 October. The intention of the pilgrims is to pray for the “homeland” (*domovina*). The date symbolically refers to the death of the last Bosnian queen, Catherine (Kosača), who died in exile in Rome on 25 October 1478.

Although members of the Roman Catholic Church in central Bosnia invest more time and energy in public religious activities than most Sunni Muslims, on our scale of ritual intensity the Bosnian Catholic community ranks in the middle between the majority Sunnis and members of the dervish orders. While the Catholic liturgy does include communal chanting, it includes less participant involvement compared to the dervish rites. Liturgical singing is usually dominated by the organ and the singing of the cantor, while other people are generally more passive. Synchronization of movements is also much less represented (with the exception of marches during military pilgrimages to Bobovac).

The third group, therefore, consists of the members of the Sufi dervish orders (*tarikāt*). There are several dervish orders in Bosnia (Macháček, 2010), which differ from each other in customs, style of conducting ceremonies, and partly in theological accents (Kropáček, 2008). It is important for this thesis to note that, at least in the territory of Bosnia, they share many characteristics that are relevant to the objectives of the study. First of all, the dervish orders form relatively sharply defined communities in the sense that it is possible to distinguish fairly precisely who belongs to them and who does not. Indeed, a person becomes a dervish by virtue of an initiation ceremony in which they submit to a spiritual leader (*šejh*; *muršid*) and vow to accept the discipline of the order (*adab*). The second aspect is the relatively high degree of personal investment in religious life. In addition to the regular participation in group rituals (*hadra/zikr*²), which usually take place once a week, the dervish is also

2 *Zikr* is, in a narrower sense, only one part of the rite of “remembering God’s names”. Often, however, the term is used as a *pars pro toto* for the entire rite, which includes many more components. The ceremony as a whole is called a *hadra*, and it is a ceremony with a complex dramaturgy involving

expected to perform the normal Muslim religious duties in an exemplary manner. These include, for example, regular ritual prayer in the mosque (especially the Friday noon prayer *džuma*), observing the fasting month of Ramadan, completing the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hadž*), and strictly abstaining from alcohol and pork. However, dervishes are expected to make a much more intensive time investment in their community. Many hours of volunteer work in the order's lodge (*tekija*) are expected, which includes both the upkeep of the lodge, including construction work and the care of guests. The nature of dervish religious ceremonies itself is also very different from what that of other Muslims and among Catholics. Although the specific arrangement of the ceremonies (*hadra/zikr*) varies among the *tarikats* within Bosnia, they generally resemble each other in a number of characteristics. An important part of them is the choral chanting of excerpts from the Qur'an or religious songs (*ilahije* and *kaside*). This communal singing is often accompanied by rhythmic accompaniment (*kudum* drums) and synchronised body movements. In contrast to liturgical singing in Catholic worship, the rhythmic component is dominant over the melodic one. The elements of synchronization and the use of rhythm are even more pronounced in the portion of the service in which the attributes of Allah are repeated (that is, the *zikr* itself in the narrower sense of the word). In Bosnia, this repetition typically takes place aloud or semi-aloud in synchronization with rhythmic breathing and bodily movements. Also in this phase, the rhythm is sometimes set by the drums. At the same time, given the physical arrangement of the participants during the ceremony (dervishes often sit in a circle or in other formations in which they can see each other), it would be almost impossible to participate in the ceremony only passively.

Patterns of cooperation in three religious communities

For all three of these communities, the models of cooperation mentioned above (in particular, generalized reciprocity between neighbours) are relevant. The question, then, is whether the Roman Catholic and dervish communities differ substantially in terms of cooperation from Sunni Muslims who are not members of dervish orders. Ethnographic material from my research suggests such a difference, that active membership in these two religious communities is a significant catalyst for cooperation even beyond the relations of *komšilik* or kinship.

a singing of spiritual songs (*ilahiyja*), various forms of repetition of God's attributes (*zikr*), passages from the Qur'an, etc. There is not an entirely sharp dividing line between these concepts, so I consider them together in the study. For a detailed discussion, see Křížek (2014).

Roman Catholics in central Bosnia

Belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, manifested by regular attendance at worship services, can make available to the people of central Bosnia a number of resources that are inaccessible to others. This access is related to the close links between the Roman Catholic Church and the Croatian political representation, especially the relatively powerful HDZ party (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*; Croatian Democratic Community). For the historical aspects of these ties, see Hladký (2005) and Hoare (2007). At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the Roman Catholic Church in Bosnia was one of the main agitators of Croatian national mobilisation, as a result of which the vast majority of Bosnian Croats have dual citizenship. Since Croatia's accession to the European Union in 2003, Croatian citizenship represents a significant facilitation for Bosnians who aspire to leave the country for work. The granting of Croatian citizenship is conditional on the individual's relationship to the Croatian nation,³ and belonging to the Croats in Bosnia is linked to confessional affiliation to the Catholic Church. In this connection, several of my informants mentioned baptisms on purpose in Catholic churches, with some priests said to be able to "facilitate" applications for Croatian citizenship.

