4

The Loudspeaker of Faith in the 'Calm' City

Islam and Urban Diversity in the Contemporary Balkans

Jelena Tošić

> In the far distance, as if through an acoustic veil, I can hear the muezzin calling for the evening prayer. Due to its conspicuous and iterative perfection, the call is easy to identify. It is the recorded *ezan* coming from the Ebu-Bekr mosque. In earlier times, as there were no loudspeakers on the minarets, while walking through the street Philip Shiroka – one of the streets of the Catholic quarter, Truma – one could most probably hardly hear the *muezzin* at all. His chant would have been lost in the acoustic 'order' of this city, which has accommodated different sensory and temporal religious life worlds for a long time.
>
> (Fieldnotes 28.5.2012, Shkodra, Albania)[1]

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore various ways of 'being a Muslim' in a contemporary urban context within the Balkans through the prism of diversity. My main thesis is that in order to be able to grasp the contemporary practice of Islam in Shkodra – the north Albanian city where I conducted my fieldwork – one must consider the particular dynamics of the local urban diversity regime (Grillo 2010).[2] Of particular interest to me is its

I would like to thank the following colleagues for their feedback and constructive critique: Arolda Elbasani, Sabine Strasser, Xavier Itcaina, Tilmann Heil, Rosie Gant, Raul Acosta, Thomas Kirsch and the members of his Anthropological Colloquium at the University of Konstanz.

underlying moral order, which is comprised of beliefs and values providing guidelines for 'right and proper conduct within and between diverse populations' (Grillo 2010: 1). Only through the prism of diversity and its 'moral grounding' – the historically developed mode of living (with) differences in this particular urban setting – contemporary ruptures and debates among the Muslims of Shkodra about the 'good' (and 'authentic') Islam can become comprehensible. Furthermore, it will thus be possible to trace why these debates most notably revolve around the issue of 'perceptibility' of religion in the urban space.[3]

In a nutshell, being a 'good' Muslim in Shkodra means that one is, first, an 'urbanite' (Alb. *qytetar*), or 'Shkodranee' (Alb. *Shkodran*). This 'urban habitus' is best expressed through the emic notion of 'calmness', which, as I argue, represents the moral core of Shkodra's diversity regime. 'Calmness' implies a generally 'contained' posture – as well as a correspondent reluctance vis-à-vis any kind of 'over-pronounced' or 'excessive' expressions of, inter alia, religious belonging – and, moreover, is viewed as being the basis of peaceful (religious) coexistence.

My approach builds on two anthropological insights on religion from the seminal work of Talal Asad. The first is that religion cannot be isolated from other realms of society (Asad 1993). Accordingly, this chapter deals primarily with the interrelation of religious belonging, social status and the urban habitus or, rather, the ideology of 'urbanity', including reflections on gender relations. This holistic and intersectional perspective in analyzing a 'Balkan case', which has avoided relapsing into violent (religious) conflict, enables a critical reassessment of socio-cultural dynamics, and thus goes beyond the hegemonic essentialization of religion according to ethno-national belonging (see Introduction).

Asad's second insight refers to the inappropriateness of the Eurocentric, hegemonic, sharp division between the 'religious' and the 'secular', and hence results in a call for explorations beyond this ideological conceptual divide (2003). While taking into account the emic differentiation between 'believers' (Alb. *besimtar*) and 'non-believers' (Alb. *jo besimtar/ateist*) – itself an expression of the hegemonic 'urge' to unambiguously identify (non)belief – my primary focus is on exploring the contemporary diverse ways of 'being a Muslim' in Shkodra. In doing this, I also join Benson Saler (2009) in acknowledging the 'pointlessness' of trying to define clear boundaries between 'religion' and 'non-religion'.

In the first part of the chapter, I will explore the legacy and the actual religious diversity in Shkodra. The second section analyses the inner

diversity of being Muslim in the context of the moral order of 'calmness', a historical and theoretical analysis of which will be given in the third section. Focusing on a crucial aspect of the latter – the 'contained' expression of religion as a key aspect of peaceful religious coexistence – I will conclude the chapter (the fourth and fifth section) by exploring debates and ruptures among the Muslims in Shkodra. These are concerned with the issue of the perceptibility of Islam in the urban space, and reveal a boundary between the 'good' and 'authentic' *Shkodran* Islam and a new, 'foreign' and 'fanatic', religious practice.

Tracing the legacy and the present of religious diversity

Shkodra,[4] a prime example of a former Ottoman border town – often referred to by its inhabitants as the unofficial capital of Albania and the 'bastion' of the urban middle class – was a prominent target of the totalitarian regime of Enver Hoxha. One aspect of the socialist legacy – of 'fatal relevance' for inquiries into religious belief and practice – is the period of imposed atheism (1967–1990). Regardless of religious belonging and individual devoutness in the narratives of the Shkodraneese, the totalitarian legacy figures as a traumatic period of the destruction, not only of religion, but also of the urban way of life, crucially characterized by the peaceful accommodation of religious[5] and sociocultural diversity.[6]

Like other religious communities in Albania, the Muslim Community[7] was exposed to an increasing level of control by the state, culminating in the request to 'instill' in citizens the loyalty to the Hoxha regime and the state even before the ban on religion (Elsie 2010: 203). Indeed, the Grand Mufti of Shkodra was one of the clerics executed by the regime for refusing to comply with these demands (ibid.). His execution – as well as many stories about imprisoned Islamic believers from Shkodra – was often used by my interlocutors to illustrate the claim that the Muslims of Shkodra were 'favored' targets of the totalitarian regime.

