

Summary

This monograph seeks to illustrate, and explain current identity processes among Bosniaks in Slovenia as they are manifest either through clothing practices, or the differing opinions about these practices. More precisely, it is shown through different attitudes towards Islamic clothing practices how Bosniaks experience Islam as a constituent element of their history and identity. In this vein, the analysis displays the different meanings that Bosniaks of different generations attribute to Islam, and the complex social processes affecting attitudes towards Islam. Analyzing these identity processes, the monograph's main focus is the period after 1991, when radical political changes as the demise of Yugoslavia, the independence of Slovenia, and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina significantly influenced the Bosniak identity statements. The dress code as the media through which such assertions are made and symbolised embodies the discourse through which various Bosniak religious and other orientations are being communicated and contested, and through which both internal and external social boundaries (Barth 1969) of the Bosniak community are being constructed.

As shown in the analysis of the fieldwork data, the Bosniaks' dress discourse is defined by two primary topical contexts. The first one I have termed Slovenian. In last years, it has increasingly been defined by a growing, open islamophobia, which manifests itself mostly through dominant media and political discourse about Islam and Muslims in Slovenia and throughout the world. This kind of islamophobia mainly draws on the images of »frontier orientalism« (Gingrich 1998) which is embedded in Slovenian collective memory on »Turkish incursions« during the Middle Ages, and is perpetually reproduced in the local »mytho-histories« (e.g. in national historiography, literature, school textbooks), and supported by state ideological apparatus. The more exotic images of the oppressed, secluded and veiled, but at the same time luring and carnal women linked to Islam and Muslims, in turn draw on the images of »classical colonial orientalism« (Said 1996). The latter are locally easily accessible for example in the form of various »products« of elite arts from the period of European colonialism, and reproduced through contemporary visual media and propaganda.

The second topical context I have termed Bosnian. It is defined by the history of nationalisms which led to the war in Bosnia in the

1990s and contributed to the formation of social boundaries among Bosnians of different religious affiliations in Bosnia, as well as in Slovenia. On the Bosniak side, the ideological »nationalization« of Islam (Bougarel 1999a, 1999b, 1999c) propagated by Bosniak politicians greatly contributed to the formation of these ethnic boundaries. Islam became in this context the element of the Bosniak cultural repertoire that erected the »impassable«, ethnic boundaries (Šumi 2000) between Bosniaks who have interiorised the views of the Bosniak national politics against the Orthodox or Catholic Bosnians. Within Bosnian topical context, influences from the Islamic world which were brought to Bosnia during the war, are also of importance. These above all contributed to different Bosniak understandings of Islam today. Social boundaries which are being constructed through these different understandings of Islam within the Bosniak community are, once more, observable in Bosnia as well as in Slovenia.

The revival of the Islamic dress code is part and parcel of the processes of interwar revitalization of Islam, and the said influences from the Islamic, predominantly Arab world. A great majority of Bosniaks in Slovenia Islam still perceives in a traditional, Bosnian way, which they perceive as having evolved during the times Socialist Yugoslavia. Islam is understood as belonging to the intimate sphere and should not be publicly displayed. Knowledge about Islam derives mostly, but not exclusively, from oral traditions that flourished and were passed from generation to generation in the Bosnian countryside: the majority of Slovenian Bosniak immigrants are of such background. Bosniaks who follow traditional Bosnian Islam lay stress on the moral code of Islam rather than on religious dogma. In other words: for Bosniaks who practice Islam in this traditional way, it is more important that a person is good and honest, than dressed according to religious rules.

During the war, some Bosniaks engaged with Islam in a more studious way. Among them are mostly, but not exclusively, people of younger generations, who studied Islam in religious literature which was, during the war, circulated among Bosniaks both in Bosnia and Slovenia. These people got to understand their Islamic practices in a more »scriptural« way (Gellner 2003[1992]). Unlike those who follow »folk Islam« (Gellner 2003[1992]) based in oral tradition, they ground their everyday practices in Islamic orthodoxy. They hold that veiling is a religious duty of every adult Muslim woman. Most women who understand Islam in this way, veil at least sporadically, mostly for various religious occasions, because strict observance of all the religious duties does not seem feasible in their everyday surroundings.

Translations of many religious books which circulate among Bosniaks were financed by foreign humanitarian organizations during the war and interpret Islam in a more rigid way than the traditional Bosnian Muslims endorse: the authors of these books interpret Islam through the optics of Hanbali Islamic school of law, or through Salafist views rather than the Hanafi Islamic school of law which was well established in Bosnia, and institutionalized by the Bosnian Islamic Community. Having been educated by this kind of literature and given instruction by individuals who were in contact with representatives of »foreign Islam« during the war, some Bosniaks took up a different form of Islamic practices hitherto unknown by Bosnian Muslims. These new practices are most evident in the revival of the Islamic dress code inclusive of »Arabic dress elements«: women wear the *jilbab* and *abaya* in dark colours non-traditional to Bosnia; some men grow beards and shortened trousers that expose the ankles; behaviour is highly ritualized and enhances restraint and austerity, as is especially evident in communication between men and women who avoid eye contact, shaking hands, and mixed-gender company.

