

2012

# Final Dissertation

## Religious Traditions: Islam in the Balkans

Anthropological Perspective

Supervisor: Fotini Tsibiridou

**UNIVERSITY OF MACEDONIA**

Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies

Master Program in Politics and Economics in contemporary Eastern and Southeastern Europe



Christos Tziouvaras, A.M. 14/12  
Thessaloniki  
30/10/2012



## Message for the reader

Due to respect for all sciences, it is the writer's unwavering belief that when one attempts to suggest something new in any scientific field, they owe to prove it to full extent, something which is not often practicability within the bounds of a dissertation of such a scope. So, in this essay, the reader is not about to face any groundbreaking views or ideas. On the contrary, this work focusing on Islam in the Balkans is based on sources taken from distinguished researchers mostly on the field of anthropology and history, and thus the following text is modeled along the aspiration we have already had during the second semester in the field of political anthropology in Eastern and South Eastern Europe. In practice, what this work aims at is to give a view about Islam in the Balkan region and the role it has played, and still plays, for the political proceedings taken place within this checkered corner of the world. In addition, this is why in the first paragraph it has been placed the word 'towards' a Balkan mentality and not a common Balkan mentality for sure. This happens because, while there is a suspicion and enough proof for such a claim, it is not yet fully proven. But, in any case and far from that, and because this examination is done under an anthropological inspiration, I would like to express my belief that anthropological perspectives and analyses could help us to put the right questions in such a complicate and among else mostly political issue.

With Honor,

Christos Tziouvaras

Thessaloniki, October 2012

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks and acknowledgements to all contributors of the Master Program of the Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies of the University of Macedonia, irrespective of their position or personality, as they have achieved to create a department open to all students, giving, in that way, opportunities and opening roads for young people and, therefore, for new ideas. Finally, I would like express my full appreciation and to thank my supervisor professor Fotini Tsibiridou whose door has been always open for me. Even during the semester she was very friendly with all of us.

Christos Tziouvaras

Thessaloniki,\_October/2012



## **Contents**

Abstract.....	4
Introduction.....	6
Chapter I: Towards a Balkan Mentality on Religious Roots.....	8
Chapter II: Identification Processes .....	16
Chapter III: Religious Dichotomy and Its Extensions.....	26
Closure.....	33
Bibliography.....	36

## Abstract

Studying the role and the meaning of the presence of the Islamic creed in a region where the prevailing religion is Christianity, one can easily make the conclusion that it has mainly to do with a different culture that comes as a result of a different perception of the life and, therefore, a different coping with it. This holds as a common truth that has to be deconstructed. In other words, do Muslim people in the Balkans differ from other Muslims in the Middle East or all over the world and how? Ernest Gellner in his work *Muslim Society (1981)* suggested that Islam is not only a religious doctrine; it is also the canon being practiced in everyday life as a law (Gellner : 1981). According to his view, Islamic holy texts define and explain the culture of the Muslim societies and, therefore, these texts are adequate for someone to comprehend their behavior and their political practice. But, is this the case for the Balkans? Are the differences between the Muslim and the other religious societies (mostly the Christian) in the Balkans so much explicit as they seem at first sight? Gellner himself was forced to signalize exceptions in his theory, as was the case of the Ottoman Empire, in a case where the study of solely the texts seems to be inadequate (Salimi, 2008: 29). “Sufi, as the other Muslims, consider Koran as the Word of God which was revealed to the people through prophet Mohammed. But, unlike many orthodox Muslims (Sunni and Shite), they are not looking for a literal interpretation of Koran, nor they are satisfied with its usual legal implementation in everyday life” (Mavromatis, 2008).

In the first chapter, we suggest that, even after the conversions and the embracement of Islam from a great part of the Balkan people, there are traces of a common Balkan mentality which is based on shared religious beliefs and practices. The intersections here lie in the common religious culture coming from the Byzantine era of Christianity, but also the adaptability that the new religion displays concerning, not only with the previous religious practices, but also even with the local traditions and customs. This new religious creed is a mystic one and it is none of the orthodox Sunni or Shia Islam, and their conceptions are revolving around a place where the Oriental Christianity, Islam, the central-Asiatic Samanism and Buddhism are met (Mavromatis, 2008); rather it is a creed much more smooth and open to adaptations in

local peculiarities (Zagkinis, 2002). As we will see below, this is probably coming from Bektashism.

Clifford Geertz, at some point in his *Interpretation of Cultures* (1970), says that the human behavior –which inevitably is reflected on the political behavior – is the result of a conglomeration of various incentives acquired and evolved in a way which seems impracticability to define. He says that it would be useful to define some ‘fixed points’ of the human behavior in general, which are ecumenical for all peoples, in order to have a reference frame for our studies. For this reason, in the second chapter of this essay where we are examining the identification process in the Balkans during the nation-state building, we will not search to define the character and the political behavior of the Balkan societies that unconsciously come from their culture (including religious peculiarities). It should be unachievable. Instead, we will view the identification processes as the result of the interaction between different groups. As we say, identification is a meaningful process of definition of ‘self’ in strong contrast with others, or in other words, “ethnicity is a property of relationship and not the sound of one hand clapping” (Eriksen, 1991: 129). Conversion to Islam here is a process for the various groups of preserving their identities. It is a landmark of belonging ‘somewhere’, when one group comes in touch and is compared to others, something which, as we say later, mostly takes place in the border lands of the Ottoman Empire (like Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo etc.), where the possibility of assimilation from the Roman Empire is also existent.

In the last chapter, we examine the dichotomies being created within the Balkan society and, even within the separate successor of ethnic-nation states coming up from the breakup of former Yugoslavia. In these dichotomies, the religious ones are prevailing as Islam, unconsciously, has been coincided with the Ottoman Empire, and further with the Orient, and then with the ‘backwardness’, instead of the ‘progress’ that Christianity suggests, as it goes along with the Occident. During the period of creating their ethnic and national identities through a process of differentiation with the others, this rhetoric hits its peak, providing in that way a kind of ‘Self-identification’ on the one hand, and a kind of ‘Otherness’ on the other. These discriminations, later, are explicitly reflected on the constitutional provisions of each ethnic state promoting and deepening the schisms within the Balkan people and among the states. Thus, under the route of forming the separate nation-states (19<sup>th</sup> and

20<sup>th</sup> centuries), the homogenization was of utmost importance. So, majorities supersede minorities. Thereafter, under the warfare period during the wars of disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, and under the effort for creating homogenized ethnic nation-states, the ethnic cleansing that could not be achieved through constitutional provisions was achieved through military and expulsion ways.

## **Introduction**

According to the prevailing stereotypical popular and orientalised aspect among the people, Islam, as a creed, came to the Balkan region as something imposed by the Ottoman conqueror bringing about extensive Islamizations in the populations. In case of refusal, the conquered people became witness of great and horrible violence, killing the men, raping the women and scrounging the children. Many conversions to Islam occurred indeed. On the other side, the Balkan population never accepted Islam altogether. On the contrary, Christians always outnumbered Muslims. Thus, the question raised is, if conversion to Islam was a process forced by the conqueror, and also of such great success, then why this was not the case for the whole population? Historical evidence provides us with three considerable elements: first, conversion from Christianity to Islam was not the only direction; there were also conversions from other creeds to another. Second, conversion was not a process taking place outright; instead, it was a gradual process occurring over a period, from the coming of Ottomans and prior till almost the end of the Ottoman Empire. Third, there is evidence that the Ottoman conquest for many occasions was beneficial for the Balkan peoples rather than a story of oppression. Political unity, peace, stability, and liberated population from the feudal anarchy are some benefits ascribed to the Ottoman administration (Minkov, 2004).

As an introduction, we have chosen to provide the reader with a picture of the distribution of the population of the Balkan region in reference to the religious creeds. For this purpose we chose the period of time when the Ottoman glory reached its peak - and therefore the conversions as well - and so, there is stability at the maximum of the number of Muslims. This period can be the early nineteenth century. Also, we will give a slight illustration of the distribution of the religious creeds before the Ottomans so as to acquire a better perception for the religious reality in the Balkans.

Historically, religiousness in the Balkan region has accepted two major blows. The first is the coming of Slavs on the 6-7<sup>th</sup> century. Originally, they were a polytheistic pagan people which, reaching to the various Balkan regions, had been influenced from the religion and cultural diversity of the latter, while at the same time, many of them preserving their ancient rituals and traditional folklores. Thus, before the Ottomans, except Bosnia where competing faiths exist, the other Balkans states have

one dominant form of Christianity (Orthodox, Catholics, or even a Christian heresy, the Bogomils) (Norris, 1993: 44). The second blow came with the Ottoman conquest in early fifteenth century. The official religion of the Ottomans was Islam and, in this basis, many conversions to Islam were meant to take place within the peninsula. At the end of the Ottoman Empire, in the age of 1831, demographics give us a percentage of 59.5% Christians, 37.0% Muslims, 2.6% Jews and 0.1% Armenians. In the western part of the peninsula Muslim presence seems to be more significant. In Albania they constitute 70% of the population, in Kosovo 72%, in FYROM almost 40% and in Bosnia- Herzegovina 50%. In Serbia and Greece, independent by 1831, the Muslims had dwindled as a result of emigration to the areas still forming part of the Ottoman Empire. According to Greek census in 1821, Muslims constitute the 6.8% of the total population and, as for Serbia, there is left a 0.8% Muslims of the total population (Minkov, 2004: 61).

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Towards a Balkan mentality on religious roots**

It is often used for people when talking for other peoples to attribute them cultural stereotypes, especially for their mentality. It has been heard many times, for instance, for Turks to be crude, for Greeks to be defensive, for Israeli to be fearless, for Germans to be industrious and so on. Certainly, it is an oversimplified approach almost always expressed by non-experts and most usually within the narrower limits of the state borders, that is, within a political entity, now existing or once existed. This fact, though happens spontaneously, is confirmed by G. R. Lloyd saying that “a mentality” can only make sense if it is understood as context-bound. That is, it cannot make sense unless it refers to a specifically defined political context as a framework of communication. Thus, it can be understood as a mental expression of a historically recognizable unit (Kitromilides, 2007: 169). However, the ‘reference political entity’ may be smaller or larger, that is, to the world level, to the continental level or even to the local level, and always to the extent that the two compared entities interact with each other and, therefore, enter in the logic of comparison. But this is not solely a matter of politics; or, better, there is an underlying pattern of action which defines, not only the politics but, all levels of ‘public life’ of a community. It has been said that “one of the common accepted things, but that no one seems able to prove, is that one country’s policy reflects the context of its civilization” (Geertz, 1970: 303) and, “in this case, civilization is not a cult or customs but the structures within which the peoples shape their experience’ and politics is not the coups or the constitutions but one of the arenas wherein these structures are developed publicly” (Geertz, 1970: 304). Thus, identity should not be taken for granted to be the invention of French revolution and the nationalism ideology, but rather the latter are based upon the already formed and preexisting identities<sup>1</sup>. In addition, Max Weber suggested that the idea of nation<sup>2</sup> comes partly from ideological interests of strata which comprise “all those who think of themselves as being the specific ‘partners’ of a specific ‘culture’ diffused among the members of a polity” (John Hutchinson, 1994: 21). He argues that the concept ‘nation’ refers, above all, to a certain group of people which exact a

---

<sup>1</sup> Identity, here, means tradition, culture, customs, mentality, national identity and, even, race. Whatever could differentiate one society from another.