While the everyday mnemonic practices (e.g. narratives, jokes, genealogies) are a clear expression of the traumatization meted out by a totalitarian 'all-pervading' state, one of the few positive attributions to the post-socialist state – generally perceived as corrupt and chaotic – is the re-instatement of religious freedom. However, there is also a strong reluctance among the population to be identified as an 'Islamic' state.[8] An illustrative example in this regard was Albania's entry into the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 1992, which engendered strong critique from Albanians from all religious denominations (Elsie 2010:

203). This attitude resonates with the reluctance of the Muslim population in Shkodra to embrace new forms of Islamic practice, often identified as too pronounced and 'fanatic' (see also fifth section).

The newly garnered religious freedoms in the local urban context of Shkodra have generated a process of religious revitalization – including both mutual respect and competition between the three main religious communities.[9] A milestone within the context of the return of religion in the case of the Catholic community was the visit of the Pope and Mother Theresa to Shkodra in 1993,[10] which not only had a strong impact on the image of the Catholic Church in Shkodra, but clearly re-established the town's role as the regional center of Catholicism. In the case of the Albanian Orthodox community, the revitalization was strongly connected to the support of the Archbishop based in Tirana and resulted in the construction of a new Orthodox Christian Church in the center of Shkodra.[11]

In the case of the Sunni Muslim community in Shkodra, the end of the ban on religion led to the reestablishment of the local Islamic organization (Myftinia Shkodër),[12] with Faik Hoxha as the first new mufti. Having spent 23 years in prison as a cleric, Faik Hoxha was a crucial and oft-mentioned figure in narratives concerning both the suppression and the revival of Islam in Shkodra. As in other parts of Albania and the Balkans, the Islamic revival in Shkodra also featured the rebuilding of mosques,[13] all (but one) of which were destroyed by the Hoxha regime. The only mosque 'spared' – the old Lead Mosque in the former city center (Xhamia e Plumbit) from the late 18th century – figures as another crucial narrative reference concerning Shkodra's special role within the Islamic revival in Albania. Indeed, it was precisely in the old Lead Mosque where the first post-socialist Grand Mufti of Albania, Hafiz Sabri Koçi, performed the first public prayer in Albania after the religious ban had been lifted in November 1990. The establishment of 'Turkish' schools – with a strong element of Islamic education, gender division and compulsory veiling – as well as the related influx of Islamic charities and the formation of a new transnationally educated and connected clerical elite were further aspects of the Islamic revival in Shkodra as much as elsewhere in Albania (Elbasani 2015).

Of special relevance in this chapter is the presence of Islam in the urban space in the shape of public prayers, *Iftars*, and diverse religious celebrations. A related and prominent aspect of the new 'perceptibility' of Islam is the transformation of the local urban soundscape in Shkodra through the loudspeaker-amplified, taped, call for prayer.[14] Although not comparable with the complex impact of the 'ethical soundscape' created by recorded sermons marking the Islamic revival (Hirschkind

2006), the amplified *ezan* represents a crucial rupture in the local urban soundscape in Shkodra, and ignites debates on the 'proper place' of religion in the urban space.

As hinted at in the introductory quote, the recently transformed urban soundscape crosscuts another manifestation of religion in the urban space. Already in the very first days of my fieldwork, a common reaction to my address – 'Oh, so you live in the Muslim part of town' – revealed to me the implicitly religiously based spatial organization of the city. In spite of the frequently mentioned socialist top-down strategy of internal urban migration, with the aim of 'mixing' the city quarters – this crucial aspect of the Ottoman legacy (Sugar 1977: 74) has remained relevant up to the present day. As revealed through everyday conversations, the spatial manifestation of religious boundaries was both seen as a given (historical) 'fact', and as a permeable and flexible spatial order. Moreover, this model of everyday life, with these implicit and non-rigid boundaries between religious communities, was often used to explain and illustrate the 'calm' character of Shkodra and its inhabitants. Religious coexistence was often portrayed as an active social practice of mutual respect in the context of the shared urban space. In this spirit, while we were once listening to a young Muslim woman talking about her positive experience of living in a Catholic neighborhood – where everyone respected the other religious community by mutual visits for religious holidays – Lirije, an accountant in her 40s, concluded: *Po, natyrisht, janë qytetarë!* (Yes, of course, they are urbanites!). This comment can also be read through the notion of *komshillek* (neighborliness)[15] – widely used throughout the Balkans – denoting the Ottoman legacy of a peaceful (inter-communal and interreligious) coexistence on the micro-urban level and hence also a 'moral environment' (Sorabji 2008: 102).

A further crucial dimension of social order in Shkodra – based on religious belonging and strongly 'unsettled' during socialism – is that of marriage practices. Although the present is marked by a preference for faith-based endogamy – a model that was hegemonic prior to the spread of religiously mixed marriages[16] during the 'atheist' period – mixed marriages simultaneously serve as a standard argument for the 'calm' character of Shkodra's inhabitants and its most essential dimension – peaceful interreligious coexistence.[17]

The 'calm' city

The recurrent term I encountered during my fieldwork, by which citizens of Shkodra described both themselves and their city, was that of 'calmness' (Alb. *qetësi/njerezit e qetë*). 'The Shkodrani are calm people!'.

'Calmness' – the 'metaphorical argument' continuously reappearing throughout narratives, urban myths, life-stories and interpretations of everyday interactions – can be seen as comprising the 'habitus' of the 'peaceful and tolerant urban dweller' (Alb. *qytetar*) insofar as it unifies an inner attitude and behavior grounded in an 'urban socialization'.[18]

Religion is one of the crucial reference points of these narratives of 'calmness'. The following urban myth, which I encountered during my fieldwork – relating to a type of event happening all over the Ottoman Balkans at the beginning of the 20th century (Clayer 2011) – is an accurate illustration of the 'calmness' of the Shkodraneese, most notably represented through the peaceful accommodation of religious diversity

> Once someone, who was not from Shkodra, threw a pig's head into the Ebu Bekr mosque. These were turbulent times. But the people stayed calm. The voices were not raised. The people of Shkodra understood that this was an external provocation. The head was removed from the mosque and everything was cleaned. The Bishop and the Imam got together right away and decided to span a chain of light between the minaret and the church tower.
>
> (Interview[19] with a historian, Merzuk (65), 19.12.2011, Shkodra, Albania)

In this standard narrative, the moral order characterizing the local regime, and embedded in the metaphor of 'calmness' becomes understandable through memorized social practice. In particular, 'calmness' means first and foremost that one does not react to provocations – always said to be external – and that one does not raise one's voice. Rather, a Shkodranee stays peaceful in the face of potential conflict and – as such – embodies the value of 'calmness'. Becoming loud, conversely, would entail giving into provocation – in this case possibly accusing the members of other religious denominations of having ignited a conflict.