In addition to providing potential Croatian citizenship, active membership in the Roman Catholic Church can help an individual to establish themselves directly in HDZ structures or participate in some form of the party's clientelism (Lofranco, 2016). These benefits stem both from the close links between the Roman Catholic Church and the HDZ, and from the fact that within Bosnia and Herzegovina many state-owned enterprises are directly intertwined with the dominant national political parties.

Other types of relationships that arise through active membership in the Roman Catholic Church and can expand an individual's network of at least potential cooperation are those associated with fictive kinship (godparenthood; *kumstvo*). In central Bosnia, it appears in two forms: godparenthood (*kršteno kumstvo*) and the position of the best man at a wedding (*vjenčano kumstvo*). Whereas godparenthood is limited to Christian communities (either Roman Catholic or Orthodox), the position of the best man at a wedding is common for all ethno-religious groups. In addition to these two forms, both Allcock (2000: 362) and Maček (2009: 114) mention the so-called *šišano kumstvo* (created at the first haircut of a child of about one year old) and relate it to secularization and the overcoming of barriers between confessional groups after World War II. However, according to the narratives of the inhabitants of the region under study, *šišano kumstvo* was an artificial attempt by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia to 'secularise' the godparenthood.

In central Bosnia, *kumstvo* is thought of as a relationship based on choice (not hereditary godparenthood as common in other regions of the former Yugoslavia or Europe). While a *vjenčani kum* (best man at a wedding) is usually someone from the

3 There has been a significant reduction in the interpretation of this requirement over the last 20 years.

circle of close friends, a *kršteni kum* is optimally someone who is not related, has a positive reputation in the community, and preferably a higher social status. Although it is considered unacceptable to ask someone to be a *kum* for apparently selfish reasons, it is expected that the *kum* will be helpful to their godchild. This help refers especially to a willingness to speak on behalf of someone and similar interventions. In an urban setting (but also in the mountain towns of central Bosnia), *kršteni kum* represents a rather important relationship that is by its nature tied to the religious community (in this case, Catholic), and a strategically chosen *kum* can be a good intermediary in such matters as admission to a job, to a prestigious university, or if something needs to be arranged as a matter of priority.

However, the benefits of membership in the relatively cohesive group of Roman Catholics are not exhausted by godparenthood. Other such benefits include networks of “acquaintances” (*veze*). While these are not restricted to denomination in the normative model, in practice sufficient trust between individuals is necessary for their formation. This trust often involves people who do not have much in common with each other: they did not go to school together, did not serve in the military, and do not even live in the same neighbourhood, so that they and their families know each other only vaguely. What they do have in common, in this case, is belonging to a common Catholic parish. For Bosnian Croats, a separation of ethnic and confessional identity is much rarer than for Bosniaks. This strong conflation, which is much more pronounced among Bosnian Croats than in Croatia itself, has also been pointed out by Ivana Maček (2009: 17) in her ethnographic analysis of besieged Sarajevo. She attributes this identity formation to the group’s perception of being a ‘minority’, an image that persists in the nationalist rhetoric of Bosnian Croats to this day (even a double minority – within Bosnia towards Bosniaks and Serbs, but also towards Croats from Croatia).

As noted above, the main religious obligation that concerns Roman Catholics is regular attendance at Sunday and feast day liturgies. A fairly accurate overview of who was and who was not present at the liturgy can be acquired very easily, since it is not customary in central Bosnia for people to rush home immediately after the service. People still meet outside the church after the mass, converse, sometimes go for coffee together, and only then go home. Attending the service thus is much more of a community event. As a result, the most important social punishment for more frequent non-attendance is the spread of a negative reputation.

The dervish orders

If the highest levels of ritual intensity are attributed to dervishes and their communities, including those components of rituals that Atran and Henrich (2010) suggest most strongly promote intragroup trust and willingness to cooperate, these groups should then show the highest levels of cooperation that go beyond kinship and *komšiluk*. What is significant about membership in the dervish order (*tarikati*) is

that the vast majority of members join the order voluntarily. This aspect is true despite the fact that there are also some dervish order leaders in Bosnia, where both membership of the *tarikats* and the position of *šejh* are ‘inherited’ across several generations.