<sup>2</sup> Here, we jump to the use of the term “nation “ as it is the top expression of the collective action.

specific sentiment of solidarity in the face of other groups and, thus it belongs in the sphere of values (John Hutchinson, 1994: 21-22). In general, this solidarity can be produced – or, has the trend to be produced – by the notions of common descent and of an essential homogeneity (John Hutchinson, 1994: 22). In particular, this solidarity cannot be identical with the membership of a given polity, or with a group speaking the same language<sup>3</sup>, nor based on a common blood<sup>4</sup>. Instead, solidarity can be connected with other culture values of the masses like religion, or with differing social structure and mores and, hence, with ‘ethnic elements’, or with a potential common political destiny with other nations (John Hutchinson, 1994: 22).

Thus, searching for a ‘Balkan mentality’, that is, a certain recurrent attitudes, beliefs or perceptions of shared interests that characterize a culture, we have to travel back in history, in a period of time when Balkans constitute, or is a part of, a political entity of common attitudes, forms of behavior, symbolic expression of the unconscious, and why not, shared values and morals (Kitromilides, 2007: 167). This period in Balkan history can be before the second half of the eighteenth century. That means, before the penetration of new ideas of French Revolution and the rising of nationalistic attitudes of the various ethnicities. A period when the Balkan Peninsula was free of internal national divisions and prior to prevailing cultural traditions and communication patterns in the particular geographical places provoke ethnic rivalries (Kitromilides, 2007: 170). And this happens because a shared Balkan mentality is incompatible with so many divergent, mutually exclusive and usually antagonistic ethnic identities. Ethnicity is a factor of distinctiveness and therefore cannot make for commonalities; nationality is a factor of division and therefore undermines the sense of shared meanings; finally, nationalism is a machine of conflict and violence which annuls those deeper affinities and unspoken assumptions which form the psychic substratum of a shared mentality (Kitromilides, 2007: 169). Searching for a Balkan mentality means searching for this society’s ‘vision of the World’, that is its understanding of the world and, therefore, the subsequent framework of its daily life (Kitromilides, 2007: 170). In this region, ‘the vision of the world’ perceived by this society was primarily based on religious belief (Kitromilides, 2007: 171). At first, we will focus

---

<sup>3</sup> It has been proved in the Balkans in both cases. Sometimes, common language can be conceived as a culture value of the masses but it is not a widespread case in the Balkans, as most of the successor states comprise Slavic populations speaking the same language.

<sup>4</sup> However, we will see later that this is widely demonstrated in the Balkans at times. However, it is neither sufficient nor prerequisite to found a nation. (John Hutchinson, 1994, p. 22)

on the outlook on life associated with the religion of the vast majority of the population in the Balkan heartlands, namely the Orthodox Christianity. The further task to analyze the experience of the 'minority' religious groups, and especially the Muslim societies, gives us the opportunity to reconstruct our picture for the Balkan consciousness and to attribute in a more accurate way the coordinates of the Balkan thought. Finally, it confronts us with the challenge to compare and to explain; why, for instance, conversion to Islam occurs mainly in Bosnia and Albania? Is it a matter of fear to the conqueror, of pressure, of economic privileges, of adjustability of these societies to the new conditions? Under which political structure these changes occur?

Our target here is to provide an illustration of how religious belief and the whole symbolic universe of active Orthodox practice were integrated into daily life and supplied the framework of values and meanings underpinning collective attitudes and legitimizing individual choices (Kitromilides, 2007: 172). The following narrative is based on the writings of an Orthodox author in the eighteenth century named Constantine Dapontes (1713/14 – 1784). Who as a monk later in life took the name Caisarios (Kitromilides, 2007: 172). What he did was to record the values of the world of Balkan Orthodoxy in his time and express the way that these values were translated into social experience. As P. Kitromilides emphatically said, for him, Orthodoxy is not simply a religious doctrine and a form of worship but it is the primary content of social life itself (Kitromilides, 2007: 176). This content of social life comprises the sense of time defined by the ecclesiastical calendar, the sense of space determined by the geography of faith, the understanding of individual life as a record of sacramental experience, the quest for communication with the divine through the detection of the presence of the supranational in daily life, the same consciousness of the interplay of sin, repentance and forgiveness as the content of individual life. These qualities of the Orthodox mentality are not putting forward only through the witnesses of Dapontes. They are checked up by other biographical references as well, like those of Sofroni, bishop of Vratsa, and the memoirs of Prota Matija Nenadovic (Kitromilides, 2007: 180).

Below, is cited the text as it is written by Paschalis Kitromilides providing the threads out of which the 'Orthodox' mentality is woven (Kitromilides, 2007: 177):

First and foremost among these dimensions of the Orthodox Balkan outlook was a sense of time defined by the ecclesiastical calendar: the passage of time was felt to revolve around the succession of

feast days in the Orthodox calendar, and daily life was punctuated by the Saint's day, which marked the changing seasons and charted the organization of harvests, fairs, family events, days of joy and days of trial and mourning. This was the standard framework for the understanding of time in Christian culture until it was subverted and gradually superseded by secular temporal schemes.

Besides the ecclesiastical definition of time there was also a sense of space which was determined by the Christian heritage of the Balkans: the spatial horizon was defined by places of worship, great shrines of the faith and humble chapels isolated in the countryside, graves of the saints, places of martyrdom, environments sanctified by miracles. Pride of place was reserved for shrines sheltering miraculous icons or holy relics.

Another fundamental component of the Orthodox mentality was the active presence of the supernatural in daily life. The supernatural was integrated into everyday experience through the constant quest for the miraculous intervention of the divine in the life of the individual and in family affairs, through the constant effort to read the will of God and to communicate with the Virgin and the Saints through dreams, through votive offerings, and through special acts of worship. The active presence of the supernatural in daily life was mediated primarily by the objects of religious worship, icons and holy relics, and was formalized and canonized in the ecclesiastical practices of the Orthodox religious tradition. This canonization acted as a check upon extreme expressions of superstition and often charlatanism which threatened to corrupt the spiritual content of the faith. That is why the official church as a rule opposed and condemned extreme forms of fundamentalism, which ran the risk of stirring up acts of fanaticism that might compromise the dignity of Orthodoxy.

One other fundamental aspect of the orthodox outlook was the organization of individual's life around the sacramental life of the church. An Orthodox individual's autobiography was essentially a record of one's participation in the sacraments of the church and the sealing of all major occasions in life with the prescribed forms of religious practice. One's own baptism in infancy and one's chrismation through marriage, the baptism of one's children, the active participation in the sacraments of the Eucharist and confession and the optional taking of holy orders which the faithful in traditional Orthodox society approached as an integral rather as an exceptional occasion in a Christian's life.

Dapontes provides us also with a glimpse into the orthodox attitude towards the death:

The alleviation of pain through the transaction of the religious rites prescribed by the church and the dignified acceptance of death as part of the Christian voyage in the expectation of the resurrection of the dead.

But, Dapontes, provides us also with one other aspect of the Orthodox vision of the world:

The intense religious content of individual experience and the religious frameworks of life and thought did not of course refract the Orthodox vision of the world in such a way as to obscure the material components of life and the social structures of reality. Dapontes never lost sight during his peregrinations of the beauty of nature and the charms of material creation besides his continuous recollection of the geography of faith, so his living through the ecclesiastical calendar of feasts and fast days constantly reminded him of the products of the earth, of the simple natural tastes of the austere diet prescribed for days of fasting and repentance and of the richer tastes, smells and luxuries connected with the great feasts of Orthodoxy, either in monastic refectories or in the dining halls of worldly mansions. But, the material world was not of course only made up of pleasures and gratifications. Dapontes, reminds us of the other side of pleasure and, which is sin and depravity. For the Orthodox conscience this is an inevitable consequence of the Fall and original sin but it is also the threshold to repentance and forgiveness by a merciful God. Despite his countless other sins, pride and self-righteousness were not among them. The depravity of the material world however extends far

beyond individual corruption and sin; it takes the form of pervasive social injustice, the exploitation and suffering of the weak at the hands of the powerful. In his *Garden of Graces* he laments the depravity and misery he had witnessed on his travels, resulting from the injustice, greed, vanity and personal corruption prevailing in Orthodox society.

Against the position of a common Balkan Orthodox mentality is often provided a counter argument pointing out the various local traditions of worship and veneration of local saints. However, this should not be taken as a demarcation line for potential future 'ethno-religious' rivalries, but rather it is a common characteristic of the Orthodox world in general, whose spiritual identity is close connected with the veneration of Saints (Kitromilides, 2007: 181). Instead, the most common divisions within Balkan society in the period of our study are social and class ones which, however, cut across ethno-linguistic demarcation lines maintaining the dynamic of a unitary society (Kitromilides, 2007: 182). If there is a common trait which worth stressing here, and with a potential impact on a common mentality in the Balkans, it is the Ottoman Conquest. Although this is not the case here to search for an overall Balkan mentality which would cover all scientific needs and blunt all different scientific approaches, there is a considerable characteristic which, coming along with Ottoman conquest, seems to change this voyage of the Balkans throughout history. This is Islam and the subsequent conversions coming along with it. The presentation of Daponte's peregrination across the Balkan Peninsula, though comprehensive, took place in overall peninsula except the western part wherein, not only the most extensive conversions to Islam occurred, but also these conversions had had a strong impact on the further course -on the political side- of the modern-era's nations. Thus, it provided us with the one side of the coin. Bosnia and Albania, as we will see later, are the major players in the evolution of a Balkan Islam and, therefore, our attempt to define the role of Islam in the Balkans will be focused mainly on these two places.