According to this moral blueprint, 'calmness' – with 'loudness' as its corollary – also figures as an essential social boundary maker. Indeed, loudness – often directly associated with a potential violent posture – is particularly ascribed to the rural population from the mountains (Alb. *Malesore*) and the Roma (Alb. *Gabel* or *Magjyp*). In this sense, the moral concept of 'calmness' can be seen as a variation of the urban–rural discursive dynamics in the Balkans (Bougarel 1999; Jansen 2005; Stefansson 2007). Generally marked by an Orientalizing grammar (Baumann 2004), the urban habitus normatively stands for being 'cultured', 'modern' and 'peaceful', while the rural folk are rendered as 'lacking culture', being 'traditional' and 'violent' (Bringa 1995).

In line with this discursive image of the calm 'urbanite', is a general sense of participation in, and contribution to, the city's economy, which is clearly revealed through the narratives of members of migrant families. The primacy of 'calmly' accepting and incorporating one's affairs into the urban socio-economic and governance structures – as opposed to 'standing out', for example, through 'showing off wealth', or disrupting the urban economy through violence – is a crucial aspect of being an 'urbanite' (Alb. *qytetar*). A contemporary example is the considerable reluctance citizens of Shkodra express toward the currently emerging 'Malesor' neighborhoods on the city margins, which are, inter alia, perceived as constituting a 'too visible' display of wealth. The reference to blood-feuds (Alb. *gjakmarrje*) in the middle of the urban space serves as another narrative 'constant' of rendering the *Malesori* incompatible with the urban 'calmness' characterized by a peaceful and participatory attitude.

Of specific interest to the illumination of *Shkodran* 'calmness' as a variation of the discourse of 'urbanity' in the Balkans is the focus on a 'moderate' practice of religion. In terms of Islam, Shkodra is indeed comparable to the case of Muslims of Sarajevo, particularly in terms of their self-identification as 'European' Muslims in a 'cultural sense' (Stefansson 2007: 62; see also next section). Accordingly, (rural) newcomers are seen as a threat to the peaceful urban cultural and religious pluralism, due to allegedly being more prone to a more 'fundamentalist' religious practice and belonging (ibid.: 68).

In 'genealogical' terms, 'calmness' can be traced to different aspects of the Ottoman legacy of 'governing' urban diversity.[20] A combination of clear boundaries – embodied for example in the urban order of the city along *mahalla* based on religious and guild membership[21] – and the loyalty and contribution to the common urban economic space represented the Ottoman 'recipe' of peaceful urban coexistence. Religious pluralism and tolerance – including the primacy, but also the 'permeability' of Islam – and participation in city life (as opposed to tension and conflict) were the main markers of the Ottoman urban habitus. Accordingly, the overall inclusive historical pattern of incorporating migrants and refugees into Ottoman cities[22] (Lafi 2011) – based on their social status, but also the potential and willingness to contribute to the city's economy[23] – reveals the importance of the Islamic-grounded moral practice of charity, Ottoman 'pragmatism' and the impact of reforms.

While the urban myth outlined, dealing with 'provocation' through 'calmness', clearly illustrates the strength and durability of the Ottoman legacy at the beginning of the 20th century, under the socialist-totalitarian regime, which included an attack on urban values – an 'urbicide' including socio-economic as well as material aspects[24] – the habitus of 'calmness' has transformed. It can be seen to have been 'adapted' to specific modes of survival within a surveillance state. In this sense, aspects of contemporary every-day social practices and 'social customs' – such as jokes,[25] the unpopularity of 'pointing the finger' at someone or something or the 'non-refusal mode' of social interaction[26] – can be read as transformations of 'calmness' due to living under totalitarianism.

Islam as the locus of diversity and social marginalization based on 'urbanity'

How does the moral concept of 'calmness' – being constitutive for inter-religious 'urbanity' – figure when we look at the Muslim community in Shkodra in particular? The ongoing process of Islamic revival in Shkodra includes both a wide diversity of manifestations of 'being a Muslim' as well as a debate about a 'good', 'adequate' and 'authentic' practice of Islam. Moreover, it will come as no surprise that the vertex of this debate is centered precisely on the issue of 'calmness' in its diverse dimensions, and in particular, in terms of the perceptibility of individual and collective religious practice in the urban space.

Apart from going beyond the religious-secular binary (Asad 2003), I hold that the constant emic reference to religion as a locus of diversity makes religion in Shkodra in general – and Islam in particular – a favored space of diversity, also in terms of the personal 'design' of faith. This observation resonates well with the crucial theoretical insight that there is no clear boundary where 'religion' ends and 'non-religion' begins (Saler 2009: 164) and that religion hence represents a 'graded category the instantiations of which are linked by family resemblances' (ibid.: 168).

