

Chapter Thirteen

Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Before the war in Bosnia, few Westerners were aware of the existence of an indigenous Muslim population in southeastern Europe. Islam was usually regarded as a problem associated with migration or political relations between the West and the Middle East. In fact, about 10 million inhabitants of the Balkans are of Muslim origin. The largest group is to be found in former Yugoslavia, where about 5 million, or one fifth of the population, are Muslims. Others are living in Albania, 3.5 million (70 per cent of the population), Bulgaria, 1.4 million (10–15 per cent), Greece (150,000) and Rumania (50,000). The figures are not exact and do not necessarily refer to actual religious identification.

If Balkan Muslims are ranked according to ethnic origin the following picture emerges: Albanians (5–6 million), Bosnian Muslims (2.3 million), Turks (1.5 million), Roma/Gypsies (500,000), Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks (180,000), Macedonian-speaking Torbeshi (100,000–200,000) as well as smaller groups of Slavic- and Greek-speaking Muslims. In terms of territorial dominance, the largest concentrations of Muslims are found in Kosovo (90 per cent), Albania (70 per cent), the Sandžak province in Serbia and Montenegro (50 per cent), Bosnia and Herzegovina (45 per cent) and Macedonia (30 per cent).

The Islamic presence in southeastern Europe is the result of five centuries of Ottoman rule, beginning towards the end of the fourteenth century and lasting until 1913. Balkan Muslims are Sunni of the Hanafi school of law, although an important role has been played by Sufi orders, notably the Bektashiyya. In Albania it is estimated that 20–25 per cent of the Muslims are Bektashis, and in Kosovo and Macedonia, as well as in Bosnia, the Bektashiyya and other orders still have followers. Ottoman rule was to have far-reaching effects on the history of the Balkans. First, a social and political system developed which differed radically from feudal society in Western Europe. Second, a specific Balkan culture evolved, partly isolated from major currents in European thought, and generating an ambivalent attitude towards 'Europe'. Third, and as a consequence of these factors, the process of nation-building among both Christians and Muslims was affected.

Bosnian Muslims

The Muslims of Bosnia illustrate perhaps more clearly than other ethnic groups the unusual complexity of nation-building among the southern Slavs. Although Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins and Bosnian Muslims speak the same language, religious and cultural differences were sufficiently important to serve as a basis for the formation of distinct national identities. This was to a large extent due to political circumstances during the nineteenth century, but is ultimately a result of prolonged foreign domination and the characteristics of social and cultural processes in the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires.

In the Ottoman Empire, citizens were categorised according to religious affiliation. From the point of view of the Turks, society was made up of Muslims, Jews and Orthodox, Catholic or Armenian Christians. This principle of classification was a consequence of an Islamic world-view and the lack of a Western concept of religion. There was no clear distinction between a religious and a secular sphere, between state and religion, but society–culture–religion was understood as a unified whole, subject to the Islamic law, *sharia*. As *sharia* could not be universally applied, since a majority of the inhabitants of the Balkans were not Muslims, the Turks' solution was to allow the conquered peoples a considerable degree of autonomy. They retained their own legal system and were represented politically by their religious leaders.

This social order, which is usually referred to as the *millet* system, meant that different socio-religious groups, or *millet*, lived together, or rather side by side, and gave rise to a specific multi-ethnic culture where the cities became meeting grounds of Christians, Muslims and Jews. Every group lived in its own residential area or *mahala*, where it preserved its language and lifestyle. People prayed to their God in Hebrew, Arabic, Church Slavonic or Byzantine Greek, but met in the market place and the streets of artisans. In Balkan towns and cities, Turkish, Greek, Judezmo, Albanian or Slavic dialects were spoken, and, irrespective of ethnic origin, many people were multilingual.

As a rule the Turks did not actively engage in missionary activities and therefore a majority of Greeks and southern Slavs maintained their original culture and religion. A notable exception is Bosnia, where a large part of the population converted to Islam, according to one theory because of their Bogomil heritage, according to another primarily for social and economic reasons. Whatever the case may be, the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina are descendants of these Serbo-Croatian-speaking converts. During Ottoman rule they were regarded by themselves and others as 'Turks' or, rather, people of 'Turkish Faith'.

Westernisation

The occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria–Hungary in 1878 was a turning point for the Muslims. They were confronted with the

lifestyles of modern European society, and the question of their ethnic identity was suddenly brought to the fore. As long as the Ottoman Empire and the *millet* system prevailed they had no reason to identify themselves as anything but Muslims. However, the rise of Serb and Croat varieties of modern nationalism during the nineteenth century made the identity of the Muslims a complex and pressing issue. As in other similar situations several alternative options were initially available. Muslims belonging to the modern segments of society often identified themselves as Serbs but more often as Croats, as both Croatia and Bosnia were parts of the same political framework, and Zagreb was a major cultural centre.

Between 1878 and 1918 the Austrian authorities consciously tried to popularise the idea of a Bosniac nation and a Bosniac language. This policy was, however, not very successful, as Serbian and Croatian identities were already available to Orthodox and Catholic Bosnians, while for a majority of the Muslims the traditional adherence to Islam was still the primary identification. In addition, since the characteristic feature of Bosnia was its Islamic heritage, the term Bosniac practically referred only to Muslims, especially as the oriental aspects of Bosnian culture were perceived as alien by nationally conscious Serbs or Croats.