Now, trying to define the coordinates of the Islamic thought in the Balkans we have to pay our attention mainly to the Bektashi's order. Balkan Islam, which developed quicker under Mourat A' (1362-1389), had had as reference point the «mystic» Islam, with Bektashism<sup>5</sup> being its main exponent (Zegkinis, 2002: 271). Bektashi's doctrine

---

<sup>5</sup> "The first Bektashi community in the Balkans was established during the Byzantine period, in Dovroutsa, around in 1263. The reason was the going of the Seljuk Sultan Ijentin Kaukaous B', who had Christian parents and was baptized as Christian but, when he became the Sultan of Seljuk Turks he was forced to keep hidden his deeper convictions and to have as apparent religion that of Turks. In his voyage to Dovroutsa he took along Sari Saltik, student and fellow worker of Haci Bektas, who, with his missionary activities and the his 'miracles' laid the foundations for the Balkan Islam. Evidence refer that Sari Saltik had a pro-Christian attitude and he violates the 'Sacred Law' (Koran), to the extent that many of the inhabitants of Dovroutsa considered him as a Christian Saint.

was neither a branch of Sunni Islam nor the official creed of the Ottoman state when the conquest in the Balkans started. It was a heterodox doctrine which, having taken its backbone from Sunni Islam, incorporated many elements of the Christian doctrine producing in that way a more flexible and tangible scheme of 'syncretism' which was to shape the intellectual basis which the Balkan Islamic thought based on. The study of the Bektashi thought in the Balkans and its relations with the Orthodox thought provides us with the idea of a good and peaceful symbiosis between the two later-conflicting communities. The fact of such a symbiosis and the development of good relations between them is witnessed also from historical evidence, biographies of scholars, documentaries and evidence of any kind, but the fact of a shared use of doctrinal and cult elements, symbols, almanac, cult of Saints, and even cult buildings (Zegkinis, 2002: 279) provides us with the idea of a shared mentality on religious basis, in an era when social and political life is closely connected with religious affairs.

The man who gave impetus to the Bektashi movement in the Balkans was Balim Sultan; He shaped the external characteristics of Bektashi order as well as its doctrinal teaching (Zegkinis, 2002: 271). His reforms were based on the Christian patterns, conveying and adjusting them in the doctrine of the monastery life of Dervishes of Bektashi order (Zegkinis, 2002: 271). The question raised is if this adjustability presented by Bektashi order in the Balkans is a matter of politics in order to be open and flexible to the Christian Balkan society, and so to gain followers, or was it shaped as a result of an existing strong Christian society and the subsequent pressure it could exert to a new religious creed. Sevki Koca suggested that in this fact it was important the role of Balim Sultan's Christian mother as well as the wider climate of the Christian-Islamic cooperation in the Balkans, which had developed in the period 1416-1420 (Zegkinis, 2002: 271). In any case, the main characteristics of Bektashi order, being in compliance with the Christian ones, are referred below as they are cited by Eystration Zegkini in his book (Zegkinis, 2002: 271-272) *Genissaries and Bektashism*:

---

It has been said that after the death of Sari Saltik, the inhabitants integrated the Christian heresy of Bogomils and, when the Ottomans attempted the conquest of the Balkan region, a few of the inhabitants of these populations along with all the Bogomils were the first who followed Islam, without considerable coercion'. This evidence is of high interest for the origin of the Bektashi order of the Balkan Islam because it provides us with its doctrine and the acceptance of Islam into the Balkan Christian community. (Zegkinis, 2002, pp. 259-260)

First of all, he defined the way of the administration of the order and the hierarchical structure of its members taking account the administration of the Christian monasteries. He established the ritual of the worship of the Bektashis in accordance with the Christian patterns, and finally he added modernistic elements, under which the syncretism of the order expanded. The most important innovations, which Balim Sultan applied, were the follows:

He established the celibacy of Dervishes in correspondence with the celibacy of the Christian clerics and monks.

He established the triad Allah – Mohammed – Ali, which symbolically, corresponds with the Trinity of the Christian creed.

He established the use of wine instead of the mixture “serbet”, used then for the sacramental rituals, along with the bread, in the rituals of “ikrar” and “tzem”, which symbolically correspond with the “Eucharist” of the Christian worship.

He establishes the ritual named “bas okoutmak”, which in its external characteristics corresponds with the Christian confession.

He established the penance “ntouskiounlouk”, which has common traits with the penance of aphorism of the Christian Church.

He established the use of “vestments”, the special clothes worn by priests, from the dignitaries of the Bektashi order, in correspondence with the vestments of the Liturgical vestments of the Christian clerics.

He banned the divorce, in correspondence with the orders of the Christian rules for the Christians.

He established the worship of the 12 Imams in accordance with the pattern of the worship of the 12 Apostles.

He established the cult of Saints and the almanac in association and accordance with the cult of Saints and the almanac of the Christian - Orthodox Church.

The reforms of Balim Sultan at all levels in Bektashi order, and in association with the Orthodox patterns, contributed for the two creeds to come closer and, therefore, a bright line to be drawn between Bektashism and Sunni Islam. This fact was of high importance for the following predominance of the Bektashi order in the Balkans instead of the Sunni one (Zegkinis, 2002: 272). Moreover, Bektashism constitutes a laic movement, far from dogmatisms and rigorous formulation. It advances the folk craft, it uses the language of the ordinary people, it respects the mores and customs of the others and does not have any difficulty to adopt them for its members (Zegkinis, 2002: 297). These traits of Bektashism render it more harmless for the Christian populations who, under the pressure of the Ottoman conquest, were less or more forced to accept Islam. Instead of the Sunni Islam’s much more doctrinal and strict wording teaching Bektashism, with its Christian influences, is a more smooth conversion process allowing simultaneously the preservation of the previous Christian

mores and customs. The apex of the Christian – Bektashi symbiosis, of a common course and a common expression of the two creeds in the Balkans is the declaration of a Dervish that “if someone of the Turks states that the Christians do not venerate God, then he is irreverent” and that “no one cannot be salved unless they agree with the Christian faith” (Zegkinis, 2002: 297).

## CHAPTER 2

### Identification processes

Thus, Bektashism, as a religious creed, seems to be the intersection, the common ground, the average, or even the middle way necessary for the symbiosis of a region (the Balkan peninsula) which straddles the demarcation line between west and east, throughout history and occasionally on the side of religion, political administration, ideology and so on – a reality which is continued until the modern times. ‘The division between the western and eastern Christian churches resulted in a bifocal perception of Europe – with western European and Byzantine lenses in the same geographic frame. With the Ottoman expansion, roughly coinciding with the previous Byzantine world, this geography was redefined to distinguish between Europe ‘proper’ from ‘oriental’ Europe. During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the dissolution of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, this division might have ceased to apply, but soon a new, secular breach (‘western democracies’ and ‘communist East’) occurred in Europe after the World War II. Almost half a century later, it was symbolically erased with the tearing down of the Berlin wall (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 921). We cannot clarify, or it is not so important to define, whether Bektashism is a well-designed device for bringing Balkan peoples closer, or it is the outcome of the Balkan reality and the necessity for a bounded peaceful symbiosis of the diverse people lying in. Moreover, according to Clifford Geertz’s approach on the impact of civilization on human beings (Geertz, 1970: 43-67), he suggests this as a hand-in-hand process. That, in our case, simply means that, though on the one hand Bektashism was developed and constituted a syncretic form of religiosity of the two major doctrines of the time (Christianity and Islam) so as to embrace as much more possible people in its bosom, on the other hand the Balkan society provided the fertile ground for the development of the Bektashi order, and hand-in-hand they went along in the course of history. Bektashi order provides also another merit: its mystic character. In 1826, Bektashi was outlawed by the Ottoman State considered to be a threat along with the corps of Jenissaries. The re-emergence of Bektashism after almost forty years denotes the capability of the order to act in an underground way and to maintain religious identities despite a religiously hostile public sphere (Mustafa, 2007: 6). Among the Balkan peoples, Bosnians and Albanians have proved

to be more prone to so an important alteration as is a religious conversion. This fact has been attributed from the most scientific circles to the position of these two nations. If the Balkan Peninsula is the meeting point and the crossroad of two worlds, Bosnia and Albania are the very borders of these worlds; the borders not only in geographical terms. They are the religious, political, mentality, cultural, ideological, psychological, and so on, borders; they are the places where the great struggles - physical or mental- have been given.

Concerning Bosnia, Mehmed Mesa Selimovic in his novel 'Dervish and Death' delineating Bosnia's case characteristically writes: "We live in the borderland between two worlds, on the border between nations, within everyone's reach, always someone's scapegoat. Against us the waves of history break, as if against a cliff" (Bringa, 1995: 12). A sketchy delineation of this from-the-Bosnian-sight bifocal view of the world historically is expressed by certain milestones. Thus, Bosnia lies on the boundaries between Byzantium and Rome, those between eastern and western Christendom, and later straddling between the Catholic Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Islamic Ottoman Empire being part earlier from the latter and later from the former; In modern times it has been defined as the iron curtain between the western democracies and the eastern communism; In Tito's years and on, it was 'battlefield' of nationalistic claims between Catholic Croatia and Christian-Orthodox Serbia – though the majority of the population were Muslims (Bringa, 1995: 12-13). Albania has also played a similar role throughout history; Illyricum<sup>6</sup>, which was the border between the two Churches (western and eastern), contributed to the estrangement of them and finally became the battlefield between on which the forms of Christianity waged the first great struggle which led to the complete and fateful separation for Christendom (Norris, 1993: 15). Thereafter, it is also the borderline between Roman and Ottoman Empires; though to its western border there is sea, the interaction of is almost the same, as the sea constitutes a widespread means of transportation and communication.