The typical dervish community in Bosnia, which is grouped around a single *šejh* and regularly attends ceremonies in the order’s lodge (*tekija*), includes at most a few dozen people. These are usually people of a very wide range of ages (from students to people of retirement age), education, social status, etc. Since dervishes in Bosnia usually do not practice celibacy, we might expect entire families of dervishes to participate in the life of *tekija*. But in Bosnia, family-based membership is rather a rare phenomenon. Dervishes belonging to a particular *tekija* are often unrelated to each other and live in different places. Nor is it rare for individuals to commute tens of kilometres for ceremonies to a *tekija*. Thus, patterns of cooperation described above are rather rare within dervish communities. Dervishes are unlikely to cooperate with each other primarily on the basis of neighbourhood or kinship. Based on theoretical grounds, however, I expect that membership in a *tarikats* promotes intragroup cooperation more strongly than membership in other types of religious groups, including the Roman Catholic Church.

Direct cooperation between the dervishes of the same *tarikats* takes place in a similar way to that mentioned in the case of neighbourhood (*komšiluk*) but independently of how far apart the dervishes live. When a dervish mentions in the course of conversation that he needs two or three men to help with construction work over the weekend, someone immediately offers to help. This kind of cooperation proceeds on the basis of generalised reciprocity. There is no expectation of immediate reciprocation of help, thus it is the long-term reluctance to help when someone needs help that is viewed negatively. And since dervishes do not usually live in close proximity, the previously described ritualized visits connected to family or religious festivals or the celebration of holidays apply only to a limited extent. After the common ceremonies associated with the holidays, the dervishes return to their families, so that visits and other activities associated with those events take place in their neighbourhoods.

Another example of cooperation that a visitor to a dervish lodge will immediately notice is the organization of the *tekija* (volunteer work at the lodge). Each member of the order has assigned duties, which they carry out so that everything runs smoothly. These duties cover activities ranging from cleaning to preparing tea and coffee for other dervishes and guests, to preparing or providing refreshments (after the ceremony, the dervishes often still meet for a more or less formal get-together over dinner. This custom is called *sofra* and is part of the relations of informal diplomacy often associated with dervish communities; see Henig, 2014).

However, the distribution of duties to individual dervishes often extends beyond the *tekija* itself. The dervish community can directly help its members to self-realization. This support happens in a number of ways. One of these is still related to duties within the order: the *šejh* can assign duties to individual dervishes differentially according to their interests, talents, and abilities. In some dervish communities,

I have encountered a literally pedagogical or even therapeutic approach by *šejh* or his assistant (*vekil*) towards their dervishes in this way. So, for example, if a dervish had academic inclinations, the *šejh* might encourage them in their university studies (even by arranging financial support; cf. also Henig, 2014: 87); if someone showed musical inclinations, they would be entrusted with this area of work, and so on. At the same time, however, he required the dervish to fulfil these duties consistently within the framework of their own spiritual practice. In so doing, he not only ensured that the relevant areas of the *tarikát's* life were effectively covered from his own resources, but above all he fostered in the dervishes a sense of their own competence and self-confidence.

Another form of cooperation that takes place directly in the environment of the dervish order is direct assistance with job placement or with securing a premises for business. This assistance happens in two ways. The first is direct placement; a dervish who has lost his job or has had a long-term problem finding employment can get a job either through another dervish or through the direct intervention of a *šejh*. Several leaders of dervish orders are public figures of high prestige outside the religious sphere. They include, for example, university professors, civil servants, or men of letters, so they can use their professional contacts. In addition, they sometimes intervene directly on behalf of a dervish in need of help with another member of the order. The second way is more like brokering a location for a business. For example, when a dervish of a particular *tarikát* has decided to move to the city in which his order is based, they might have difficulty finding a suitable business space (e.g., a workshop or shop space). Renting such premises is often not easy as many owners of commercial or manufacturing premises are reluctant to rent space to someone they do not know. In such a case, membership in the dervish order often helps the applicant. For example, when I mentioned a dervish in informal conversations with residents of the research sites, people (regardless of religion) generally gave the individual high moral credit. Understandably, this credit is also related to the reputation of the *šejh*. If a particular *šejh* does not have a good reputation, membership in his *tarikát* tends to put the dervish at a disadvantage.

Conclusions

Although the study provides a rather preliminary analysis, the findings obtained from the ethnographic fieldwork correspond reasonably well to the above-mentioned expectations. Differences in the extent of cooperation networks can indeed be observed between denominational communities. Sunni Muslims in central Bosnia form a heterogeneous and relatively less cohesive group, as a result of which their cooperative relationships are usually limited to family and kinship, neighbourhood and friendships derived from shared experiences (classmates, colleagues, military service buddies, etc.). The two other denominational groups add other, differentiated circuits of relationships to that basic level of cooperation networks. Membership in

the Catholic group potentially extends networks of cooperative relationships through fictive kinship (godparenthood; *kumstvo*) and, partly still, through ties between the Roman Catholic Church in Bosnia and the Croatian political party HDZ, providing potential benefits from party clientelism (Lofranco, 2016). Membership in the Roman Catholic Church or other organizations directly or indirectly connected with the Church can help to obtain Croatian citizenship, which also makes it easier for the holder to travel for work to the countries of the European Union.