The Austrian occupation initiated a process of dramatic cultural and political change. The Muslims lost their privileged position, and Islam was reduced to a minority religion in a predominantly Christian state. The Austrians interfered even in purely religious matters, for example by introducing a new hierarchical and church-like organisation, and creating the position of *reis-ul-ulema* as the religious head of Bosnian Muslims. The state also took control of the important religious foundations, the *vakuf* (Ar. *waqf*). These policies, as well as insensitive missionary activities of the Catholic Church, gave rise to strong opposition and the decades around the turn of the century were dominated by a Muslim struggle for religious and cultural autonomy, which was finally achieved in 1909.

As a consequence of the political changes, a great number of Muslims left Bosnia and Herzegovina and moved to areas still controlled by the Ottoman Empire. According to some estimates, about 150,000 Bosnians emigrated to Turkey between 1878 and 1914, which resulted in a significant change of the ethnic structure in Bosnia. The census of 1879 reported a Muslim population of 448,613 or 38.7 per cent of the inhabitants. In 1910 there were 612,137 Muslims, but their share of the population was only 32.3 per cent.

Yugoslavia: Religion and Nation

In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia only Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were recognised as founding nations of the new South Slavic state, and the position of the Bosnian Muslims was initially quite difficult. Immediately

after the First World War there were cases of harassment and persecution, and the agrarian reform particularly affected the Muslims, since practically all landowners in Bosnia and Herzegovina were Muslims, and the Muslim farmers were discriminated against. The most drastic change, however, was that Bosnia and Herzegovina no longer existed as a political and administrative unit. The Muslims concentrated their efforts on preserving Islam and the religious institutions, while trying to obtain some degree of autonomy. Their political party, Jugoslovenska Muslimanska Organizacija (the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation, JMO), under the competent leadership of Mehmet Spaho, skilfully used the rivalry between Serbs and Croats to improve the position of the Muslims.

In 1930 the government established the Islamic Religious Community, abolished the religious-cultural autonomy of 1909, and, like the Austrian authorities, took control of the *vakuf* foundations. Another important step was to move the function of *reis-ul-ulema* to Belgrade. However, due to the key position of JMO in Yugoslav politics, in 1936 the Islamic Religious Community managed to inaugurate a new constitution, which re-established religious autonomy. The community regained its control of the *vakuf* foundations, *reis-ul-ulema* moved back to Sarajevo, and the Muslims were allowed to keep considerable parts of the *sharia*-based family law. There were also Islamic educational institutions both on secondary school and university level, in addition to several hundred Quranic primary schools.

During World War II, Bosnia and Herzegovina was annexed by the Croatian Ustasha state. Muslims were officially regarded as 'the flower of the Croat nation' and a monumental mosque was established in the centre of Zagreb. Parts of the Muslim population sympathised with the fascist regime and a Muslim SS-unit, the Handžar division, was organised. It should be pointed out, however, that Islamic religious leaders at a very early stage publically condemned the Ustasha atrocities and genocidal policies against the Serbs. There were also strong sympathies among the Muslims with the communist-led partisan movement. Bosnia and Herzegovina became the central battle ground in a cruel civil war between Serbs, Croats and Muslims. Nowhere else were people killed on a such a scale or in such a shocking manner. At the same time Bosnia symbolised the possibility of a life together. Under the slogan Brotherhood and Unity the partisans managed to mobilise Bosnians of all ethnic groups, and it was logical that the post-war Yugoslav federation should be proclaimed in the town of Jajce in 1943.

In Tito's Yugoslavia the Muslims of Bosnia in many respects occupied a specific position. At first, Islam as a religious community was seriously affected by the antireligious policies of the socialist regime. The Muslim infrastructure, in which the *vakuf* foundations played a key role, providing education and welfare, was dismantled. Land and buildings were

confiscated, the Quranic schools and higher institutions of learning were closed, the Muslim press was silenced, *sharia* abolished and the veil forbidden. When the resistance was broken, the Islamic Religious Community, due to its relatively weak organisational structure, became the most tightly controlled of all religious institutions.

After Yugoslavia's break with the Soviet Union in 1948 and the creation of a specific brand of self-management socialism during the 1960s, the position of the religious communities improved substantially. Because of Tito's aspirations to become a leader of the non-aligned movement, the Muslim population, as well as the institutions of Islam, were given a special role in foreign policy. Yugoslav ambassadors in Muslim countries were generally recruited among Turks, Albanians, Macedonian or Bosnian Muslims, and the mosques of Sarajevo were always visited by prominent guests from the Islamic world. Taking advantage of these developments, the Islamic Religious Community gradually consolidated its position. More than 600 mosques were built or reconstructed all over Bosnia and Herzegovina, mostly financed by the believers themselves. The *medrese* (Ar. *madrasa*), religious secondary schools, started to function again and a Muslim theological faculty was solemnly opened in 1977. In addition, a great number of Bosnian Muslims studied at Islamic universities, such as the famous Al-Azhar in Cairo. As a result, the Islamic Community was strengthened by a new cadre of well-educated *imams* and other syllabification functionaries. A case in point is the famous Bosnian politician Haris Silajdžić.