If we keep fixed Croatia as the curtain of the Roman Empire and later Habsburg Empire and, in both cases, Catholicism, the western part of the Balkan peninsula which passed strictly from Byzantium to the Ottoman Empire presents a great

---

<sup>6</sup>Illyricum was a Roman Province comprising lands of the northern part of modern Albania, part of Croatia and part of Bosnia-Herzegovina. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illyricum\\_\(Roman\\_province\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illyricum_(Roman_province))

changeability in its religiosity and, in general, in its civilization and mentality. The major representatives of this fact are Bosnia and Albania. This changeability can easily be translated into adaptability; this adaptability has mainly to do with the preservation of the sense of 'collectivity', of 'sameness', or better of the sense of identity. The word identity, according to Erik Erikson's psychological perspective, derives from the Latin word *identitat* which is deep rooted in the meaning 'repeatedly', that is 'same and same' (Meijl, 2008: 169-170). For him, 'identity refers primarily to a coherent sense of self or the feeling on the part of the individual of being the same as how he or she is viewed and identified by other(s)' (Meijl, 2008: 169-170). He finally concludes that 'identity came to be understood as the historically and culturally rooted self-image of a group of people that was predominantly sketched and sharpened in contact with other groups of peoples' (Meijl, 2008: 170). Thus, invasions of any kind - territorially through military operations and culturally through imposition of ideas, ideologies, religious creeds, and so on - constitute a threat for their identity. For this, Albert Doja, attempting a more effective anthropological analysis for the conversion process, suggests that 'conversion should be understood in terms of the dynamics of objectification and resistance against pressures exerted by authorities holding political and religious power' (Doja, 2000: 421). For him, 'religious conversion relates primarily to a collective history which embraces social and cultural communities, or, more precisely, members of a lineage, family, a village community or a larger territorial group. An individual converts to Islam because it belongs to a social network. Conversion and religious belonging or affiliations are therefore part of a process of socialization through the pursuit of a collective identity. Belonging to religion means belonging to a social group. Being Muslim or Christian, is based on the particular family, kinship or social group, which by tradition relates to religious belonging or adherence' (Doja, 2000: 422). However, identification through religion belief is not the only one possible; a group can be identified in ethnic, patriotic, linguistic or other means. So, it seems to be more useful here, not to provide the degree of religiosity or the kind of this religion; what is of high significance here is to understand which circumstances -historical, social, political e.t.c - particular groups prefer particular means of identification, like ethnicity, language or even territorial definitions. Before starting a recursion over the political history of Bosnia and Albania (after the rise of nationalism Albania will be examined in conjunction with Kosovo and FYROM) stressing the role of religion in identification processes of

both nations, we have to accentuate an important thing concerning identification: “Identity can be found only in interaction with significant others” (Erikson, 1968: 52). If ethnicity is a landmark in the course from identity to the creation of a nation, then, in modern times we will see identification to be a meaningful process of definition of ‘self’ in strong contrast with others, always those of having common interests with. For has been said that “ethnicity is a property of relationship and not ‘the sound of one hand clapping’” (Eriksen T. , 1991: 129). Also, ethnic distinctions can be provided despite insignificant cultural differences, and the vice versa; ethnic commonalities can be highlighted despite significant cultural differences. Symbolic articulation of cultural differences or commonalities often seems to change in form and content along with historical and political occasions (Eriksen T. , 1991: 129). Thus, producing and re-producing ethnicities, or defining and re-defining identities, is the very act of communicating and maintaining cultural differences and always a matter of interethnic communication (Eriksen T. H., 1991: 129). These identities become realized on the boundary of ‘we’, in contact or confrontation with, or in contrast to, ‘others’ (Doja, 2000: 423). Thus, what matters for the ongoing existence of the various groups is the existence of ethnic boundaries, independently of any rules and markers they adhere to (Doja, 2000: 423).

In Albania, first mass conversions to Islam occurred during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, 150 -200 years after the Ottoman conquest of the Albanian territories. Although conversion to Islam has taken many interpretations the most prevailing and meaningful, as explained before, is that of Albert Doja (2000)<sup>7</sup> who maintains that Islamization of Albanians must be considered under the context of identity, historically explained by the ongoing pressures of assimilation by the Christian Orthodox Greeks and Slavs neighbors concluding that, embracing Islam, Albanians accentuated their differences with their Greeks and Slavs rivals. Proximity is here a very important characteristic. The Ottoman State is quite far from Albania. The danger for an identity lies mainly in the neighboring cases where ethnic boundaries are usually overlapping and confused. For Albanians, the pressure from the Greeks in the South and from the Slavs elsewhere (eastward and northward) constitutes a definite menace. So, embracing Islam is taken by Albanians as a means of preserving

---

<sup>7</sup> Mentor Mustafa, ‘Giving Ottomans otherness a local flavor: the Bektashi Order of Dervishes in contemporary Albania’, Department of Anthropology, Boston University, Massachusetts (2007), p. 16.

their identity through differentiating themselves from their neighbors drawing a demarcation line between them using the religion (Doja, 2000: 428).

The coming of nationalism era finds Albania extremely divided. There are two axis of division. The first one is the religious and the second is the linguistic. Concerning religion, there were four denominations: Catholicism mostly in the North, Orthodox mostly in the South, Sunni Islam mostly in the central and eastern parts (until Kosovo) and Bektashism mostly in the South and some in the central regions and in Kosovo (Babuna, 2004: 290). Concerning language, there were two important subgroups: the Gegs, lived in the northern mountainous area and being an almost self-governing tribe and the Tosks, lived in the southern lowland areas which were more prone to the Ottoman administration (Babuna, 2004: 290). The national awakening in Albania (1878-1912) based mainly on a movement to standardize the Albanian language and to utilize the Latin-based alphabet instead of the others possible (Persian, Greek etc), having always underlying the idea of nationhood and the common blood (Mustafa, 2007: 7). However, Bektashism as a religious congregation played its own role in the national movement toward an independent Albania. The first time that Bektashi gained an eminent position among the Albanian society and operated in political terms was during the political patronage of Ali Pasha of Tepelena between 1788 and 1822 (Doja, 2003: 364). Ali Pasha developed close links with Bektashi and entered into dispute with the Ottoman authority to gain autonomous administrative status in Southern and central Albania; simultaneously, this was a great challenge for Bektashi to strengthen its power to the territory that was under the rule of Ali Pasha and, thereafter, to the whole Albania. Also, the dispute between Bektashi and Sunni Islam allowed Ali Pasha to engage into a war for both political and religious connotations (Doja, 2003: 364). Now, the danger for Albania is not so much Serbia and Greece; rather, the differentiation that Albanians want to provide is between them and the Ottomans. In this course, the Ottomans are the 'others', as happened with the other nations in the Balkans which developed nationalist movements. So, even after the fall of Ali Pasha in 1822 and the harsh persecutions from Turks against Bektashi throughout the Ottoman Empire, the Albanian sentiment for differentiation from Turks remains and Albanians embarked on a prolonged resistance to the Ottomans (Doja, 2003: 364). What Ali Pasha managed to achieve and, therefore his figure was coincided with, was exactly to create a local sentiment of

community against the Ottoman center (Doja, 2006: 95). Thereafter, Bektashi played an important role for the independence of Albania also in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth until the final independence in 1912. Naim Frasheri, an Albanian poet and activist of the Albanian national movement, strived to establish a unified written Albanian language, to glorify the Albanian past but also to found the theological and practical principles of Bektashism and the organizational rules governing its functioning (Doja, 2006: 96). Naim Frasheri who, more than everyone else influenced the Albanian population and the national movement, supported the view of a clear opposition to the Ottoman State under the sense that ‘as long as the Ottoman political power coincided in ideological level to Islamic religion, all deviation from dogmatic and orthodox Islam was assumed to take on a political meaning of opposition’ (Doja, 2006: 96). The three main figures of Albanian nationalist movement are Skanderbeg, a man who is believed to have given the first struggle against the Ottomans, Ali pasha, who is the man which is coincided with the notion of autonomy and Naim Farheri, all of three in one or another way related to Bektashism. The apex of Baktashi presence and importance for Albania is reflected on its recognition by the highest governmental authorities as an established denomination and the acquisition of an institutionally recognized representative in the highest function of the state. Thus, The High Council of the Regency of Albania was composed of four rather than three members, representing each of the country’s denomination: Sunni Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Catholics, and Bektashis. This action symbolizes the presence of Bektashism as a separate and independent religious congregation (Doja, 2006: 98).

After the foundation of the new independent Albanian state in 1913, almost half of the Albanian population remained outside the Albanian borders, that is, in Kosovo and fYROM<sup>8</sup> (Babuna, 2000: 68). However, these places, later in 1918, became parts of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and not any different status was recognized for them by the kingdom. But, there was the *Cemiyet* which was an association trying to represent the rights of the Muslims in the Southern Kingdom (Babuna, 2000: 68) and so, an underground distinctiveness among Albanians of Kosovo and FYROM still exists. After the World War II and the rise of communism in the Balkans, in Albania, the communist regime under Enver Hoxha there is a rest of

---

<sup>8</sup> Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

the religion communities. Particularly, under the 1967 constitution proclamation Albania became the first officially atheist country in the world (Mustafa, 2007: 7). But, as there is a Muslim background for Albania and the taking under consideration that the Albanian national awakening was based mainly on ethno-linguistic and a common-blood basis, the Yugoslav state, and mainly Serbia, chose to transfer the game on this basis. Therefore, the conflict between Serbs and Albanians seems to be an ethnic rather than a religious one. Under this conception, Serbian rulers considered the Albanians to be not a distinct nation but mainly Albanian-speaking Serbs (Babuna, 2000: 68) and the backbone of their policy was based exclusively on this fact. The inhibition of teaching the Albanian language in schools of Kosovo or the encouragement from Yugoslav authorities to Albanians to declare themselves as Turks were some of them (Babuna, 2000: 69). A turning point in these developments was the period between 1961 and 1981 when a meaningful demographic change took place in Kosovo. The proportion of the population declaring to be Albanians increased rapidly, but they comprised as well Slavo-phone Muslims (Bosnjaci, Torbesi, Goran, Arnautasi, Roma, ethnic Turks etc) who were absorbed by Kosovar Albanian (Babuna, 2000: 70). Despite their common trait as Muslims, their self-identification in censuses was along ethnic connotations. Demonstrations in 1981 were based mainly on Albanian nationalism rather than religious differentiation. In the course of the decade of 1980s Kosovar Albanians gained a relevant autonomy which resulted in the independence of Kosovo in the summer of 1991 (Babuna, 2000: 74). Then, the Serbs came to assert that all these turmoil and conflicts in Kosovo was in fact a fundamentalist movement acting and threatening all Europe, trying in this way to give a religious essence, now in the European level (Babuna, 2000: 78). However, the Albanian side keeps maintaining that they are Albanians regardless their social or ethnic background (Babuna, 2000: 79) having as their main argument the demographic fact that the overwhelming majority (more than 90%) of the Kosovar population declare themselves as Albanians (Babuna, 2000: 77). Similar is the case in FYROM where the controversy between Albanians and the Yugoslavs lies primarily in ethnic basis. The choice of the political leadership of FYROM to define the new nation on an ethnic basis rather than on the concept of citizenship has exacerbated the inter-ethnic relations between the two groups (Babuna, 2000: 83). The definition of Macedonia as 'a national state of the Macedonian people' in the constitution of 1989, triggered protests from the Albanian side and drew a definite line between the two

groups. However, there is still a fusion of the identification process in FYROM as the self-definition occurs at will; State authorities fear a potential assimilation of other small Muslim minorities (Muslim Slavs, Turks, Muslim Gypsies) by the Albanians as was the case in Kosovo (Babuna, 2000: 83-85). In general, both traits (ethnic and religion) seem to be used by the Albanians in order to provide general claims to excuse they are inferior to their co-citizens and/or non-Muslims. Thus, this sense of inequality (either as ethnic or religious different group) seems to be the backbone on which each claim can be exploited for political ends.