Of particular interest for the case of Islam is the reference to the individual relation to God, which I repeatedly encountered in conversations with Shkodran Muslims. This not only relativizes the also 'active' emic differentiation between believers (Alb. *besimtar*) and non-believers (Alb. *jo-besimtar/ateist*), but also serves as an explanation (or legitimization) for the 'inner' diversity of religious practice by Shkodran Muslims. A concurrent explanation is the reference to the impact on imposed

atheism, the aftermath of which is characterized by a process of individually and gradually learning Islam and incorporating religious practice into daily life (see also next section). Finally, this pronounced tolerance for the variety of 'being a Muslim' in Shkodra is perfectly in line with – or rather can be considered as another manifestation of – the moral concept and practice of 'calmness'. The unlikelihood of pointing the finger at or openly criticizing 'non-believers', however, has its limits. As will become apparent, the 'calm' urban habitus appears incompatible with an 'over pronounced' and 'loud' practice of Islam.

When living and socializing in Shkodra – especially during religious celebrations or Ramadan – one constantly encounters a variety of 'pick and choose' personalized forms of 'being a Muslim' (see Introduction). Apart from declared atheists celebrating religious holidays or declared believers who have never been to the mosque, in Shkodra one is confronted with a wide range of constellations of self-images, practices and claims of 'being' a Muslim. In this section, I analyze this diversity through brief 'ethnographic portraits', and elaborate on the intersection of social marginalization and religious practice in Shkodra.

'In the Koran one can read the truth about everything. Everything that science said or will say is already revealed in the Koran. Think of artificial insemination, for example! The Koran says that a child can be born of a man and a woman together, but also separately!' (Fieldnotes 17.5.2012, Shkodra, Albania). Although one might think this view comes from a Muslim believer who is familiar with the Koran, Sidrit[27] – a middle-aged shopkeeper – has never been to the mosque, and his knowledge of the Koran relies exclusively on the History Channel.

Ndricim, a waiter in his 50s who declares himself a Muslim, never goes to the mosque, drinks alcohol and eats pork, yet complied with the Ramadan fast. While never complaining, although visibly exhausted during the seemingly endless August days, he would explain to me: 'That's simply how it is done. I always observed the fast. My mother is fasting, how could I possibly not?' (Fieldnotes 28.7.2012, Shkodra, Albania).

'Negotiations' regarding belief in the context of daily necessities and gender roles were particularly illuminating in helping me to grasp the complexity and transformations of being a Muslim in contemporary Shkodra. Serveta, an employee in her 50s who had never visited a mosque or had any religious socialization, suddenly started using the 'correct' way of referring to the Prophet.[28] In spite of her openness to her husband's gentle persuasion to familiarize herself with the Koran and start visiting the mosque, at home, her husband's religious 'turn'

often led to irritation, as revealed in the following conversation: 'You can't go around in front of me when I am reading the Koran! Do you know at all what this is that I am holding in my hands? You can't just walk by it!' While gently rolling her eyes at her husband's complaints, Serveta commented: 'Where am I supposed to go? I have to iron, tidy up and go around. I am not addressing you at all! What am I supposed to do? Jump over it?'[29]

Blerta, a clerk in her late 20s, and Sidrit, an entrepreneur in his early 30s, members of a close circle of friends, both self-identify as Muslims. While never having been to the mosque or intending to read the Koran, Blerta would however clearly prefer a Muslim for a husband. Sidrit – having recently read the Koran several times, though not visiting the mosque – often criticizes Bektashism (his father's religious belonging) as an 'impure' form of Islam while stating that there is only 'one Islam'.

Ibrahim, a member of the Serbo-Montenegrin minority in Shkodra, identifies as a 'Shkodran' and as a 'Muslim Serb'. While regularly reading the Koran and attending the Friday prayer, he explicitly demarcates his way of being a Muslim from that of his relatives living in a close-by village and identifying as 'Podgorican' (see note 31). Without explicitly condemning their 'fanatic' practice – at times legitimizing it by the fact that they went on *Hadj*, Ibrahim holds that their religious practice (characterized for example by praying five times a day, wearing long beards and short trousers, insisting on strict veiling practices for women, etc.) is far too pronounced for the urban context of Shkodra (see also next section). 'I am not like them. I pray and go to the mosque only on Friday'. I recall Ibrahim 'excusing' his relatives as they once ran out from the restaurant where we were having dinner in order to perform the sunset prayer (Fieldnotes 15.9.2012, Shkodra, Albania).

Cross-cutting these very briefly sketched dynamics and illustrations of 'being a Muslim' in Shkodra are social stratification (and migration-related) aspects. For example, a specific fragment of Shkodra's Muslims is comprised of two segments of the urban population, with a migration-based identity, which has inscribed itself into the local diversity regime through vernacular terms of belonging. As is often highlighted in narratives, both the so-called *Ulqinak* – migrants from the harbor town Ulqin,[30] who, due to their urban background, more easily entered the realm of the Shkodran middle class – and the so called *Podgorican*[31] – who either settled in the surrounding villages or joined the working class in the quarter Rus – are considered to have been more pious than the average Shkodran Muslims. Metush – a historian in his late 50s – and his mother Saferja – who came from Ulqin for marriage almost 70 years ago – remembered how Saferja's father decided not to stay in Shkodra after all. In this example, the issue of 'over-pronounced' visibility of religious belonging proved to be crucial. Namely the 'Islamic appearance' of Mehmet – an Imam in Ulqin – wearing a beard and special clothes was viewed to be too radical and too pronounced for Shkodran tastes.

