Chapter 12

Sun, Moon and Cross

The commonest symbols on Bosnian stećci are the sun, the moon and a cross. With other symbols they are also found on Muslim tombstones known as “bašluci” (headstones), “nišani” (markers), or “šahidi” (witnesses). Burial grounds with stećci often merge with areas of nišani. The association is almost a rule, its absence either an exception or due to destruction of the nišani.

Like Judaism, Christianity is a Divine revelation reminding us of God’s unity and the purpose of existence. If revelation has been received and interpreted in various ways, this is what necessarily happens on descent from a higher to a lower level of existence. No form or interpretation is left without connection to the Principle it manifests. God’s revelation of the Word to His apostle the Praised recalls us to Unity, prophecy and return. It annulled nothing in the prophetic heritage, but showed everything in a different, more certain light. Christianity in all its variety is thus the heritage of every witness to God’s unity, the Praised’s apostolate and the inevitability of the Hour. Intellect retains every potential of Being and the same signs remind us of this in all the traditions.

Everything in the world and self is a sign. As knowers, we must ascend through signs to the Signified, Whose Face is present in them everywhere: “Whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God.” Two signs strike us more than all the rest: the sun and the moon.

The sun has its own light, which is thus its manifestation: it is both Light and the Lamp that lights: Light, because its capacity to illumine is from itself, and the Lamp, because we need it to see the world around us.

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1 The cross is the symbol of Christ. Just as there are many Christologies, there are many interpretations of the cross. For traditional Bosnian interpretations, See Solovjev, “Jesu li bogomili poštovali krst?” 82–102.
2 For illustrations of the decorations on stećci and nišani see the works of Bešlagić, Mujezinović and Wenzel cited in the bibliography.
3 In anti-Muslim discourse, this fact is passed over in silence, denied, or forcibly rejected. It presents an unacceptable challenge to the ideological distortions of “Christian continuity” and “Muslim intrusion.” Though obvious, even Bešlagić does not record it. His scholarly failing is no doubt due to fear of public confrontation. There are, for example, the remains of old nišani near groups of stećci in Ljubomir, around Prokoško Lake, at Gorica near Stolac, and in Presječka near Foča, but Bešlagić makes no mention of this. Nišani have been systematically destroyed by nationalists in the past two centuries, a destruction that continues today.
4 Qur’an, 2:115.
The light it sheds corresponds to Intellect, for it contains its own source, in the form of manifestation, radiation and dispersion. It connects what it lights up with the uncreated Light. This is true of everything: everything is connected through Intellect with the One Whose knowledge is all-embracing. As Guénon said “the Divine Intellect is the Spiritual Sun, while the manifested intellect is a ray of the Sun; and there can be no more discontinuity between the Principle and manifestation than there is between the Sun and its rays.” He goes on to say “It is by the Intellect, therefore, that every being in all its states of manifestation, is attached directly to the Principle, insofar as it eternally contains the ‘truth’ of all beings, is itself not other than the Divine Intellect.”

The moon owes the light it sheds to the sun, to which it is wholly subordinate. Surrendering to the sun, it receives and comes to life. It is both masculine and feminine: what it receives as feminine it transmits into the dark and the depth as masculine. It is a sign of the Praised, who transmits praise received from All-praised God. Its receptive aspect signifies the Virgin Mary, as handmaid, its giving aspect the apostle.

The Praised is both lit and light-giving. As receiving and giving, they manifest as our irrefragable core, the Spirit of the All-merciful breathed into us. However low we sink, his light is present. Our constant potential, manifest in descent and ascent, is symbolized by the moon in its phases, from full to new moon sliver, like an aged palm bough. To face the bottom of the valley, symbolized by the new moon, we must first understand the upright path and ascent to realization in the Hour. This unveiling and realization is seeing one in two, the Praised and Mary in their state of perfect illumination, the light in the Light-giving lamp:

In the name of God, the All-merciful, the Ever-merciful. The Hour has drawn nigh: the moon is split. Yet if they see a sign they turn away, and they say “A continuous sorcery!” They have cried lies, and followed their caprices; but every matter is settled. And there have come to them such tidings as contain a deterrent – a Wisdom far-reaching; yet warnings do not avail. So turn thou away from them.

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5 Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 12.
6 Ibid.
7 The Slav noun for moon, “mjesec,” is grammatically masculine, whereas the Latin “luna” is grammatically feminine.
8 Qur’an, 36:39.
9 Ibid., 54:1–6.