As said before, the other significant case in the Balkans to convert to Islam was Bosnia, too, a country having undergone the strong competition between Christian Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Probably, it is the same case as Albania; that is, an effort from the Bosnian community to preserve its identity against its more powerful neighbors (Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs). This fight occurs and is constantly repetitive throughout history as Bosnians initially had to differentiate themselves from their neighbors but later, as they had achieved it, they had to support this differentiation claiming for autonomy – political, territorial, cultural, or of any kind-. It is suggested that the heretic and schismatic practices adopted by the Bosnians before the Ottomans is exactly the result of their effort to dodge the risk of their assimilation from the others and to preserve their own identity (Doja, 2000: 429). The heretic character, here, provides the Bosnians with the middle way and the only solution in order to support their character and to blunt the differences with their neighbors which had as a result the persistent and consistent fight in its territory. During the Ottoman times, the State had organized its administration along religious groups, namely *millet*. In general, the Ottomans provided a relevant freedom concerning religions, so, the differentiation among the various groups from one another was taken place along religious demarcation lines. The coming of the nationalist era confronts the diverse groups with the challenge to adopt their attitude, as referred prior, regarding and in contrast with the groups they were in interaction with. Bosnians, who had to confront with Serbs and Croats, should preserve their religious differentiation as all of three were of the same linguistic family, namely the Slavs (Babuna, 2000: 67). But this was not the only case. The rise of nationalism first adopted by Serbia and Croatia mobilized the already institutionalized structure of the Bosnian society along religious lines and the nationalist sentiment was transferred to

the respective millets - communities (Bougarel, 1996: 88). This structure, accepted by the then Austro-Hungarian Empire, not only fixed but strengthened the religious division within Bosnian society, and along with the Serbian and Croatian claims to the respective parts of the Bosnian population and territory, led to a dispute over a differentiation on religious basis. During the World War II Bosnia-Herzegovina became part of the Croatian independent state. In this period, the identity of Muslims, as Muslims, was not accepted by the Croats who considered themselves as Croat Muslims (Babuna, 2004: 301-302). In the same time, Tito wanted to bring all Yugoslav nationalities together to fight against the occupation forces; so, its policy changed. Then, the Yugoslav state recognized the Muslims as a Yugoslav nationality but in religious and not in ethnic sense (Babuna, 2004: 301-302). During the communist period, the Yugoslav policy for secularization and socialization of the regime eliminated the significance of the cultural, political, and at-all-levels organizational autonomy that Muslims enjoyed within millets (Bougarel, 1996: 92). But, despite these developments the Bosnian Muslim society comes back at the census of 1948, 1953 and 1961 when they refused to declare themselves as Serbs, Croats or Yugoslavs; In 1968, opposing to the communist stance of refusing national identities on religious basis, Bosnian Muslims were recognized as “Muslims in the national sense” (Bougarel, 1996: 304). From this time, the national identification of the Muslims on religious basis symbolizes a counteraction for the existing Serbian and Croatian nationalisms. So, the fall of communism and the subsequent conflicts in former Yugoslavia found Bosnia-Herzegovina in the middle of three nationalist movements with the main differentiating element being the religion.

Finally, comparing Albania with Bosnia we conclude that, both cases have Islam as an obvious differentiating element from their respective ‘significant others’, in Bosnia Islam acquired a prominent position in their identification. Probably, this has to do with the cultural dimension that religion gives to each society. But, further, this is also evidently that it has to do with the significance that religion gives to the differentiation from one group to another. That is, the opportunity that each religion gives to each community to differentiate itself from other communities which constitute potential threat for their identity.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Religious dichotomy and its extensions**

If something became clear in what has been said until now is that the identity of each group, and more precise its identification process, is a course of interaction between this group and a 'significant other'. The 'other' is significant exactly because it constitutes the reference point on which the 'self' defines itself through a process of comparison and stressing the differences between them. Historical evidence has proved that such comparisons are not a modern phenomenon; they have been happening throughout history and, mostly, between groups that have been in contradiction or in dispute. Thus, they seemed to come in a strong comparison as a game of power, and always in the context of the specific era when this comparison happened (civilization, military power, religion, wealth e.t.c.). For instance, "the Persian Wars constituted the permanent element of the Identity of Greeks, which were delivered from the Persian subjugation" (Davies, 2009: 134-135). Here, the free Greece became perceived as the 'glory occident', 'the place of freedom', 'the hearth of good and wisdom'; Instead, the orient was the headquarter of slavery, barbarity, ignorance (Davies, 2009: 136). Although this division may be unsound, it has been said that it constituted the cornerstone of a consistent tradition which connect the "civilization with Europe and the Occident" (Davies, 2009: 136). Here, it does not worth examining whether that happened deliberately from them in order to prove who is better, or spontaneously as a reaction coming from the human nature. In addition, James Carrier approaching this problem said: "It is not only the imposition of an identity from the Occident to a foreign group of people. It is also the imposition of an identity which was created as a dialectical contradiction on another identity, that of the Occident. So, the Westerners define the Orient from the side of the Occident, but the 'Others' also define themselves from the side of the Occident, and all define the Occident from the side of the 'Other' (Todorova, 2000: 44). In the last two centuries, all peoples are strongly influenced from the nationalist theories coming from the French Revolution and create nationalist movements which as their flag have the 'progress' at all levels (Literacy, technology, human rights, e.t.c.). Thus, if a controversy occurred during this period among nations and if a comparison took place (as we said, deliberately or spontaneously), it could not be but only at the level of the

progress that each state has achieved. In this race among states, the Occident has achieved the highest levels when compared with orient; within Occident, the westernmost part has achieved more progress than the Easternmost, or recently, the Northern part is often compared to the Southern. Therefore, the European continent, as all the World, has been divided between demarcation lines each being attributed with 'essences' which produce and reproduce dichotomies, most prominent being that of 'civilized' versus 'backwardness'. These essences, though attributed from outside, have resulted in being the alter ego for those who accept them and, as Friedrich Nietzsche suggested: "they are growing from generation unto generation, merely because people believe in it, until it gradually grows to be a part of the thing and turns into its very body" (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 917), giving us also the traces for a case of identification from outside.

In this context, Eastern Europe has been associated with 'backwardness', the Balkans with 'violence', India with 'idealism' or 'mysticism', while the West has identified itself consistently with the 'civilized world' (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 917), as opposed to the 'progress', the 'civility' and the 'rationality' that west has attributed to itself, respectively (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 918.). The 'other' face that the Balkans acquired in contrast to Europe is attributed mostly to the Ottoman presence in the peninsula; the fact that the border between the West and Ottoman Empire was the same between the Roman and the Byzantine Empire provides this region with something different; Rather, it stresses a different culture which, then, was based mainly on the religious creeds. The dichotomy between West and East can easily take the form of a religious dichotomy (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 923) (Christianity versus Islam or, even Catholicism versus Orthodoxy) which is further reflected to various sub-dichotomies within the Balkans themselves. Within the Balkans there are such dichotomies and the rhetoric of 'Self' or 'Other' – identification culminates during the strong rivalries before and during the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. Searching for identities, the Yugoslav successor states seek their constituent characteristics in the pre-Yugoslav era, but always adapted to a way which serves the future. Thus, Slovenia and Croatia, once parts of the Roman Empire and after of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and being Catholics, are more close to the European culture and civility than the other states which once were parts of the Ottoman Empire (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 922). Among the latter states, there is a further division between

Orthodox Christians (i.e. Serbs) and Muslims (i.e. Bosniaks and even Albanians) (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 922). During the dispute for the Bosnian territories, Serbs, as Christians are taken to be more close to Europe than Bosnianks (Muslims). The inner Yugoslav dispute over identification and definition of 'Self' and 'Other' places the Serbs as the Others when compared with Croats and Slovenians. In turn, the Serbs defend themselves recalling the Byzantine times promoting the Byzantine Orthodox and cultural heritage as the basis on which the European civilization is based upon; or, they called upon their strong resistance of Christendom against the onslaught of Islam (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 925). Islam, here, is presented as a threat for the whole Europe, its culture and civilization (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 925). In the Balkans, the rhetoric of dichotomies and the brave discriminations between each other, especially on the religious basis, takes a form, as called 'betrayal Syndrome' (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 927). The Serbs, who had to treat mostly with Muslims (from Bosnia, and even Kosovo) in order to serve their territorial claims, used to draw a bright line between them and the Muslim populations proclaiming that the Muslims of these territories were neither Bosnians nor Albanians, respectively, but rather they were Serbs who betrayed the "faith of their forefathers" (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 927). They attribute features to them like weakness or opportunism (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 927). In this process, Muslims are identified from outside as the 'others', though the Bosnian Muslims show off a resistance responding, in turn, that to the former that the real traitors are the Serbs who betrayed the ancient Slavic faith of their forefathers, when they converted to Christianity (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 928). For the Muslims, conversion to Islam is an action of 'acculturation', as they declare that the acceptance of Islam had mainly to do with the institutions it bears and not with the privileges granted by the Ottomans to those who followed the official creed of the Empire (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 928). All this rhetoric between Serbs and Bosniaks occurs in another variation at the case of Kosovo where this discourse takes place between Serbs and Albanians. Serbs, again declare Albanians as being traitors as before Ottoman conquest they were followers of Christian Orthodoxy. We cannot understand in its all complexity the way in which political reality is affected by such rhetoric, and especially the practice of dichotomy creating oppositions such as Christian versus Muslims, but Milica Hayden suggested that "the symbolic association of a group or a region with a negative feature of social or cultural life instigates terminological alienation which affects both referents and the speakers" (Bakin-Hayden, 1995: 926).

As referred to before, dichotomies are not developed only in world level nor in European level but also within the Balkan peninsula itself as well as within the states themselves. For this case, Albania offers us fertile ground for such an examination as there are noted regional differences between mountains and plains, between life-worlds shaped by different religious cultures, and between different social and economic settings, urban and rural, and even a gender dichotomy (Doja, 2008: 55-56).