Nation-Building and Secular Nationalism

Bosnia differed from other Yugoslav republics in one very important respect. There was no *Staatsvolk* constituting a majority of the inhabitants and making its imprint on society and culture. Instead three ethnic groups, Serbs, Croats and Muslims, were supposed to share political power. Immediately after the war several options, including partition, were in fact considered, but the communists chose to create the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, partly because of the strong Muslim segment, partly in order to curb Croat and Serb rivalry and territorial aspirations. Between the two World Wars the Yugoslav Communist Party – on Comintern's order – had advocated the dissolution of Yugoslavia and issued statements that might indicate that the Bosnian Muslims at least potentially were a distinct people or nation. The dominant view within the party, however, was that the Muslims of Bosnia constituted a religious group, which due to specific historical circumstances possessed certain characteristics of an ethnic group. It was generally expected that they would finally assimilate.

However, it was very difficult even for a secularised Muslim to become a Serb or a Croat, as these identities were ultimately based on religious

boundaries. Moreover, from a Serb or Croat perspective, Bosnian Muslims were, and to a considerable extent still are, a kind of traitor, who adopted the religion and culture of the invading Turks and were on the wrong side during the glorious wars of liberation which constitute the national myths of Serbs and Croats. Thus, at the same time as Croats and Serbs claimed that the Muslims were actually part of their own national corpus, they despised them. This meant that the process of assimilation which began in the late nineteenth century involved only a minority, and in the absence of a secular identity the only viable option for many Muslims who left the Islamic tradition was to become 'Yugoslavs'.

In the Arab- or Turkish-speaking Muslim world it is possible to construct a national identity based on language and perhaps pan-Arabic or pan-Turkish ideologies. This alternative was not available in Bosnia, as the high culture of Serbocroatian-speaking Muslims during the Ottoman period was not indigenous, but part of a universal Islamic civilisation. While the Slavic dialect was used in everyday life, the literary languages of educated Muslims were Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Bosnian culture before the Ottoman conquest, on the other hand, was Christian, and a matter of dispute between Croats and Serbs. The ambiguous status of Bosnian Muslims was reflected in the post-war censuses. In 1948 it was possible to declare oneself as 'Serbian Muslim', 'Croatian Muslim' or 'Nationally Undecided Muslim'. A majority, almost 800,000 individuals, or 90 per cent, chose the latter alternative. In 1953 there was another option: 'Undecided Yugoslav', and in 1961: 'Muslim - Ethnic Affiliation'. When Yugoslavia during the 1960s had given up any plans to establish a common Yugoslav (ethnic) identity, and was transformed into a highly decentralised federation, Bosnian Muslims were finally, in 1969, recognised as a state-building people, or nation, on the same level as Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Montenegrins. This was confirmed by the constitutional changes in 1974, but as early as in the census of 1971, the category 'Muslims' (in a national sense) was introduced.

The Bosnian Communist Party was controlled by a coalition of Muslims, Serbs and Croats, where an important role was played by certain Muslim families or 'clans'. These secularised Muslims within the party actively pushed for a recognition of the Bosnian Muslims. The new nation was given the name *Muslimani*, i.e. Muslims, and the recognition started a process of nation-building where the history and culture of Bosnian Muslims was strongly emphasised. As the communists wanted to downplay the religious dimension as much as possible, there was a clear tendency to stress the (possible) Bogomil origin of the Muslims, which at least indirectly implied that the Muslims were actually the dominant nation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The communists might have expected that by choosing the term Muslim, they would neutralise the socio-cultural and political role of Islam, but the effect was rather the reverse. In Serbo-Croatian the only way

to distinguish between Muslims in an ethnic and religious sense was to use capital 'M'. As ethnic identity in this case would be inconceivable without a religious basis, it more or less automatically followed that those who did practice Islam were, after all, more genuine Muslims than others. This was further accentuated as cultural institutions, which in other parts of Yugoslavia had a strong national and symbolic function, in Bosnia and Herzegovina were supposed to be the common property of three nations. However, while Serbs and Croats had 'their' academies of sciences and cultural foundations in Zagreb and Belgrade, the only Muslim analogy were the Islamic institutions. Moreover, in the Islamic world it was impossible to apply the distinction between religion and nation, and it is hardly a coincidence that the Islamic Religious Community in 1969 changed its name to the Islamic Community.

The new attitude towards the Muslims coincided with a general modernisation of Bosnian society, which acquainted a growing number of Muslims with an industrialised and urban environment, as well as higher education. Their share of the membership in the Bosnian Communist Party rose dramatically during the 1970s, and they were increasingly employed in the state apparatus and other power structures. Between 1971 and 1981 the number of Muslim communists grew three times, which meant that in the 1980s they were represented according to their share of the population. In addition, due to rapid population growth and extensive Croat and Serb migrations, the Muslims finally became the largest ethnic group in Bosnia. After World War II they constituted 30.8 per cent of the population, the Serbs 40.5 per cent and the Croats 22.2 per cent. In 1991 the situation was completely different. Now, 43.7 per cent of the population was Muslim, 31.3 per cent Serbian, and 17.5 per cent Croatian, and a Muslim majority was a likely prospect.