Again another segment of Shkodra's Muslim population is comprised of the local Roma, who themselves are divided between the population referred to as Egyptians (Alb. *Egjyptian* or *Magjyp*) living on the urban outskirts, and the population (referred to by the negative term *Gabel*) living in a slum-like neighborhood near one of Shkodra's bridges. As already mentioned, these segments of the population are, as a rule, denied the status of a 'qytetar' – embodying 'calmness' – and are instead portrayed as loud and potentially violent. Even the *Egjyptian* – who themselves use the 'urbanity' discourse to demarcate themselves as more urban than the allegedly non-sedentary *Gabel*, and who are indeed more included into the hegemonic urban realm – are marginalized in terms of their Islamic religious practice. In particular, their neighborhood across the old market which – as it is often stressed by *Egjyptian* representatives with the aim of clarifying their urban status of *qytetar* – used to be the center of old Shkodra harbors a *teqe* of the Rufai order, which actively practiees the Zikhr.[32] Although tolerated as a local form of Islam, this heterodox Islamic practice – like the community's members – is marginalized and considered a 'deviation' by the Sunni majority for potentially being too loud and violent. In this context, the issue of 'calmness' versus 'loudness' clearly figures as the main discursive tool of exclusion and demarcation.

Within the diverse meanings attributed to 'being a Muslim' in Shkodra – cross-cut by an 'othering' of particular communities' religious practices based on social stratification – there are two significant contemporary ruptures among the Muslim inhabitants of Shkodra. While both can be described as connected to the issue of perceptibility of religion, one rupture represents an internal divide while the other demarcates *Shkodran* Islam from 'external' influences.

Debating 'perceptibility' among the Muslims of Shkodra: The inner divide

The first rupture can be best described as one dividing the Muslims of Shkodra into those who are critical of the new forms of presence of Islam in the urban space and those who welcome them as a manifestation of Islamic revival.

Apart from a general openness to interreligious marriages, the first 'way' of 'being a Muslim' in Shkodra is most notably characterized by a standard critique of any 'over-pronounced' form of religious practice. In other words, a 'contained' religious practice is seen as locally authentic, since this entails the manifestation of the historically grown 'calmness' as a guarantee of peaceful religious coexistence. The crucial importance of this aspect of 'containment' – that anything too pronounced is seen as a threat to the local way of life and coexistence – is most clearly manifested in the critique of the loud *ezan*,[33] as illustrated by the following field notes-fragment:

> Hamdi describes himself as a secularist, an intellectual, a Muslim, a non-Atheist and a non-believer. The most important thing in his life is to be free. While we are drinking coffee in the Grand Hotel Europa the call for prayer starts. 'Do you hear this?', says Hamdi visibly irritated. 'It should be forbidden that the Imam calls for prayer through a loudspeaker! He can sing in the mosque and on the minaret, but why use a loudspeaker? Why does everyone in the city have to hear this? Imagine you live next to a mosque. I mean I respect people who are believers and pray, but why does everyone have to listen to this five times a day? This is a provocation!'.
>
> (Fieldnotes 28.5.2012, Shkodra, Albania)

Beyond being a variation of the 'classical' secular argument of seeing religion as a part of the private realm, this critique of the loud call for prayer can also be read as representing reluctance vis-à-vis novel and unauthentic manifestations of local Islam in general. Further recent transformations of Islamic practice critically highlighted in a similar manner are: the locally unauthentic 'foreign' or 'Arab' style of the newly built mosques; public prayers; veiled women, whose number is perceived as steadily rising; and a related spread of alien forms of Islam, which will be further elaborated in the next section.

However, the 'other side' of the portrayed internal rupture among the Muslims of Shkodra – comprised of persons often explicitly referring to themselves as 'practicing believers' as opposed to 'merely' members of the Muslim community – as a rule does not share the same reluctance regarding the transformed 'perceptibility' of present-day Islamic practice in Shkodra. New mosques – although not denying their non-local 'style' – are commonly seen as welcome, and indeed magnificent, successors to the smaller and more 'grounded' Ottoman-style mosques destroyed by the Hoxha regime. These buildings are thus perceived as a

sign of a desirable Islamic revival. Moreover, certain forms of visibility of Islamic practice in the urban space are endowed with a very positive connotation. A prominent example of such a practice is the public *Bajram*-prayer, marking the end of the Ramadan, which has been held in the street next to the biggest mosque in the city for the last few years. However, as well as being contested among the Muslim population of Shkodra, this manifestation of the transformation of Islamic practice has led to a 'competition for visibility' in the urban space, most notably with the Catholic community of Shkodra. As I was once sitting, having my 'regular' coffee with Visar – a Shkodran Muslim in his late 30s – a loudly singing procession of Franciscans passed our café. Visar commented, with a unique mixture of understanding and sarcasm: 'You see, since there is the public *Bajram*-prayer, the Catholics are seeking to be more visible too' (Fieldnotes 6.4.2012, Shkodra, Albania).

Another prime example of this 'visibility competition' is the debate on the Mother Teresa statue, which was placed in the center of the city in direct proximity to the main mosque. In spite of a request from the representatives of the Muslim community to transfer the statue to the entrance yard of the Catholic cathedral – since it represents a Catholic symbol and thus not the city of Shkodra as a whole, let alone its Muslim population – the communal government decided against moving the statue.

The argument of Islamic revitalization – of which 'perceptibility' is seen as an integral aspect – by a part of Shkodra's Muslims is seen as a 'righteous' return to religious practice after decades of destructive atheism. This is often expressed through the notion of 'learning' as expressed by Drini, a young historian in his late 30s. Drini – considering himself a believer in the state of 'learning' – characterizes Shkodra-Muslims as a community in an initial phase of the process of learning: 'With the opening of Albania, also the religion came here... you accept and step by step you may arrive at some point, but for me this is the present condition, we are learning the religion at the moment, we are at the start of learning' (Interview with Drini (37), 8.11.2011, Shkodra, Albania).