As said before, in the Balkans, belonging to a religion means belonging to a social group (Doja, 2008: 56). Thus, conversion to a religion and the subsequent collective representations and beliefs, ritual practices and ceremonies is not an action of participating in a World belief system but in a social group and all these practices are considered part of 'an ancestral legacy of traditions and customs' (Doja, 2008: 56). Albert Doja suggests that the conceptualization of the categories of 'Christian' and 'Muslim' is necessarily related to social, political, territorial, ethnic, gender and many other levels of identification (Doja, 2008: 56). In this logic, he continues, the oppositional conceptualization between Christians and Muslims is part of a series of antithetical pairs such as highlander/lowlander, urban/rural, conqueror/conquest, oppressor/oppressed, autochthonous/heterochthonous, moral/immoral, pure/impure, all of which are significant represented by the categories of masculine/feminine, and male/female, in the pattern that Maria Todorova and Bacin-Hayden have suggested in their works (Doja, 2008: 56). According to this pattern, lowlanders and urban people can be seen as rational, pragmatic and cultivated, or as degenerate, soft and submissive; highlanders and rural people can be seen as brave, proud, of superior mettle, or as violent, primitive and arrogant (Doja, 2008: 57). A spatial dichotomy is obvious in Albania: 'Southern Albanians would conceive of the northern mountain people as 'primitive' and of themselves as 'civilized'. By contrast, northern Albanians, especially Catholics, would conceive of Albanians Muslims as 'unfaithful', relating this prominently to their religious conversion in history. They would also tend to label all southern Albanians of Orthodox religion as potentially 'unfaithful' because of prevalent conspiracy theories in which identification with Greeks expansionist plans would make them potential traitors (Doja, 2008: 58). Of high interesting is the case of the gender dichotomy that Serbia produces during its nationalist discourses, shaping in that way the 'real Serbs' against Bosnian 'traitors' who have converted to Islam but also against fantasized virile but 'bestial' and 'evil

incarnate' Albanians, against 'emasculated' Serbian bureaucrats and communists, against 'effeminate' Serbian peace activists, or against 'hormonally challenged' opponents to the Milosevic line (Doja, 2008: 57). This religious dichotomy, further suggests another one dichotomy within the same family. Thus, in contrary to the 'civilized' people there is the 'fanatical' one. This division is often observed within a family being represented through the subordination of woman to male authority, perceived as a feature of fanaticism (Doja, 2008: 58). Albania produces also a dichotomy, even if it occurs between Muslims themselves. For instance, the Muslims of the southern Albania attribute to themselves a 'cultural finesse' in comparison with the Muslims of the rural or mountain areas of the northern Albanian (Doja, 2008: 58).

This process of identity construction can become notably dangerous when accompanied with tense periods of ethnic disputes and disruptive social change as was the case before the breakup of the former Yugoslavia (Doja, 2008: 57). In that way, religious demarcation lines can easily be transformed into a ragging nationalism, which further can become militarist, masculinist, misogynist, racist and violent (Doja, 2008: 57). Moreover, it is not by chance that the wars (or, the most bloody and horrid of them) took place in region where nations, or ethnic groups, or different identities were to a great extent overlapped (Heyden, 1996: 783). Robert Hayden suggested that the extreme nationalism in the former Yugoslavia has not been only a matter of imagining allegedly 'primordial' communities, but rather of making existing heterogeneous ones unimaginable (Heyden, 1996: 783). The task of creating a homogeneous nation in a heterogeneous polity, that the Yugoslav nationalism promotes, can be achieved through three ways: assimilation, expulsion and border revision (Heyden, 1996. 785). All of three ways have the same end but the implementation of each of them is a matter of broader social and political conditions. In the former Yugoslavia there is an explicit conflation between the notions of 'republic' and 'nation'. This division is well comprehended when one studies the definitions that the constitution of each successor state gives, but also the Yugoslav state itself gave, in order to justify and legitimate the bearer of the rights of each one (Heyden, 1996: 787). Thus, in the first line of the 1974 Yugoslav constitution draws a bright line between these two concepts stating "the right of every nation to self-determination, including the right to secession", referred, not to the population or

citizens of republics, but to the nations (*narodi*) of Yugoslav, ethnically defined (Heyden, 1996: 787). Here, is clear that the right for secession is not justified to republics but to the nations and, therefore, the borders are not those of 'republics' but those of the 'nations', which, probably, are not something tangible but something 'imagined' (Heyden, 1996: 787). This perception of nation as an ethnically homogeneous entity is further perceived also by the republics of the successor states, for instance when Croatia is constitutionally defined as the national state of the 'Croat people' (constitution of the Republic of Croatia 1990, Preamble), or Slovenia as the state of the sovereign Slovene people (Heyden, 1996: 785). In such a definition, the exclusion of ethnically different categories is implied from the beginning. And, because these states were defined as such by the respective ethnic majorities, the omen for the minorities was a bad one. As Robert Hayden notes, by definition, anyone not of the majority ethno-nation could only be a citizen of second class. The key to these distinctions lay in the concept of *sovereignty*. As nationalist politicians came to power in the various Yugoslav republics after the elections of 1990, they rewrote their respective republic constitutions to justify the state on the sovereignty of the ethnically defined nations (*narod*) in which others might be citizens but could not expect an equal right to participate in control of the state (Heyden, 1996: 787). In this period of time, in Yugoslavia the term 'nation' supersedes the term 'republic' as well as the cultural borders of the diverse peoples (*narod*) supersede the respective territorial borders. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo constitute the places par excellence where this occurs. For instance, Serbia, in its constitutional provisions implies the existence of a Serbian nation within the Bosnian territory which, according to the right of self-determination, has the inalienable right to claim its autonomy (Heyden, 1996: 791). Thus, when Yugoslavia collapsed, the Serb and Croat leaders of their respective ethnic groups within Bosnia proclaimed their autonomy, modeled of the theory of self-determination, far from the will of the central and sovereign government of Bosnia-Herzegovina and searching to join their compatriots (Heyden, 1996: 792).

From what has been said until now, it is well comprehended that the definition that the separate successor republics give through their law to the notion of 'citizenship', that is the property of belonging, is of utmost importance for the people living within, since those who do not be comprised in this category are immediately excluded from

the community. But the basis for defining the ‘citizenship’ in laws was the ‘majority’, something which immediately creates an explicit discrimination between those belonging in the majority and those who were not members of it (Heyden, 1996: 793). So, all this process of creating nations through national self-determination and homogenization described before ends up being a process so logical as to be irresistible (Heyden, 1996: 795). The course of the war has followed this logic of establishing the nation-state by eliminating minorities; and what started to be done through constitutional provisions and laws, if it was not adequate to ensure the security of the new nation, it should be accomplished through other means, specifically military conquest and the subsequent expulsion of the unwanted population (Heyden, 1996: 795).

### **Religious Minority and Marginality: The case of Greek Pomaks**

This game of power and hegemonic politics from the ‘privileged’ upon the ‘unprivileged’<sup>9</sup> groups and the processes for the (re) construction of the identities can be well comprehended if we refer to the case of the Greek ‘Pomaks’ in the mountain area of Rodopi, in Thrace, Northeastern Greece. In the broader region of Thrace, there is a legally recognized Muslim minority which lives among the Christian Greek population. This cohabitation dates from the early Ottoman period (14<sup>th</sup> century) (Tsibiridou, 2007: 2). “Muslims in Greece do constitute a homogeneous group within the population as far as religion is concerned. However, this very same group of people is also heterogeneous – in terms of social or economic status, but also with regard to language, national, or ethnic identity, and modalities of political self-perception” (Tsitselikis, 2012). Muslims in Greece fall into two categories (Tsitselikis, 2012):

---

<sup>9</sup> The case of Greek ‘Pomaks’ constitutes an extreme and, therefore, a good example with which it is easy for someone to understand the game of power that took place among the diverse republics of former Yugoslavia under their way to create their ethnic nation-states. This, does not mean that ‘Pomaks’ tried to create a separate political entity based on a different identity, as was the case in the rest of the states; rather, we use this example in order to clarify and to make clear how the road towards the nation-state building is a dialectical process which turns to be ‘a game of power’, under which weak communities display a weakness to self-assert their identity; finally, they accept resignedly the identity attributed from outside.

In the first one comprises the Muslims inhabiting the Greek Thrace. They constitute a separate group with important degree of internal coherence despite their internal linguistic or ethnic differentiation.

The second category comprises all those immigrants coming from Asian or African countries as economic immigrants and are concentrated mostly in Athens. Between the two categories there is not any given social bonds. Here, we will not concern ourselves with the second category as their origination and their social and political situation is different and out of our study, as those of the first category.

So, coming back in Thrace, there is a point which worth stressing here and this is that, within this Muslim minority, there is an other minority (also Muslim) which differs from the former at least linguistically (Tsibiridou, 2007: 2). This means that, while the larger part of the Muslim minority in the Greek Thrace is a Turkish – speaking, the Pomaks is a Slavic – speaking one and this difference puts the latter in a status of marginality (Tsibiridou, 2007: 2). “Since 1925 (after the population exchange between Greece and Turkey) the identities – and the definition in general - of the minority of Thrace has evolved under fluctuating social, economic, and political circumstances, and faced new needs and challenges. It has done so in a context in which legal protection on religious ground should not –but in practice often does–deprive the beneficiaries of their right to express other concurrent identities at the linguistic, cultural, national, or ethnic levels” (Tsitselikis, 2012: 140). The minority(-ies) in Thrace has undergone strong pressure, as far as their identities is concerned, coming mostly from the nationalist game of power between Greece and Turkey, and sometimes Bulgaria. The minority “was forced to take on the role of proxy in the battlefield of the ideological clash of nationalism” between these powers (Tsitselikis, 2012: 141). The Treaty of Lausanne defined the minority as a religious one using the appellation ‘Muslim Minority’ (Tsitselikis, 2012). Further ethnic, cultural or political designation (or identification) became later a field over which the politics of nationalism took place. Muslims were (and, up to a point, still are) coincided with Turks; so, this connotation gave national definitions to this minority implying nationalistic claims from Turkey, and the subsequent encounters from Greece in order to attach something ‘Greek’ in this population and so to preserve and to prevent potential future territorial claims (Tsitselikis, 2012). Thus, for the minority in Greek Thrace, a political game of hetero-definition started and they became they found

themselves in a situation of second-class citizens. The crucial point is that the Muslim population in Thrace was not of common descent.

“According to the 1991 general census, the Muslim minority in Thrace numbers approximately 98000 persons or 29 percent of the local population, and 0.92 percent of the total population of Greece. The minority consists of three distinct groups, whose members are of Turkish origin (50 percent of the minority population), Pomaks (a native population that speaks a Slavic dialect and was converted to Islam during the Ottoman rule, 35 percent of the minority population) and Roma (15 percent of the minority population). Each of these groups has its own distinct spoken language and traditions. They share, however, a common religion (Muslim), which is the basic reason for the denomination of the minority in its entirety as a ‘Muslim’ in the Treaty of Lausanne” (Tsitselikis, 2012: 148).