The demographic changes, and the political and religious mobilisation of the Muslims, worried both Croats and Serbs, in particular the latter. Serb intellectuals started to refer to a Stalinist-type 'Islamic socialism' which had allegedly conquered Bosnia, and many well-known personalities left Sarajevo. The accusation was partly correct, in the sense that the Bosnian regime was one of the most conservative and dogmatic in Yugoslavia. Using the delicate balance between religious and ethnic groups as a pretext, the Republican Communist Party reacted severely against anything that might be labelled ethnic hatred or nationalism. Statements or activities which in Croatia or Serbia were hardly controversial, might lead to imprisonment in Bosnia. This, however, affected all religious communities, especially Islam.

The Sarajevo Trial

After the revolution in Iran the Bosnian leadership grew visibly nervous and started a campaign against 'clero-nationalist' tendencies in all religious

communities. The offensive culminated in 1983 with the infamous trial of thirteen Muslim intellectuals in Sarajevo. They were accused of having conspired against the socialist order with the purpose of creating an Islamic state ('Islamistan') in Bosnia. Among the prosecuted were engineers, economists, lawyers, teachers and religious scholars, including two women. The main suspect, Alija Izetbegović, the current president of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was sentenced to fourteen years in prison, of which he served almost six. The accusations focused on the Islamic Declaration, a treatise written by Izetbegović in 1970, and published in Arabic, Turkish and English, but not (until 1990) in Serbo-Croatian. Inspired by the declaration, the offenders had allegedly formed a secret organisation, which tried to spread its message during seminars at the Faculty of Islamic Theology, as well as in certain mosques. The group had also been in touch with foreign governments (Iran).

The trial, which rested on a weak legal foundation, was a traditional political performance of the communist type. Harmless circumstances or events were treated as stages in a conspiracy; discussions with relatives or friends were interpreted as enemy propaganda, and meetings in private homes were defined as the creation of a secret organisation. In his defence, Izetbegović argued that Bosnia or Yugoslavia were not even mentioned in his essay, and that he explicitly declares that an Islamic state can only be established in a country where Muslims constitute a majority of the population.

A large number of people were interrogated or arrested, and those involved later said that it was more or less chance that decided whether one would be prosecuted or called as a witness. The sentences, which were unusually severe, were widely criticised, both in Yugoslavia and abroad, and relations with Muslim countries seriously deteriorated.

The Islamic Declaration

In terms of genre, the Islamic Declaration is a religious and moral-political essay which, in a broad sociological perspective, passionately discusses the predicament of Islam and Muslims in the contemporary world. The general point of departure is that Muslim peoples live in a situation of moral decay and humiliating stagnation. In order to change these conditions a return to Islam and the Quran is necessary. However, a renewal is blocked by two forces: the 'clerics' and the 'modernists'. *Ulama*, the class of learned scholars, represents a degenerate Islam, which has turned religion into form without content, while modernist intellectuals try to popularise a Westernised culture which is foreign to Islam and the intimate feelings of the broad masses. The Muslim masses, therefore, lack the leaders and ideas which would awaken them from their lethargy, and there is a tragic distance between the intelligentsia and ordinary people. What is needed is

a new brand of Muslim intellectuals, reborn in the spirit of their own tradition.

The ultimate aim of the spiritual revival is to establish an Islamic order, which according to Izetbegović encompasses two dimensions or elements: society and state. Without a society where people practice Islam, there can be no Islamic state. An Islamic state which does not rest on a living faith would be a hypocrisy, and could not exist without violence. This means that a mere political usurpation of power would only be a continuation of a situation which has led to the present crisis. On the other hand, says Izetbegović, the Islamic society must be protected by an Islamic state. Islamic renewal does not mean a denial of the rational aspects of modern society. Science and technology cannot and should not be ignored, but must be used in a proper way. Contrary to other religious and philosophical systems Islam offers a comprehensive vision of history and the world, which will overcome the contradictions of modern society.

For Izetbegović the Islamic order represents a more profound type of democracy. It is an expression of authentic freedom, because individual actions and society as a whole correspond to the essential character of the people, i.e. Islam. A true Islamic society can therefore never be coercive, although on the surface it might be different from the ideals of Western democracy. A society based on a genuine understanding of the Quran and an Islamic education will have certain consequences, though. Alcoholism, prostitution or pornography cannot be allowed. Neither can one accept that cultural norms and lifestyles opposed to the spirit of Islam are openly propagated. There must, says Izetbegović, be a 'congruence' between the message of media and mosque. An important issue concerns the position of non-Muslim minorities in an Islamic society. Their rights must be respected, to the extent that they do not harm Islam, and the declaration stresses that this is a consequence of the traditional tolerance towards Christians and Jews, which existed in the Ottoman empire.

The Young Muslims

It is sometimes argued that one should not dwell too much on the Islamic Declaration, since it was written some twenty-five years ago, and Izetbegović today has adopted a different position. This overlooks both recent statements by the president and the fact that there is a continuity in Izetbegović's views which goes back to his youth and involvement in the association of Young Muslims, a movement which has hardly been noticed in the West.