Rejecting the *'fanatike'*: Private and socio-historical demarcations

Common to both sides of the divide – even though practicing believers are in favor of an Islamic revitalization including the aforementioned forms of religious 'perceptibility' and on-going transnational

connections[34] – is a rejection of a radically visible Islamic practice seen as strongly divergent from the local urban practice of 'calmness'. This second Islam-related rupture in Shkodra – manifested as 'taking ownership' of faith by marking specific external influences as alien and inappropriate (see also Introduction) – can also be read through the notion of authenticity, which is always 'closely related to the relationship between an inner state and an external expression' (Fillitz and Sarris 2012: 14). The emic term one encounters in narratives and everyday interactions referring to 'over-pronounced' practices of Islam is *fanatike/besimtare fanatike* (fanatic/fanatic believers).[35]

A myriad of impressions, encounters and stories negatively refer to this new and alien Islamic practice and its over-pronounced 'perceptibility'. Almost comprising a 'genre', the 'sudden-transformation-narratives' about friends, neighbors and relatives are omnipresent among the Muslims of Shkodra. 'I suddenly recognized his blue eyes', remembered Helga – a young interpreter in her late 20s – while she recalls how she recently realized that the full-bearded man wearing three-quarter trousers entering the same bus was her former schoolmate (Fieldnotes 11.11.2011, Shkodra, Albania). As was known in her circle of friends for some time, the timid young man, after having left for Tirana to study, had suddenly become a pious believer and married a completely covered woman from the countryside. Again, the discourse postulates that a too-pronounced perceptibility of religion is not authentic, and is not compatible with the value of 'calmness'. Veiled and especially completely covered women are as a rule not held to be from Shkodra, and are often ascribed a 'rural' or 'foreign' origin.

It does not come as a surprise that there is a pronounced reluctance to open up the private realm of the family to this novel form of Islamic practice. The marriage preferences of young Muslim women in Shkodra are thus also going through a transformation related to the appearance of a new form of 'being a Muslim' in the urban space. Sidita – a non-practicing young Muslima – although preferring a Muslim for husband, unhesitatingly states that she would rather marry a Catholic than a too pious Muslim. In a similar way, Bashkim – who is meanwhile desperately looking for a Muslim husband for his daughter – fully complies with one aspect of her 'pickiness' (that he otherwise nags about). Namely, Lirije has recently 'disqualified' an otherwise interesting 'candidate' for very particular reason: 'He simply went to the mosque far too often' (Fieldnotes 3.4.2012, Shkodra, Albania). Bashkim's related narrative about his pious neighbor (most of the time living as a migrant in Vienna) brought about an indicative

characterization of Shkodra and its 'authentic' Islam. After having recalled how shocked he was by a *Bajram*-visit at his neighbor's home – where his wife was immediately led to the women's quarter of the house and he himself was repeatedly advised to 'also start living according the Islamic order' – Bashkim concluded: 'This is foreign to us. It comes from Saudi Arabia and there is money involved[36]! We are Europeans. We don't need this here!' (Fieldnotes 3.4.2012, Shkodra, Albania).

However the 'fanatic' practice of Islam is not always located as 'external' and 'alien'. As revealed by historical narratives on families and the way of life in Shkodra, a more visible and pious practice of religion does indeed appear as an integral part of the religious life in Shkodra. Yet, here it is 'othered' as well. Apart from ascribing the more 'pronounced' and 'fanatic' practice to historical migrants (such as the *Podgorican*), social status and gender figure as the crucial reference points of 'othering' specific modes of 'being a Muslim' in Shkodra. Namely, a myriad of narrative-historical accounts collected during my fieldwork primarily trace the emergence of an educated, 'modern' Shkodran urban middle-class, whose daughters would not wear a veil and who would have the opportunity to gain a holistic education. Here, a more liberal stance toward gender relations figures as a marker of social status and 'urbanity'. The family narrative by Mirsad, a lawyer and communal employee, clearly exhibits this line of argument. While talking about his mother, Mirsad continually highlighted the fact that she did not wear a veil and received her education at the Catholic Stigmatine Girl's school, which – unlike the local madrasas – provided children not only with a religious, but also a general education. The following narrative about Mirsad's mother's wedding photo transcends a family and individual biographical narrative space. It can be considered exemplary of the often-highlighted significance of the existence of an urban Muslim middle class. Namely, Muslims who reject female-coercive religious practices are portrayed as being the basis for urban interreligious tolerance and coexistence.

> At that time women from some Muslim families would never be unveiled – especially not in front of a camera. But my mother was not from a fanatic family. Families like ours comprised the basis of the harmony among the three religions in Shkodra. Their members were educated, they had the adequate – economic and cultural – level necessary for tolerance.
>
> (Interview with Mirsad (67), 18.12.2011, Shkodra, Albania)

Along these lines, wearing a veil and receiving a holistic education as a woman is seen as a sign of not being 'fanatic', and instead embodying the urban moral value of 'calmness' considered as the basis for interreligious tolerance, and hence peaceful coexistence.

Conclusions

By applying the lens of diversity – in terms of intersections of most notably religion, social status, 'urbanity' and gender – to a specific urban context in the Balkans, this paper argued that explorations of the transforming Islamic belonging and practice must include an analysis of the entanglement of legacies and the present as well as situating religion within broader socio-economic dynamics.

Accordingly it has been explored how the 'moral grounding' of the local urban diversity regime – embedded in the emic notion of 'calmness' claimed to be the basis of 'urbanity', entailing peaceful coexistence in a highly diverse and migration-affected urban setting – figures as a discursive instrument of inclusion and exclusion. As has been shown with regard to the religious realm, and Islam in particular, 'calmness' 'translates' both into a pronounced 'tolerance' to a variety of individual practices of 'being a Muslim' – actually transcending the (existing emic) differentiation of the religious and the secular – and a reluctance toward any 'over-pronounced' perceptibility of religion in the urban space.

The specificities of the local diversity regime that have been outlined – although featuring debates and divisions on the issue of the 'good' and 'authentic' practice of Islam – provide an example of an urban setting featuring pronounced transformations of religious practice (after totalitarian atheism and in the midst of transnational influences), while at the same time (re)claiming a sense of 'authenticity' and 'continuity' for a historically rooted modus of 'accommodating' difference.

