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Emira Ibrahimpasic
Candidate

Anthropology
Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Carole Nagengast, Ph.D. , Chairperson

Louise Lamphere, Ph.D.

Melissa Bokovoy, Ph.D.

Elissa Helms, Ph.D.

**WOMEN LIVING ISLAM IN POST-WAR AND
POST-SOCIALIST BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

by

EMIRA IBRAHIMPASIC

B.A. Hamline University, 2002
M.A. University of New Mexico, 2005

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Anthropology

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

DEDICATION

To the memory of my grandparents

*Nazila (rođ. Ismailović) Salihović
1917-1996*

and

*Mehmed Salihović
1908-1995*

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Numerous women and men contributed to this dissertation project. I am grateful for all the guidance, help, and support I received from the women I met over the years. At times, when I felt that many of the questions at hand could not be answered, it was my primary informants that provided contacts and suggestions in how to proceed and address the problems. This dissertation was as much theirs as it was mine, and I will forever be indebted for their open hearts and support.

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This dissertation project represents my personal quest to understand and comprehend the history of a people to which I belong, and, subsequently factor into my

own identity. Keeping this in mind, the reader must understand the deep seated connection and relationship I hold to both the questions I set out to answer in my doctoral research and the informants who allowed me to share their stories and lives in the narrative context of this dissertation. Objectivity, a reasonable goal for any practicing anthropologist or social scientist, is not my primary concern here. Rather, my apprehension is derived from the question of: Did my informants provide me with truthful and honest accounts of what they consider to be important factors in the making and constitution of a Bosnian Muslim woman. Thus, as I work toward expanding this project to include additional questions that arose in the aftermath of my doctoral fieldwork, I focus on how I might develop a project and write-up my findings in a way that does not feel so personal. In the process of investigating, analyzing, and writing this doctoral thesis, I not only grew as an academic, but as a person; through my dissertation—as it was guided by the firm, but patient and forgiving hands of the women on my doctoral committee—I shed the trappings of childhood and transitioned into adulthood alongside my generation [*moja generacija*] informants. For this, I will be forever grateful.

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WOMEN LIVING ISLAM IN POST-WAR AND POST-SOCIALIST BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

by

Emira Ibrahimpašić

B.A. Anthropology and Philosophy, Hamline University, 2002

M.A. Anthropology, University of New Mexico, 2005

Ph.D. Anthropology, University of New Mexico, 2012

ABSTRACT

This is an ethnographic study of what it means to be a Muslim woman in post-war and post-socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina. Almost two decades after the end of inter-ethnic wars that led to the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Bosnia's inhabitants are undergoing radical social, economic, political, and particularly religious transformations. This transformation, visible in both community and individual lives, can be discerned in all aspects of daily life. In this dissertation I examine the underlying reasons and motivations concerning the different ways in which one can practice and live Islam in Sarajevo and Zenica, two of the largest cities of the Muslim-Croat Federation of Bosnia. My study is situated in two women women-centered NGOs, one secular and one religious (Medica Zenica and Nahla), and from these sites I ascertain the role civil society plays in helping women combat the political, economic, and social marginalization that is part of being a woman in today's Bosnia. This dissertation examines faith [*vjera* or *iman*] and practice (what women do) as it has evolved from traditional Bosnian Islam (a secularized form of

Islam that developed during the communist period) and the way it compares to those practicing *povratak Islamu* (a return to Islam or reislamization). My research indicates that there are two primary ways in which one can be a Muslim in post-war and post-socialist Bosnia: conventional (*obična* or *tradicionalna Bosanska Muslimanka*) and pious (*osvješćena/pobožna Muslimanka*). Conventional and pious Muslim women share a number of commonalities, yet, how they understand themselves and their relationship to Islam, including their duties and obligations, is considerably different. Furthermore, this dissertation demonstrates different approaches to being a Bosnian Muslim woman by focusing on agency and the ways in which women adapt to Bosnia's transforming economy and social structure. Finally, I also examine the role that civil society and civic engagement (both secular and religious) play in identity formation.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Almost two decades following the end of inter-ethnic wars that lead to the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1995,¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia), is undergoing radical transformations in social, economic, political, and particularly religious lives of its inhabitants. This transformation, visible in both the institutions, and individual lives, can be discerned in all aspects of daily life. In this dissertation I focus on what it means to be and live as a Bosnian Muslim woman. There are at least two ways of being a Muslim in Bosnia: conventional [*obična*² or *tradicionalna Bosanska Muslimanka*³] and pious [*pobožna* or *osvješćena*⁴ *Muslimanka*]. Conventional Muslim here refers to those women who are Muslim by virtue of birth. It is an ethnic and cultural identity that “sees Islam as a system of abstract values that is to be cherished but that, nonetheless remains inessential to the practical organization of day-to-day life” (Mahmood 2005: 45). Conversely, I use Ayse Saktanber’s definition of conscious Muslim women to identify my pious informants as those individuals whose entire life is led in accordance with Islamic principles and jurisprudence (2002: 165). In order to elucidate the similarities and the contrasts between Islam as an ethnic identity and Islam as religious identity in today’s Bosnia, I analyze the lives of self-identified Muslim women – both conventional and pious - who belong to non-

¹ The period of 1991-1995 refers to primarily three conflicts that led to the disintegration of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, first starting with a ten-day conflict of 1991 resulting in secession of Slovenia, followed by a conflict and secession of Croatia between 1991 and 1995, and finally, the Bosnian conflict of 1992-1995. These three conflicts were followed by the Kosovo conflict resulting in Kosovo’s independence from Serbia in 2008, but have been only partially recognized and have yet to be accepted to United Nations.