It is of high interest here to refer to the case of Greek Pomaks of the mountain area of Rodopi, Northeastern Greece who, as referred before, constitutes a minority within the already Muslim Minority of the Greek Thrace. The marginal status of this “is performed through ‘silence’ practices and is emotionally invested with feelings of fear and shame, while it is attributed by subjects to lack of material and social goods, and absence of good physical, mental and emotional health. Practices of self-constraint of speech, emotions, and sexuality are systematically adopted by subjects who, not only in the past, but also until present, have experienced and are experiencing attitudes of discrimination” (Tsibiridou, 2007: 1). “Marginality is consciously or unconsciously perceived as deprivation of social and material goods, of physical, mental and spiritual health, and of the absence of opportunities to have sexual intercourse with the other sex. Poverty, attributed to ‘lack of knowledge’, urges them at the level of close interpersonal relationships, ‘because of envy’, as they say, to adopt practices of negative reciprocity for the sake of circulation of social goods within the limited confines of one village. Poverty’s idiom is also claimed regarding the hybrid character of the language they speak, which they themselves figuratively compare to the ‘poor people’s soup’: our Pomak language is *tsorba*, it contains something of everything, Bulgarian, Turkish, Pomak, Greek’. Their peculiar language seems to be a main reason for their exclusion from many forms of knowledge” (Tsibiridou, 2007: 3). The ‘marginality’ (or the lack) of an official Pomak language seems to be transferred and translated into the marginality of the very group of Pomaks. When they are kids, they perceive themselves as Pomaks and they speak the Pomak language. When they go to school they learn foreign languages (Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian) but the mother language, the Pomak (Tsibiridou, 2007). Among others,

this phenomenon pushes them to adopt the Turkish language as the official one, as it is the dominant within the ‘Muslim Minority’ of Thrace, because it is the official minority language in the educational system of the area (Tsibiridou, 2007). For, Pomaks, as a social category within a broader Muslim minority and the broadest Greek Society, “are shifting from practices of silence to ones of assimilation into the Turkish-speaking majority” (Tsibiridou, 2007: 2), something which, further, implies a subsequent changeability at their definition as a social/political/ethnic group. “As a result, verbal practice as a concrete communication code is avoided by Pomaks coming from the mountain areas, and seems to be often replaced by the ‘look’” (Tsibiridou, 2007: 6).

In all this context wherein this ‘isolated’ mountainous people is placed, they become the components of a strong social game governed by the power politics of both the Greek and Turkish speaking elites (Tsibiridou, 2007). As another case of ‘internal orientalisms’, the logic of dichotomy seems to exist among the communities of the Greek Thrace based mainly on linguistic criteria. The lack of a definite educational policy from the Greek state has aggravated the situation of the Pomaks for sure. The continuation of the politics of nationalism, now between Greece and Turkey, still places, both the Muslim Minority as a total and Pomaks as a social category, to a position of a second class citizens protracting in that way a final solution of the minority issue in Greek Thrace, fostering ‘nests’ of further future ambiguities and discriminations and disparagments.

## **CLOSURE**

### **Concluding Remarks**

In the first chapter, the reader is confronted with the challenge to break the taboo of the politics of nationalism which suggests that the Ottoman –and thus the Islam- presence in the Balkan peninsula is coincided with the oppression and the subjugation of the other religious communities (Christians, Catholics, Jews e.t.). On the contrary, not only a relevant religious freedom seems to be granted by the Ottoman State, but also the diverse religious communities display a tendency to co-exist, launching in that way a coherent and, one could take the risk to say, multicultural Balkan society, which, inter alia, shares the same political authority. Especially in an era when the Emperors were God-appointed and the religion kept a prevailing position within the public life, the most predominant religious creeds (Christianity and Islam) in the Balkans display great similarities, not only in their perception of the life but also in their ritual practices. And, because the official religion of the new political authority (Ottomans) in the Balkans was Islam, the commonalities and the common ground that seems to exist between Christianity and Islam should be searched in the new religion, namely Islam. But, the new religion is not the Orthodox Islam (Sunni and Shiite); rather, it is the Bektashi Order, whose disciples swept, among other places, the Balkan Peninsula and spread the principles of their values (Mavromatis, 2008). “The acceptance of the Bektashism in this region should be searched in the wider political and economic conditions in this region as well as in the syncretic spirit of Bektashism which allowed their adherents to approach Christians and to build good relations with them” (Mavromatis, 2008). Thus, before the coming of the era of nationalism and the sequent bloody rivalries between the potential nation-states, the Balkan Peninsula displays a great unity as a political entity. But historically also, it seems to have a long story of a lasting course within which the Balkan peoples were going along with each other (Byzantium, Roman Empire etc.) and living under the same authority and, therefore, political organization. Thus, in an era when the only source for people to derive moral values and principles for every day behavior are religion and potential local traditions, Bektashi Order constitutes the common ground to bring together the two major religions (Christianity and Islam), being simultaneously open to local customs.

But, the perception of the religions is not the same in the new era of nationalism. The coming of the nationalist ideologies and the conflicts for the creation of the ethnic nation-states led the religion to become a political tool which cultivated strict demarcation lines between the different religious communities. On this road towards the creation of the nation-states, religion constitutes the battlefield for the games of power that were taking place among the diverse enemies of each interested nation. In the process of nation-state building, religion is of utmost importance as it is a characteristic which strictly differentiates the one group from another; it stresses a different culture and, so, a different identity between the conflicting groups. And, when this is not so clear or, it seems to be confused, religion became politically handled. In some cases, and according to the political purposes, those who follow Islam are coincided with Turks, in order to be expelled to Turkey; or, in the case of Kosovo, the Muslims are arbitrarily coincided with Albanians in order to present a greater Albanian population, serving in that way political purposes; the same occurs in FYROM as well. But, the concurrence of Islam with the Ottoman state gave deeper connotation for the perception of the 'other', especially as the 'orient' and, further, with 'backwardness', 'barbarous' and 'uncivilized'.

In this game, the Muslim groups, numerically less than the Christians, are the inferior groups, those who betrayed their forefathers' religion (Christianity) in order to gain some privileges during the Ottoman times. This is the characterization that Serbia gives to the Bosniaks or, occasionally, to Albanians. Under this game of power, religious minorities probably were, and still are, undermined. As they could not seek their own identity which would go together with a clear-cut territory, creating in that way an ethnic nation-state, they are forced to accept an identification given from outside. They are the game and the battlefield of the conflicting states which, upon the minorities, they seek a potential territorial expansion or, to give an end to potential future territorial expansion of the opponent state (see the Greek-Turkey case for the Muslim minority in Thrace). All this confrontation towards the religious minorities (which in the Balkans are the Muslim minorities) puts them in a state of marginality and degradation something which, further, have direct reflections on the practical and everyday issues of these minorities' life.

## **The Balkan Muslim populations today**

Muslims seem to be found in all the Balkan countries. All of them come from Islamisation processes and religious conversion toward Islam during the Ottoman period from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bougarel, 2005: 6). However, Muslim populations in the Balkans present a great diversity; there are four main linguistic groups (Albanian-, Slavic-, Turkish- and Romany speaking Muslims) which divide Balkan Muslims along national and ethnic lines (Bougarel, 2005: 6-7). Fluctuation on religiosity is another one trait of the various groups in the Balkans; “For example, between Albanians of Albania and Albanians of Kosovo and fYRoM, between rural and urban populations, or between older and younger generations” (Norris, 1993: 20). Islam in the Balkans has constituted the main characteristic of identification of several groups in the past and lately as well. However, in some regions all these differentiations and among various groups co-exist and this fact renders their identification process difficult and confused. In 20<sup>th</sup> century, Islam became rather a political tool over the nation-state building procedure. The case of Bosnia and Kosovo strongly proves this assertion; Conflicts between Albania and F.Y.R.O.M. and Serbia and Kosovo constitute a very particular example. In these cases, Islam serves as an ‘ethnic market’ against Orthodox Serbs and FYROMs and facilitates the ‘Albanisation’ of smaller Muslim populations (Bougarel, 2005: 9). In addition, this is a considerable reason why, accordingly to the case, there are differentiations on religiosity.

Numerically, the distribution of Muslim populations and groups in the Balkan states is presented below: Kosovo has the most coherent Muslim society with a percentage of some 85% of the total population being Muslims. Most of them are followers of Sunni Islam and there is also a Bektashi Islam minority. Ethnically, there is a further variety with the most of the Muslims being Ethnic Albanians, less being Bosniaks, Gorani, Turkish communities and a small Roma/Ashkali community<sup>10</sup>. In Albania approximately 70-80% of the total population is Muslims, mainly secular and from the Sunni branch, and are found throughout the country<sup>11</sup>. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) Muslim portion makes up the 46% of the total population. Its name is Bosniaks,

---

<sup>10</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_Kosovo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Kosovo)

<sup>11</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_Albania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Albania)

a South Slav ethnic group adhered to Islam since 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>. Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's (F.Y.R.O.M.) population is made up of 64.7% of Christian Orthodox and 33.3% of Muslims most of them being Albanians, Turks and Roma, although some are FYROM's Muslims converted to Islam<sup>13</sup>. Sandjak, a district between Serbia and Montenegro, comprises a percentage of 4.5% Muslims and constitutes a minority (Bougarel, 2005: 8). They are Muslims by national identification and by religion like Bosniaks (Friedman, 2000: 470). Another one Muslim minority is found in the Greek Thrace, Northeast Greece, at a percentage of 1.5% of the total Greek population (Bougarel, 2005: 8). Finally, the largest Muslim minority in the Balkans lies in Bulgaria of a percentage of 10.0% of the total population. This portion is divided mainly into three groups: Turks, Muslim Bulgarians and Roma. According to 2001 census, Turks occupy a number of 713 024 Muslims, Muslim Bulgarians 131 531 and Roma 123 436<sup>14</sup>.