Patterns of cooperation in dervish communities are similar in that they also extend networks of relationships beyond the level of kinship and neighbourhood but primarily involve the members of the dervish community themselves. Secondly, cooperation is about potentially increasing the prestige of the individual within the wider society as well. This potential increase in prestige, however, depends heavily on the reputation of the leader (*šejh*). Insofar as the *šejh* of a dervish order makes a purposeful effort to build bridges between different segments of society by conducting informal diplomacy (Henig, 2014), he becomes an effective broker (Boissevain, 1974) mediating access to resources that might be unavailable to others. As a result, his prestige in society is consolidated, which in turn is, to some extent, passed on to other dervishes. The extended prestige is part of a positive feedback loop, because at least part of the *šejh's* prestige comes from the reputation of his dervishes.

But the question is whether one can even compare the degree of cooperation within dervish communities versus Catholic communities. Both denominational groups bring an extension of cooperative relationships beyond the immediate community, albeit in different ways. It is therefore important to focus on intra-group cooperation. In Catholic communities, it is not possible to distinguish whether two members of a group cooperate with each other primarily because they are from the same church or primarily because they are neighbours or relatives (including fictive kin). Indeed, both neighbourhoods and kinship networks tend to be very often ethnically and religiously homogeneous in Bosnia. Conversely, in the case of dervish orders, I commonly witnessed situations in which dervishes cooperate with each other purely on the basis of their affiliation to a *tarikats*, since they are neither neighbours nor relatives, nor do they know each other from other walks of life. Because of many confounding factors, this observation is not strict evidence that there is a higher degree of intra-group cooperation among dervishes, but it is at least a clue in that direction.

The findings from the fieldwork reported in this paper suggest that members of more cohesive groups with a higher level of intra-group cooperation are more successful in facing adversity. This finding is consistent with some recent trends in evolutionary anthropology (Wilson, 2010). In the monograph cited above, evolutionary biologist David S. Wilson approaches the question of the evolution of religion from the position of multilevel natural selection. This conception assumes that under certain conditions (which, as he shows, are met by religious groups) group selection can prevail over individual selection and thus groups compete with each other to

a greater extent than individuals within groups compete with each other. One group has a chance to prevail over another, competing group when, among other things, it is characterized by a strong degree of “altruistic” cooperation within the group (or cooperation entailing individual costs). For this to work, however, it is necessary to put in place a system that punishes free riders – both of which, according to Wilson, are precisely provided by religion or a similar system of beliefs and practices (Iannaccone, 1994; Stark, 1996). One of the ways in which this is done is to invest personal resources for the benefit of the community. In addition to its immediate function of providing resources for joint activities, the investment also serves as a signal of personal commitment to the community (Bulbulia, 2008). The second mechanism that further strengthens group cohesion and intragroup cooperation appears to be rhythmic synchronization as part of rituals (Gelfand et al., 2020).

This conclusion is not inconsistent with how the members of these groups themselves describe their motivations. No dervish is likely to say that he joined the *tarikats* to get some benefits; nor, as a rule, will he say that he has heard that the dervishes are a “fine bunch” who help each other out. Rather, their admitted motivations include statements such as “I wanted to experience the Islamic faith more deeply” or “I wanted to be a better Muslim”. Or they offered various cryptic explanations following patterns from Sufi folklore. Certainly, sooner or later they mention that through the acceptance of *adab* (the etiquette and obligations of membership in the order) a dervish may receive *berićet* (“God’s blessing”), which may manifest itself even in a purely secular context. The blessing, however, cannot be begged or invoked by some rite or magical act. Thus, Sufism as represented by the contemporary *tarikats* in central Bosnia rejects practices such as writing amulets (*zapisi*) or similar acts (on amulets in popular Sufism in Bosnia, see Bringa, 1995: 216). Blessings (*berićet*) in the theology of these orders come from God undeservedly (but vicariously through the *šejh*), with the *adab* merely creating the conditions for its reception. The belief in God’s blessing (*berićet*) is thus not a “pragmatic”, purposive act. However, if we take into account Wilson’s (2010) concept of the practical realism, then the belief appears to be practically realistic.

The practical benefits of belief in God’s blessing (*berićet*) are mediated by rituals which are characterized by high emotional intensity, rhythmic breathing in harmony with bodily movements to the right and left, and with the repetition of devotional formulas accompanied by drums. Unlike other religious groups, which require a high individual investment of time, energy, and other resources, they are likely to have a specific effect based on inducing a psychological frame that makes individuals more willing to help each other.

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