This organisation was formed shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, as a reaction against the general conditions of Muslims in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The Young Muslims strived for a renewal of Islam and were convinced that a religious renaissance was essential to the

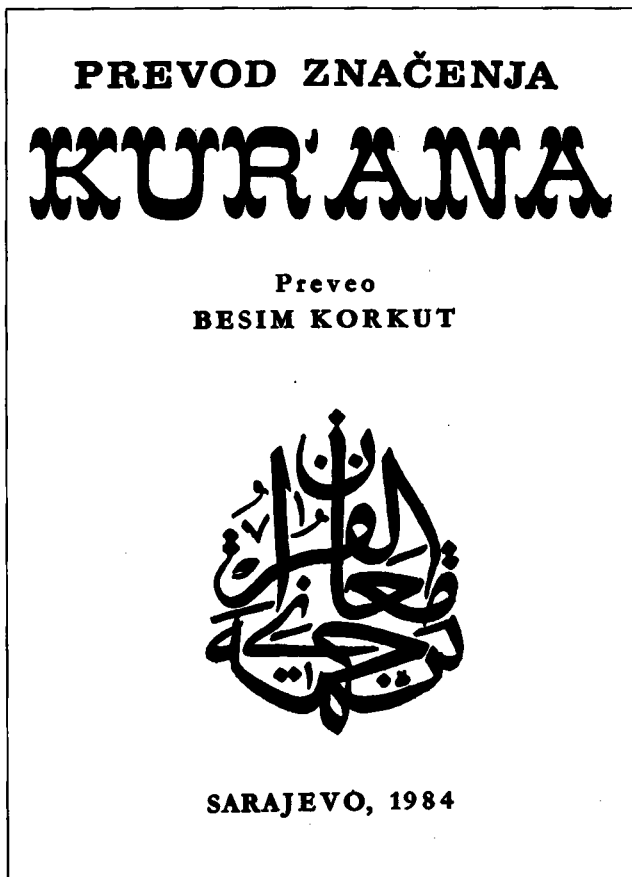
integrity and independence of Bosnian Muslims. To achieve this it was necessary to form a movement of dedicated young people who would initiate a process of re-education and serve as examples of true Muslims. During the war they were active within the El Hidaje, the association of *imams*, or the humanitarian organisation Merhamet. On ideological grounds they were against both the Ustasha state and the communist partisans. In particular, they opposed the partition of Bosnia, which was a consequence of the formation of an autonomous Croatia in 1939.

After the war the Young Muslims continued their activities, and unsuccessfully tried to infiltrate Preporod, an organisation loyal to the regime. In 1947 ten Young Muslims were brought to trial and sentenced to long prison terms, accused of having conspired against the socialist order. One of the leaders of the movement was Alija Izetbegović, who was sentenced to three years imprisonment by a military court. After this serious set-back, the resistance was radicalised and the organisation started to function as a highly conspirative network. For some time the Young Muslims succeeded in keeping their activities secret, but in 1949 the authorities finally managed to uncover the organisation. At a second trial four leaders were sentenced to death for allegedly having planned terrorist activities. It is estimated that several thousand followers were affected by repression in some way or another, which means that the Young Muslims represented the most widespread ideological protest against the Yugoslav communist regime.

Religion and Politics in Bosnia

The Legacy of the Young Muslims is in many respects noticeable in today's Bosnia. When the Party of Democratic Action, SDA, was formed in March 1990, the nucleus consisted of former Young Muslims, their relatives, or persons who had supported Izetbegović in the 1970s and had been involved in the trial and persecutions of 1983. Although SDA had a neutral name and political programme, it was nevertheless a strictly Muslim party with an unmistakable religious orientation. In a very short time it grew into an impressive movement among Serbocroatian-speaking Muslims, not only in Bosnia and the Sandzak region, but also in Kosovo and Macedonia. The meetings during the Bosnian election campaign in 1990, with prayers, religious music, green flags and participants in oriental dress, were powerful manifestations of the religious and cultural identity of Bosnian Muslims.

Although religion played an important role during the election campaign, and SDA definitely was the 'most religious' of all major political parties in former Yugoslavia, it should be stressed that Izetbegović repeatedly denied any plans to form an Islamic state. He even rejected a (secular) Muslim national state. Throughout the political crisis in 1990 and 1991 he advocated a 'civic state' and a 'multi-ethnic society'. The latter



The cover of a Kroatian translation of the Quran.

concept has caused some confusion among Western observers, who have tended to interpret it within their own frames of reference. It should be made quite clear that when Izetbegović and his political associates are referring to a multi-ethnic society, they do not mean a society where ethnicity – or religion – would be unimportant. On the contrary, a multi-ethnic Bosnia was – given the circumstances – the only way to guarantee the preservation and further development of a Bosnian-Muslim identity. For precisely this reason Izetbegović tried to prevent the dissolution of Yugoslavia right to the very end.

Developments during the war illustrate this very clearly. Whatever Croats or Serbs might think, the war has finally completed the process of nation-building among Bosnian Muslims, who are now officially defined as

Bosniacs. Moreover, 'Bosniac' is increasingly becoming synonymous with 'Bosnian', and political leaders often refer to the Muslims as 'the majority nation' of Bosnia. As far as religion is concerned, Izetbegović has stated very clearly that in the future, Bosnia will be a society where Islam naturally plays an important role. For him a Bosnian identity without Islam is unthinkable, which does not mean that Islam has to become a state religion, or that other world views or religions should be banned.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

It has generally been taken for granted that the role of religion in Bosnian society is negligible. A common remark is that the Bosniacs are European Muslims who do not have much in common with Islamic 'fundamentalists'. It is certainly true that Bosnian Muslims live in Europe, and that Serb and Croat propaganda about 'fundamentalist' conspiracies is exaggerated. On the other hand, it seems that the constant insistence on the idea of a highly secularised Bosnia says more about Western ambivalence towards Islam than about actual conditions in Bosnia. Albeit on a different scale, Muslims in Bosnia are faced with the same basic issues that confront all Muslim societies: How to formulate an ethnic identity different from religious identification, or how to distinguish between religion and politics in an environment where this was traditionally not being done? This has been the dilemma of Muslims in Bosnia over the past 100 years.