Notes

1. The reference to Fieldnotes throughout the text includes the ethnographic field diary kept during the following two fieldwork periods in Shkodra: November and December 2011; and March–October 2012.
2. With reference to Foucault's notion of the discursive formation, Grillo defines the diversity regime as 'principles underlying the configurations of diverse populations' (Grillo 2010: 13) and 'giving diversity a specific direction' (ibid: 16). Regimes are to be understood as processes, as constantly 'in formation', rather than as static phenomena (ibid.: 16).

3. The overarching notion of 'perceptibility' enables me to refer to relevant aural and visual dimensions of faith beyond the 'hierarchy of the senses' (e.g. Bull and Back 2003).
4. According to the latest census, the core urban area of Shkodra has 77.075 inhabitants (INSTAT 2013: 84).
5. While being considered the center of Catholicism in Albania (47.19 per cent of the population), almost 45 per cent of the population of the district of Shkodra self-identify as Muslims (44.84 per cent Sunni Muslims, 0.07 per cent Bektashi and a minority of Rifa'i). Orthodox Christians comprise the smallest part of the population (0.38 per cent) (INSTAT 2013: 39).
6. For a more detailed account of the diversity configuration in Shkodra, see Tošić (forthcoming).
7. The structure of the Sunni Muslim Community in Albania established in the 1930s (four Grand Muftis in Tirana, Shkodra, Korça and Gjirokastra) was the basis for the post World War II division into four districts with a Grand Mufti for each (Elsie 2010: 203). Along with the Sunni majority, Albania was and is one of the centers of the Bektashi community.
8. Albania is the only state in the Balkans with a Muslim majority.
9. This diversity of religions in Shkodra is a feature of the wider context of religious pluralism in Albania, in which – as opposed to other cases in the Balkans – religion as a rule does not figure as a marker and instrument of ethno-nationalism (see also Introduction).
10. On this occasion, the Great Cathedral in Shkodra was inaugurated.
11. A further and ascending Orthodox Christian community – embodied by a newly built church in the village of Vraka, 7 km from Shkodra – is inextricably linked to the emergence of minority claims and organizations by the community of the 'Serbo-Montenegrins'.
12. The overarching state-level organization in Albania is the Islamic Community of Albania (Alb. Komuniteti Mysliman i Sqipërisë) based in Tirana.
13. As in other parts of the Balkans, most of the new mosques – such as the central mosque in Shkodra – are commonly referred to as 'foreign' mosques, due to their non-Ottoman appearance and the financial basis of their installment.
14. This practice set in after the ban on religion was lifted in 1990.
15. In Shkodra the word 'komshiu' denotes the 'neighbor', while 'neighborhood' is usually referred to as 'lagje' (or 'mëhallë').
16. One of the reasons for a genuine openness toward mixed marriages is the simple fact that – since it is literally never questioned that religious belonging has to be inherited along the male line – the practice of mixed marriages is perfectly in line with the hegemonic patriarchal ideology.
17. A reiteratively highlighted fact is that two current religious representatives in Shkodra – the Imam and Orthodox Priest – are both children of a mixed marriage and as such literally embody the local pattern of peaceful interreligious coexistence.
18. The ideology of 'calmness' crucially intersects with of a prominent middle class discourse in Shkodra – the discourse on so-called 'old urban families' (Alb. *familje e vjeter*) (see Tošić forthcoming).
19. The notion 'Interview' refers to recorded, transcribed and anonymized conversations conducted during my fieldwork (see note 1).

20. For a more elaborate historical grounding see, Tošić (forthcoming).
21. In the 19th century in the course of reforms aiming at creating 'European-style' urban governance (Sahara 2011: 26), administrative bodies such as the city council emerged, yet still religious tolerance and parity featured prominently as one of the main axis of power distribution and representation (ibid.: 32).
22. This became especially relevant when – starting in the 18th century – the 'Muslim character' of the Ottoman city started to change due to the arrival of Christian traders and craftsmen (Sugar 1977).
23. In the course of the Tanzimat-reforms – instead of status (e.g. nobility) – primarily property and fiscal capacity (Lafi 2011: 21) became prime 'coordinates' of the urban incorporation of migrants.
24. The core of the Ottoman urban order – the old bazar – was destroyed; internal migration measures led to the 'mixing' of the religious boroughs, imprisonment and extermination of the cleric and urban elites, etc.
25. When conducting fieldwork in Shkodra, one soon encounters references to the Shkodran 'tradition of jokes' – *humor Shkodran* – which is often used to illustrate precisely the calm urban habitus of expressing critique and tension in an acceptable and non-conflict-generating way.
26. One of my earliest ethnographic insights is the unlikelihood of being explicitly refused when asking for a favor (a contact, a source, attendance at a social event, etc.) in Shkodra. Read through 'calmness', this practice of entering social obligations, while already being aware of future non-compliance, is about avoiding an explicit 'no' as a potential basis for tension.
27. In addition to changed personal information, all names of my interlocutors have been anonymized.
28. *Sallallahu alayhi wasallam.*
29. This quote can also be read as religious practice serving as the means to legitimate male passivity and thus the patriarchal gender regime, and in that way, negatively 'moralize' female efficiency and problem-orientation with reference to religion as 'ingratitude' and 'impatience'.
30. Ulqin (Mn. Ulcinj), a harbor with an Albanian Muslim majority, was 'granted' to Montenegro through the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Shortly thereafter, a significant number of Albanian Muslim families (or parts of them) – most notably well-off families of sailors or entrepreneurs – left for Shkodra.
31. The term *Podgorican*, literally people that came from Podgorica, the present-day Montenegrin capital, refers to Slavic-speaking Balkan Muslims heading toward the core lands of the shrinking Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th century of which a huge number settled precisely in Shkodra.
32. The Zikhr/Dikhr – as an ecstatic form of loud repetitive prayer – sometimes includes a ritual penetration of body parts.
33. Here it is also interesting to mention that there has been a citizens' initiative asking for the curbing of both the loud call for prayer and church bells.
34. These are primarily manifested in the aforementioned new mosques and 'Turkish' schools, but also through the education-related migration of the Muslim elite (most notably to Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia).