The principal social arena of internal bordering processes among Bosniaks in Slovenia today is the discourse on the interpretations of Islam and its practices. Within this discourse, the question of dress code is the most salient topic of self-representation. The key position of the vast majority of Bosniaks who follow folk Islam is that Muslims should not »show off«, but rather, adapt to the environment they live in. Therefore, the revival of the Islamic dress code is not acceptable to them. They are especially critical to dress code and some other religious practices followed by the adherents of Salafism, whom they take distance from and even denigrate. Salafist practices are seen as linking Slovenian Muslims to the problematic media images about Islam and Muslims in the eye of the Slovenian public, thus creating social barriers Bosniaks and majority non-Muslim Slovenian population. Most Bosniaks see and present themselves as Muslims whose values and religious practices are completely adapted to living in Slovenia, and whose Islamic religion contrasts considerably from orientalist notions of »Islamic« violence, terrorist disposition, and chauvinism towards women. In this context, they see themselves as belonging to a »modern« European rather than the »backward« Islamic world.

Despite the widespread orientalist images about Islam in Slovenia, some Bosniaks, on the other hand, decide to present themselves as Muslims in a visible way. They base their everyday life, behaviour, and dress code in Islam as it is formulated in primary religious sources. They believe that by distancing themselves from folk Islam, they also distance themselves from what is publicly understood as an

inherent part of Islam: the orientalist ascriptions of violence, backwardness, chauvinism towards women, etc. In their view, it is the traditional forms of Islam that introduce into Islam the various elements which are responsible for its distorted and problematic public image. By following the scriptural Islam, these individuals shape a life style through which they distance themselves from the majority, non-Islamic Slovenian population as well as from Bosniaks, who understand Islam in accordance with the traditional Bosnian definitions. In this way they create a certain kind of a new identity based on Islam exclusively.

As is shown in the ethnographic evidence, the decisions to turn to Islamic values, and Islamic lifestyle is among some Bosniaks propelled by various individual motives, but it is also instigated to an important degree by the Slovenian and Bosnian topical contexts respectively. A most common rationale given is the experience of excludedness and discrimination. In the Slovenian topical context, this feeling is most vividly expressed in the sphere of employment and educational institutions. Many Bosniaks feel that they cannot prosper socially because of discrimination, and that the class barrier which was established with the arrival of the first immigrants during the 1960s is only deepening. With the war in Bosnia and the processes of political transition in Slovenia in the 1990s, the position of many Bosniaks in Slovenia was aggravated. Many among them identified their adherence to Islam as the reason for this. Hence, in their view the Yugoslav Socialist regime was islamophobic, as Muslims were systematically marginalised. The fact that the international community did not attempt to stop the war in Bosnia was seen by many as the proof that Muslims always represented a kind of »disturbance« also outside Yugoslavia, a nuisance to be destroyed. Because they feel excluded in Slovenia and in Bosnia, and because of the negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims throughout the world, some Bosniaks decided to adjust their life to what they see as orthodox Islam, and in this way defy the unfavourable situation. With the formation of their own lifestyle, and values based in Islam, they can proudly stand up against all the superimposed identities that construct them as Others: as undereducated, unqualified immigrants and backward, chauvinistic Muslims prone to aggressiveness. This decision they signalize also through the adopted Islamic dress code, which they understand as a constitutive element of proper Islamic lifestyle.

It can thus be said that Bosniaks understand Islam as a crucial element of their cultural repertoire, one that in Bosnian topical context (either in Bosnia or in Slovenia) represents a basis upon which impassable social boundaries towards the Bosnian Orthodox

and Catholics are constructed. Conversely, in the Slovenian topical context, this same difference in religion is not seen as creating an impassable barrier towards the majority, non-Muslim population. The impassable differences between themselves and non-Muslim Slovenians they see primarily as based in class inequality. And these are the differences that most Bosniaks want to bridge. On the other hand, some Bosniaks, notably those who adopted the Islamic dress code, see the difference in religion as impassable also in the Slovenian topical context; thus, they opt for stressing their Islamic identity as superior to their Bosniak provenance. In order to defy the discrimination, they distance themselves from other Bosniaks, and the majority, non-Muslim Slovenian population alike. It could be said that these confronting views on the interpretations of Islam and Islamic practices among Bosniaks represent the very constituent discourse that consolidates the Slovenian Bosniak community.