The question about the influence of Islam in Bosnian society cannot be answered unequivocally, as there is a lack of detailed and reliable surveys, of the kind available in, for example, Slovenia and Croatia, where sociologists of religion since the 1960s have investigated religious attitudes and practice. However, data from empirical research, as well as other sources, seem to indicate that Islam does play a significant role in Bosnian society. In the Yugoslav census of 1953, citizens were able to state their religious affiliation or to identify as non-believers. In Yugoslavia as a whole about 12 per cent of the population classified themselves as atheists, but regional and other variations were considerable. The percentage of atheists was larger among groups belonging to Orthodox Christian culture (Montenegrins 39.5 per cent, Serbs 15.8 per cent, Macedonians 15.8 per cent), than among those with a Catholic background (Slovenes 10.3 per cent, Croats 10 per cent). The decidedly lowest number of non-believers were to found, however, among the categories 'Yugoslavs' (mainly Bosnian Muslims), 4 per cent, and 'non-Slavs' (most of whom were Albanians), 3.3 per cent. A decade later (1964) a comparative sociological investigation was undertaken in all Yugoslav republics and autonomous areas. The percentage of believers was greatest in Kosovo (91 per cent) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (83.8 per cent), i.e. areas with a large Muslim population.

Unfortunately there are few recent studies on a Yugoslav level. To the extent that they exist they are often questionable from a statistical point of view. One example is a survey from 1990 according to which the proportion of believers would be 28 per cent in Bosnia, compared to 67 per cent in Kosovo. It turns out, on closer inspection, that Muslims constitute only 28 per cent, and party members more than 50 per cent of those interviewed, which in both cases drastically differs from the actual situation, and thus influences the results. If one compares religiosity and confessional background, according to the same survey 62 per cent of the Catholics, 60 per cent of the Muslims and 39 per cent of the Orthodox regard themselves as believers:

According to a sociological survey conducted by the University of Stockholm in the summer of 1996 on a sample of 3,200 inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina, almost 90 per cent of the Muslim respondents identified themselves as members of the Islamic community. More than 80 per cent said they believe in God, whereas 27 per cent attended mosque every week, and another 9 per cent at least once a month. It is true that participation in religious activities is higher among Catholics (46 per cent attend mass every week), but this investigation shows that religion was more important among Muslims than is usually assumed. Moreover, due to the overrepresentation of people with higher education, the religiosity of Muslims is probably underestimated.

A common feature of Yugoslav investigations is the substantial variation in religious attitudes and practice according to educational background, or between rural and urban areas. The Bosnian sociologist Esad Cimić, who in the beginning of the 1960s reported an average of 60 per cent believers among Muslims in Herzegovina, found that such variations are particularly high among the Muslims. In his well-known study of village and market places in Western Bosnia, the American ethnologist William Lockwood refers to a situation where practically all Muslim villagers practice Islam. Perhaps, they do not pray the obligatory five times, but at least three, and Ramadan is generally observed. His field studies were undertaken in the 1970s, and it is interesting to note that the Norwegian ethnologist Tone Bringa in her recent book on a Muslim village near Sarajevo gives a similar account. While there are variations in religious practice, most people's identity is firmly grounded in Islam. Children are sent to the *mekteb* (Quranic school), Ramadan is observed, people visit the mosque, and of special importance are practices related to Sufism and Sufi orders.

Figures on intermarriage offer indirect evidence of the importance of religion. Reports about the Bosnian conflict have almost unanimously emphasised the presumably high percentage of people marrying outside their own ethnic group. While it is true that there is a fairly high degree of mixed marriages in urban areas, or in higher social strata, in general the rate of intermarriage is surprisingly low. In Yugoslavia as a whole, during



A Muslim boy in Macedonia dressed up for a circumcision ceremony (photo: Ingvar Svanberg, 1984).

the post-war period there was an increase from 8.6 to 13 per cent. In Bosnia the proportion was lower, about 12 per cent. Moreover, intermarriage was more common between Croats and Serbs, than between Muslims and Serbs or Muslims and Croats. That is, in Bosnia, as well as in Macedonia or Kosovo, people of Muslim origin were less prepared to cross the cultural-religious border. In other words, regardless of personal religiosity, religious background acts as a powerful boundary mechanism.

Islamic Renaissance?

What is the role of Islam after the political changes in 1990, and, in particular, after a devastating war, which has not only led to human losses and ethnic cleansing, but to massive destruction of the religious and cultural infrastructure? It is obvious that Islam is present in public life to an extent which radically differs from conditions in socialist Yugoslavia. Religious leaders usually attend official occasions, they frequently appear in the media, and are generally treated with reverence. Another feature is that religious holidays increasingly tend to acquire a semi-official character. In this respect the situation is similar to that of Serbia or Croatia, where the Catholic and Orthodox churches play a prominent role. In Bosnia this

tendency is particularly strong, due to the character of Islam as a socio-religious system and the close relations between religious institutions and the major political party. After all, the Bosnian president is a believer who actively practices Islam, and in 1994 fulfilled the obligation of *haji*, accompanied by wounded war veterans on his pilgrimage to Mecca.