**Table 1: Geographical distribution of Balkan populations (early 1990s) (Bougarel, 2005: 8)**

	Number (est.)	Percentage (est.)
Greece	120 000	1.5%
Albania	2 300 000	70.0%
FYROM	700 000	33.0%
Bulgaria	577 139	10.0%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2 020 000	46.0%
Serbia-Montenegro	380 000	4.5%
Kosovo	1 660 000	84.9%
Romania	50 000	0.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8 330 000</b>	<b>13.5%</b>

### **The Balkan Islam Today**

Today, Islam in the Balkans is not something temporal. The nation-states have been formed and the struggles for defining and securing the diverse identities have –to great extent- been soothed. The last efforts from the prevailing groups to eliminate the

<sup>12</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosniaks>

<sup>13</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic\\_of\\_Macedonia#Religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Macedonia#Religion)

<sup>14</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_Bulgaria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Bulgaria)

presence of Islam within the Peninsula, through any kind of expulsion, have left considerable Muslim communities behind. Except the minorities we described before, as having been said, Islam is the official –or the prevailing- creed for three nation-states, namely, Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo, plus FYROM where a serious proportion of Muslims resides within. Now, the striking difference with the past is that the Balkan Muslims are not a category separate from the other world; on the contrary they are part of the World Islam. In addition, the prospect of a potential integration of the Balkans in the European Union provides both an opportunity and a challenge. The participation of a Muslim nation-state within the Union promotes the co-existence and the peaceful solution of until-now unsolved problems. On the other hand, the historical experience of the Balkan Muslims can contribute to the development of a ‘European Islam’ (Bougarel, 2005: 6). However, there are great variations in the level of religiosity, not only among the Muslims of the Western Europe and the Balkans, but also among the latter themselves (Bougarel, 2005: 20). It is a common belief, for instance, that the western European Muslims are much more religious than the Balkan’s ones (Bougarel, 2005: 20).

But beyond these, the coexistence of Islam belief with the European values and rules, up to a point contradictory to each other, provide a challenge for Islam itself. That is, a potential official participation of a wider Muslim society in the Europe may provide the Muslims with a more smooth perception of their doctrine something which would eliminate the differences with other creeds and promoting, in that way, a more secular way of life for the Muslims themselves. This, also, would be beneficial for the elimination of potential nationalistic claims still existing within the Balkan region, ejecting the danger of potential future controversies, able to being evolved into conflict. The obviation of the differences and the promotion of relations of symbiosis and good neighborhood seem to be of high importance for the future of the Balkan states.

## Βιβλιογραφία

- Appadurai, A. (1988). "Putting Hierarchy in its place." *Place and Voice in Anthropological Theory*, Blackwell, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 36-49.
- Babuna, A. (1999). *Nationalism and the Bosnian Muslims*. East European Quarterly, XXXIII, No. 2, p.195-218.
- Babuna, A. (2000). "The Albanians of Kosovo and Macedonia: Ethnic Identity Superseding religion". *Nationality Papers*, Carfax Publishing, Vol. 28, No.1, p.67-92.
- Babuna, A. (2004). "The Bosnian and Albanians: Islam and Nationalism". *Nationality Papers*, Carfax Publishing, Vol. 32, No. 2, p.287-321.
- Bakin-Hayden, M. (1995). "Nesting Orientalisms: The case of former Yugoslavia". *Slavic Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4, p.917-931.
- Balandier, G. (1971). *Politiki Anthropologia*. (Giorgos Vlachos, Translation.) Athens: Papazisis.
- Bettina E. Schmidt, Ingo W. Schoder (2001). *Anthropology of Violent and Conflict*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Boskovic, A. (2005). "Distinguishing Self and Other, Anthropology and national identity in former Yugoslavia". *Anthropology Today*, Vol.21, No.2. p.8-13.
- Bougarel, X. (1996). "Bosnia and Herzegovina - State and Communitarianism". In David A. Dyker and Ivan Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia and After*, New York: Addison Wesley Longman Publishing. Chapter 6, p.87-115.
- Bougarel, X. (1997). "From Young Muslims to Party of Democratic action: The emergence of a pan-Islamist trend in Bosnia-Herzegovina". *Islamic Studies*, Islamabad-Pakistan: Islamic research institute, Vol. 36, No. 2,3, p.533-549.
- Bougarel, X. (1999). *Bosnian Islam since 1990: Cultural Identity or Political Ideology?* New York: Columbia University.
- Bougarel, X. (2003). "Islam and Politics in Post-Communist Balkans (1990-2000)". In Dimitris Keridis & Charles Perry, *New approaches to Balkan Studies*, Dules: Brassey's, p. 345-360.
- Bougarel, X. (2005). "The role of Balkan Muslims in building a European Islam", European Policy Center, EPC Issue Paper No. 43, p. 1-31.
- Bringa, T. (1995). *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way, Identity and Community in a central Bosnian village*. Princeton: Princenton University Press.
- Conversi, D. (1999). "Ernest Gellner as critic of social thought: nationalism, closed systems and the Central European tradition. Asen: Central European University". *Nation and Nationalism*, Vol. 5, No. 4, p.565-575.
- Davies, N. (2009). *Istoria tis Europis*. Athina: Nefeli.

- Doja, A. (2000). *The politics of Religion in the reconstruction of Identities, The Albanian situation*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Doja, A. (2003). "Confraternal Religion: From liberation theology to political reversal", *History and Anthropology, University of Limerick: Routledge*, Vol. 14, No. 4, p.349-381.
- Doja, A. (2006). *A political History of Bektashism in Albania, Totalitarian movements and Political Religion*, Routledge.
- Doja, A. (2008). "Instrumental Borders of Gender and Religious Conversion in The Balkans". *Religion, State & Society, Routledge*, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 436-444.
- Duijzings, G. *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Eickelman, D. F. (1989). *Ethnicity and Cultural Identity. From the Middle East: An anthropological approach*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Eriksen, T. H. (1991). "The cultural contexts of Ethnic Differences". *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 26, No. 1, p. 127-144.
- Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton., Chapt. 3.
- Friedman, F. (2000). "The Muslims Slavs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (with reference to Sandjak of Novi Pazar): Islam as National Identity". *Nationality Papers*, Vol.20, No.1., p.470-485.
- Geertz, C. (1970). *H ermineia tw n politismwn*. Athina: Aleksandreia.
- Heyden, R. M. (1996)."Imagined Communities and Real Victims: Self-identification and Ethnic Cleansing im Yugoslavia".*American Ethnologists*, Vol. 23, No. 4, p. 783-801.
- Hoare, M. A. (2007). *Flag on the Mountain: A political Anthropology of War in Croatia and Bosnia*. Saqi Books, p.109-117.
- Huslack, F. W. (1973). *Christianity and Islam under the SULTans*. Octagon Books.
- John Hutchinson & Anthony. D. Smith (eds) (1994). *Nationalism*. Oxford - New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kaprat, K. H. (1997). "The Balkan National States and Nationalism: Image and Reality". *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2,3, p. 328-359.
- Kitromilides, P. M. (2007). *An Orthodox commonwealth, Symbolic legacies and cultural encounters in SE Europe*. Burlington: Ashgate.
- Kitromilides, P. M. (2004). *Iosipos Moisiiodax, Oi syntetagmenes tis valkanikis skepsis ton 18o ai*. Athens: M.I.E.T.

- Kotzageorgis, F. (1997). *To Islam sta Valkania: Ena Mousoulmaniko xeiroyrafo apo tin Hpeiro toy 18ou ai.* Athens: Syndesmos en Athina is Megalosxolitwn.
- Macek, I. (2009). *Sarajevo Under Siege: Anthropology in Wartime.* University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Meijl, T. v. (2008). "Culture and Identity in Anthropology: Reflections on Unity and Uncertainty in the dialogical self". *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, Vol. 3, No. 1, p.165-190.
- Minkov, A. (2004). *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans.* Boston: Brill Leiden.
- Morris, B. (2006). *Religion and Anthropology: a critical introduction.* New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mustafa, M. (2007). "Giving Ottomans otherness a local flavor: the Bektashi Order of Dervishes in contemporary Albania". *AAS Working Papers in Social Anthropology*, Vol. 3, Boston: Massachusetts.
- Nagel, J. (1994). "Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture". *Social Problems*, Vol. 41, No. 1, *Special Issue on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America*, p. 152-176.
- Norris, H. T. (1993). *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World.* London: Hurts & Company.
- Pandofli, M. (n.d.). "Myths and new forms of governance in contemporary Albania". In Stephanie Schwandner – Sievers & Bernd J. Fischer *Albanian Identities, Myth and History*, London: University College London, p. 202-215,
- Pavlowitch, S. K. (1994). "Who is Balkanizing Whom? The Misunderstanding Between the Derbis of Yugoslavia and an Unprepared West". *Daedalus*, Vol. 93, No. 1, p.203-224.
- Pinson, M. (1996). *The Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Their Historical Development from the Middle Ages to the dissolution of Yugoslavia.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Rapper, G. d. "Culture and the Reinvention of Myth in a border area". In Stephanie Schwandner – Sievers & Bernd J. Fischer *Albanian Identities, Myth and History*, London: University College London, p. 202-215.
- Said, E. W. (1996). *Orientalismos.* (F. Terzakis, Μεταφρ.) Athina: Nefeli.
- Todorova, M. (1997). *Imagining the Balkans.* Oxford: Gale Stokes (Rice University).
- Todorova, M. (2000). *H Dytiki Fantasiwsi.* Thessaloniki: Paratiritis.
- Todorova, M. (2003). *National Identities and National Memories in the Balkans*, London: C. Hurst & Co Ltd.

- Trix, F. (1993). *Spiritual Discourse: learning with an Islamic master*. Conduct and Communication Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Tsibiridou, F. (2006). Writing about Turks and Powerful Others: Journalistic heteroglossia in Greek Thrace. *South European Society & Politics*, 11(1), σσ. 129-143.
- Tsibiridou, F. (2007). *'Silence' as an idiom of marginality among Greek Pomaks* (Τόμ. The Pomaks in Greece and Bulgaria). (C. V. K. Steinke, Επιμ.) Munchen: Verlag Otto Sangher.
- Tsibiridou F. & Stamatopoulos D., (eds) (2008), *Orientalismos sta Oria*. Athina: Kritiki.
- Tsitselikis, K. (2012). *Old and New Islam in Greece*. Boston: Leiden.
- Zegkinis, E. (2002). *Jenissaries and Bektashism, Operative factors of Balkan Islam*. Thessaloniki: Vanias.
- Stavrianos, L. (2006). *Ta Valkania apo to 1453 kai meta*. (E. Delivani, Translation.) Thessaloniki: Vanias.

#### **WEB SITES**

- ❖ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_Bulgaria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Bulgaria)
- ❖ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_Albania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Albania)
- ❖ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosniaks>
- ❖ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic\\_of\\_Macedonia#Religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Macedonia#Religion)
- ❖ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_Kosovo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Kosovo)
- ❖ <http://www.islamicpluralism.org/>