35. Unlike, for example, in Montenegro (or Bosnia), the term 'Wahhabi' or 'Salafi' is not present in everyday conversations concerning the novel form of Islam in Shkodra.
36. The claim that families embodying the 'unauthentic' Islamic practice do receive money was a 'standard statement' during my fieldwork.

Bibliography

Asad, T. (1993) *Genealogies of Religion. Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press).

Asad, T. (2003) *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

Baumann, G. (2004) 'Grammars of Identity/Alterity. A Structural Approach', in Baumann, G. and Gingrich, A. (eds) *Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach* (London: Berghan), 18–53.

Bougarel, X. (1999) 'Yugoslav Wars: "The Revenge of the Countryside" between Sociological Reality and Nationalist Myth', *East European Quarterly* XXXIII (2): 157–175.

Bringa, T. (1995) *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way. Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Bull, M. and Back, L. (2003) 'Introduction Into Sound', in Bull, M. and Back, L. (eds) *The Auditory Culture Reader* (Oxford New York: Berg), 1–25.

Clayer, N. (2011) 'The Dimension of Confessionalisation in the Ottoman Balkans at the Time of Nationalism', in Grandits, H., Clayer, N. and Pichler, R (eds) *Conflicting Loyalties in the Balkans. The Great Powers. The Ottoman Empire and Nation Building* (London New York: IB Tauris), 89–110.

Elbasani, A. (2015) 'Islam and Democracy at the Fringe of Europe: The Role of Useful Historical Legacies', *Politics and Religion*, FirstView: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1755048315000012.

Elsie, R. (2010) *Historical Dictionary of Albania* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press).

Fillitz, T. and Sarris, J. A. (2012) 'Introduction. Authenticity Aujourd'hui', in Fillitz, T. and Sarris, J. A. (eds) *Debating Authenticity. Concepts of Modernity in Anthropological Perspective* (London: Berghahn), 1–27.

Grillo, R. (2010) 'Contesting Diversity in Europe. Alternative Regimes and Moral Orders', *MMG Working Paper* 10 (02): 1–39.

Hirschkind, C. (2006) *The Ethical Soundscape. Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press).

INSTAT (2013) *Albania Population and Housing Census. Shkodër 2011* (Tiranë: INSTAT).

Jansen, S. (2005) 'Who's Afraid of White Socks? Towards a Critical Understanding of Post-Yugoslav Urban Self-Perceptions', *Ethnologia Balkanica* 9: 151–167.

Lafi, N. (2011) 'The Ottoman Urban Governance of Migrations and the Stakes of Modernity', in Freitag, U., Fuhrmann, M., Lafi, N. and Riedler, F. (eds) *The City in the Ottoman Empire. Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity* (London: Routledge), 8–26.

Sahara, T. (2011) 'The Ottoman City Council and the Beginning of Modernization of Urban Space in the Balkans', in Freitag, U., Fuhrmann, M., Lafi, N. and

Riedler, F (eds) *The City in the Ottoman Empire. Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity* (London: Routledge), 26–51.
Saler, B. (2009) *Understanding Religion. Selected Essays* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter).
Sorabji, C. (2008) 'Bosnian Neighbourhoods Revisited. Tolerance, Commitment and Komšiluk in Sarajevo', in Pine, F. and de Pina-Cabral, J. (eds) *On the Margins of Religion* (London: Berghahn), 97–115.
Stefansson, A. (2007) 'Urban Exile. Locals, Newcomers and the Cultural Transformation of Sarajevo', in Bougarel, X., Helms, Elissa and Duijzings, G. (eds) *The New Bosnian Mosaic. Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Postwar Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate), 59–79.
Sugar, P. F. (1977) *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354–1804* (Washington: University of Washington Press).
Tošić, J. (forthcoming 2015) 'City of the "Calm": Vernacular Mobility and Genealogies of Urbanity in SEE', in Strasser, S. and Tošić, J. (eds) *Localizing Moralities: Sociality, Economy and Temporality in SEE* (special issue in the *Journal for Southeastern Europe and Black Sea Studies*).

5

Muslim Women's Dress Practices in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Localizing Islam through Everyday Lived Practice

Andreja Mesarič

Introduction

Islamic revival in Bosnia-Herzegovina[1] is usually read in one of two ways: as a political utilization of religion in the pursuit of nationalist ends or as a manifestation of a global spread of radical Islam. However, by focusing on the everyday experiences of people living this revival, we can observe a complexity of Islamic discourses and practices that individual believers relate to in a variety of ways. While religion in Bosnia had undeniably been co-opted for political purposes, the Islamic revival contains an unmistakable religious dimension that has been documented as early as the 1980s (Sorabji 1989). For a significant number of Bosniaks, Islam is more than a cultural identity. It is personal faith that guides them in their process of becoming a particular kind of self. This complex relationship between political discourses and faith in the Balkans is explored in detail in the Introduction and dealt with throughout the chapters in this volume. What this chapter contributes to the discussion is an account of how individual believers interact with political, cultural and religious discourses in their daily lives. It is based on ten months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Sarajevo during several trips between 2005 and 2010, where I spent most of my time visiting a variety of Islamic spaces and talking with women who identified as believers.

The chapter takes a closer look at how the everyday lived practice of ordinary Muslims not only represents or reflects a local variety of Islam but rather actively contributes to the localization of Islam. It pays