On the other hand, the religious renaissance might be understood as a natural return to positions which Islam lost artificially and by force when the communists took over in 1945. Therefore, the higher societal presence of religion does not necessarily mean that the influence of Islam is increasing on a more profound level. Fairly large parts of the middle strata of Muslim society in Bosnia are certainly secularised, partly because they were members of the Communist Party. This is confirmed by Alija Izetbegović himself, who makes the sociologically plausible comment that Islam is stronger in villages and larger cities and that peasants and intellectuals are religious, whereas the middle classes are not. Therefore, recent changes are probably alien to a substantial part of the urban population, something which is reflected in the frequent disputes between secular media and the Islamic press. In any case, official Islam has strengthened its position as an institution. In 1993 the Bosnian Muslims formed their own independent Islamic Community when Mustafa efendija Cerić was elected *reis-ul-ulema* and leader of the Bosnian *rijaset* (Islamic authority). During the war Cerić has emerged as a strong popular leader who has stressed the social and political dimensions of Islam. Especially during the tragic events of Srebrenica in the summer of 1995 he played a very important role.

In spite of the war the Islamic Community has created a more vigorous organisation and has also tried to improve education on all levels. Apart from the theological faculty and the *medrese* in Sarajevo, there are four new Islamic institutions of higher learning, the *medrese* in Tuzla, Cazin, Gračanica near Visoko, and Travnik. Important changes have also occurred as far as religious education of children and youth is concerned. In 1994 religion was introduced as a subject in Bosnian schools. It is confessional and voluntary, but there seems to be a strong psychological pressure to participate and according to news reports about 80–90 per cent of Muslim children are enrolled. Islam is thus more noticeable in the media, and has, moreover, media of its own. Besides the official organs of the Community (*Preporod*, *Islamska Misao*, *Mualim*) the most important Islamic paper is the weekly *Ljiljan*. Its former editor-in-chief, Džemaludin Latić, was sentenced to prison at the Sarajevo trial in 1983. The magazine is a successor of *Muslimanski Glas*, which was the official organ of the SDA, and although *Ljiljan* is independent it is no doubt very close to the ruling party. It is here that Alija Izetbegović and other politicians give their most important interviews. A specific feature of *Ljiljan* is its professionalism. In journalistic terms it is simply of high quality. The general outlook is

modern, without the typical inward and traditionalist tone characteristic of the religious press in (former) Yugoslavia. Besides, it is advocating a vigorous national line, stressing the Bosniac cultural heritage and, above all, religion. The general frame of reference is that of Izetbegović: without Islam there is no Bosniac identity. Another expression of these developments is the publication of books, not only belonging to the corpus of Bosnian national literature, or dealing with Bosnian history, but also purely Islamic works, both in translation and by Bosnian authors. Recently a new exclusive edition of the Quran was published.

An interesting aspect is the tendency to reaffirm the Sufi traditions in Bosnian Islam. Already during the late socialist period Sufism played an important role in the official magazine *Preporod*. This is even more so today. The Sufi orders are being revived and traditional meetings, *mevlud* (Ar. *mawlid*) are given wide publicity. It has even been said that officers and commanders of the Bosnian army are not only influenced by Sufi traditions, but are themselves, in some cases, *shaykhs*. In general there is a strong religious presence in the army. *Imams* constitute a natural element in the organisation, an equivalent to the political commissars in the former Yugoslav Peoples Army, and many *imams* have participated – and died – as soldiers or officers. Certain units make a point of cultivating Islam, such as the 7th Army Corps, which at the parade after the victories in Western Bosnia in 1995 greeted the president with ‘Alahu ekber’ (Ar. *Allahu akbar*, God is greater). In fact, the Bosnian government has been criticised for neglecting professional skills and giving too much importance to religious and political (SDA) loyalty when appointing military commanders.

Within the framework of the Bosnian army there have also been volunteers from Islamic countries, the well-known *mujahidin*. They consisted of some 3,000 soldiers concentrated in the Zenica area, expressing a strong Islamist position. Together with these soldiers, various Islamist religious and humanitarian organisations worked in Bosnia during the war. This sometimes caused problems not only in relation to the United States or secularised segments of the population, but also led to clashes with representatives of official Islam.

The dominant circles of the ruling party display a distinct Islamic orientation. Several leading personalities, including the *reis-ul-ulema* and sometimes the president, have expressed worries regarding moral issues, such as women’s clothes, mixed marriages, birth rates, the educational system, or the marketing of pork meat in Sarajevo. A much-debated incident involved the character of the celebration of New Year’s Eve 1996 on Sarajevo television, which prompted President Izetbegović to write a public letter denouncing behaviour alien to the Bosnian-Muslim tradition.

Foreign journalists who initially described Bosnia as a secular society have noted that, as the war continued, the social presence of Islam became stronger. A common explanation is the war as such, that is in a situation

when people are labelled as Muslims and killed because of their ethno-religious affiliation, when mosques are being destroyed and graveyards flattened, they will identify as Muslims out of sheer self-preservation. At the same time it is pointed out that refugees from Eastern Bosnia to a large extent are behind the changes in Sarajevo. This actually shows that there was a basis, that Islam did constitute a living reality among large segments of the Muslim population. Without this basis Islam would hardly grow in importance. The natural alternative would instead be secular nationalism, which, incidentally, does exist.

It is very difficult to say anything definite about the degree to which Islamist ideas are effective within the population at large. That they do exist is clear, but we have no detailed knowledge about popular attitudes or organisational structures. It seems as if such tendencies, at least until now, have been channelled within the official Islamic Community, as well as the Party of Democratic Action and its affiliated organisations. In an interesting study of sermons during the Ramadan of 1992, Xavier Bougarel analyses a variety of currents along the dimensions political/non-political and conservative/revivalist Islam. He concludes that a political, revivalist version of Islam seems to have been strengthened during the war. In her book *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way*, Tone Bringa makes the important point that these developments have largely been influential in urban areas.

It seems unlikely that extreme Islamist tendencies will become dominant in the Bosnian context. There have been tensions within the ruling party, and when Prime Minister Silajdžić left the government and SDA in 1996, this was generally interpreted as a clash between 'fundamentalists' and 'Westerners'. It is doubtful whether this assessment is correct. The conflict was primarily political, rather than religious, and concerned issues like the role of the Bosnian army, the character of the Bosnian state and relations with Croatia. It is, nevertheless, of considerable interest that SDA, with its religious-national message, won an overwhelming victory in the first post-war elections of 1996, while Silajdžić's new party, generally expected to be popular among the urban and modern strata of Bosnian society, made a rather poor performance.

The war in Bosnia was brought to an end by the Dayton Agreement in November 1995. The major points of the agreement have not yet (1997) been implemented, and the prospect of a unified, multiethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina is uncertain. It is interesting to observe that Džemaludin Latić, writing in *Ljiljan* on several occasions, has a vision of the future which seems to be a restoration of the Ottoman *millet* system. He advocates selective use of modern technology and a return to authentic Islam, and suggests that the major ethnic groups should live together, side by side, governed by their own religious traditions. In his view, Bosnian believers of all major religions have a common interest in defending moral and spiritual values against the onslaught of a materialist and godless culture.

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ABSTRACT

David Westerlund & Ingvar Svanberg (eds), *Islam Outside the Arab World*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999. 488pp. ISBN 0-7007-1124-4 (Hbk). ISBN 0-7007-1142-2 (Pbk).

Today about 85 per cent of the world's Muslim population live outside the Arab world and due to population growth, 'missionary' (*dawa*) endeavours and migration, the number of Muslims in non-Arab nations is rapidly increasing. Yet many people in the West conceive of Islam as an 'Arab' religion and it is only recently that a more thorough scholarly interest in other parts of the Muslim world has emerged. This volume presents the spread and character of Islam in many non-Arab countries in Africa (south of the Sahara), Asia, Oceania, Europe and the Americas. It focuses particularly on the contemporary situation, but also presents an historical background. Much attention is devoted to Sufism, which appears to be the predominant form of Islam in most non-Arab countries, as well as to the growing significance of Islamism, which challenges both secularism and the Sufi forms of Islam. An extensive introduction provides a general background account of the origin, expansion and characteristics of Islam.

Key concepts: Islam, Sufism, Shia, Ahmadiyya, conversion, immigrant communities, minorities, folk religion.

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OUTSIDE THE ARAB WORLD

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and
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Contents

Preface	vii
Contributors	ix
Introduction	1
<i>Christer Hedin, Ingvar Svanberg and David Westerlund</i>	
Part One: Africa	
1 Somalia	37
<i>Bernhard Helander</i>	
2 Nigeria	56
<i>Christopher Steed and David Westerlund</i>	
3 Senegal	77
<i>Eva Evers Rosander and David Westerlund</i>	
4 Tanzania	97
<i>Abdulaziz Lodhi and David Westerlund</i>	
5 Southern Africa	111
<i>Abdulkader Tayob</i>	
Part Two: Asia and Oceania	
6 Turkey	125
<i>Svante Cornell and Ingvar Svanberg</i>	
7 Turkic Central Asia	149
<i>Roberta Micallef and Ingvar Svanberg</i>	
8 Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan	166
<i>Bo Utas</i>	
9 China	190
<i>Justin Ben-Adam</i>	

Contents

10	South Asia <i>Ishtiaq Ahmed</i>	212
11	Indonesia and Malaysia <i>Sven Cederroth</i>	253
12	Australia and New Zealand <i>Michael Humphrey and William Shepard</i>	278
 Part Three: Europe and the Americas		
13	Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>Kjell Magnusson</i>	295
14	Germany and Austria <i>Franz Kogelmann</i>	315
15	France <i>Neal Robinson</i>	337
16	Britain <i>Ron Geaves</i>	357
17	The Nordic Countries <i>Ingvar Svanberg</i>	379
18	Russia and Transcaucasia <i>Svante Cornell and Ingvar Svanberg</i>	402
19	North America <i>Mattias Gardell</i>	420
20	The Caribbean and Latin America <i>Muhammed Abdullah al-Ahari</i>	443
	Index	462