² *Obična Muslimanka* refers to common or conventional.

³ *Tradicionalna Bosanska Muslimanka* literally translates as traditional Bosnian Muslim woman.

⁴ *Osvješćena Muslimanka* directly translates as conscious or enlightened Muslim woman.

governmental organizations (NGOs), a small faith-based network, or who have no institutional affiliation. The personal, and especially religious, transformations experienced by some women have been shaped by the social, cultural, economic, and political changes that have occurred in Bosnia since 1991, and are therefore far from spontaneous. It is important to note that although I look at the impact of NGOs in women's lives, this is not a study of NGOs, but rather they represent the locations in which I was able to locate participants for my study. Therefore as one of the early data analysis chapters (Chapter 5), my NGO and small-faith based chapter is about what these organizations did for these women and as a way for the reader to get to know the women. This is primarily a study of women of *moja generacija* who are interested in a pious life, and their stories come to dominate much of the discussion in my dissertation.

MUSLIM IDENTITIES

Historical events and the rise of nationalism in Bosnia play an important part in ascertaining the present-day experiences of Bosnia's Muslims. In the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1943-1992) nearly half⁵ the population of the Republic of Bosnia was nominally (ethnically or culturally) Muslim. Their Slavic ancestors⁶ had either converted to Islam during the centuries of Ottoman Empire dominance (approximately 1450-1918) or were migrants from already Muslim parts of the Empire (Donia and Fine 1994; Friedman 2000;

⁵ Generally reported number of Muslims in Bosnia is 48% based on 1990 census. However, there are a number of discrepancies, with the Pew Research Center suggesting that there were only 43% of Muslims in Bosnia in 1991. At present no census is available that shows the exact number of different ethno-religious groups in Bosnia. I further discuss this issue in Chapter 2 when I focus on the population demographics along ethno-religious lines in Sarajevo and Zenica.

⁶ A detailed table showing Muslim populations in the Balkans can be found in Table 1.1 at the end of this chapter.

Shatzmiller 2002). To a large degree, social relations in Bosnia, much like the rest of the Balkans, were structured along both patrilineal and patriarchal gender lines, with women playing a subordinate role to men, especially in the public sphere, but also in the family (Hadžisehović 2003; Morokvašić 1986). The feminist movement occurred in a different trajectory in former Yugoslavia and reached all Yugoslav women relatively equally (whilst there was something of an urban-rural divide). It started primarily with women's participation in the war effort (World War II) through the Anti-fascist Women's Front (AFŽ) and early communist state building achieved by means of membership in the communist party. The women whose experiences I narrate in this dissertation are younger and did not experience the Yugoslav period as adults and therefore have a different experience with feminism than did older women. This means that older women associate feminism with access to the workforce, their own wages, social services and political representation.

Despite the feminist fight to level the playing field during the Yugoslav period (which I discuss in further detail in Chapter 4), women experienced subordination equally in Catholic, Serb Orthodox, and Muslim communities. In 1950, the Yugoslav government forced Muslim to discard the veil and thus became visually indistinguishable from Catholic and Serb Orthodox women, at least in urban areas (Lugo, et al. 2009; Pinson 1994). It is important to note that there were many Muslim women who themselves, many of whom were members of AFŽ, supported the idea of illegalizing the veil and were very active in helping support the de-veiling of Muslim women. The de-veiling projects were particularly successful in urban areas, while the situation remained relatively unchanged in the rural areas. Even in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Bringa found that Muslim women were

marked as Muslim particularly through their dress, which was (and is) characterized by headscarves and *dimije* (Turkish style flowing pants) (Bringa 1995). The color of the headscarf, the pattern, and even the way in which it was tied differentiated them from Serb Orthodox and Croat Catholic women who also often wore scarves.

In urban areas Muslim women and their Christian counterparts worked outside the home during this period and made up a significant percentage of the working force; albeit for lower wages and at fewer professional jobs than men, a trend observed throughout socialist Eastern Europe (Cockburn, et al. 2001; Gal and Kligman 2000a; Helms 2006; Justice 2004; Morokvasic 1986; Verdery 1996). Similarly, women's political participation was always and continues to be limited. Women's political participation on an individual level (as throughout the former Soviet bloc and in Bosnia) and specifically as voters, is much lower than that of men; and women are often influenced by the vote of their husbands and/or fathers (Gal and Kligman 2000b; Helms 2003a; Pickering 2006). Furthermore, all forms of public religious practice became proscribed during the socialist years. While there certainly were true believers and quiet practitioners, Islam became more an ethnic marker for the majority of Muslims than one of committed religious faith and practice (Bringa 1995; Donia and John V.A. Fine 1994; Friedman 2000; Poulton 2000).

The situation began to change in 1990 with the first free elections. The re-emergence of religion was noticeable in the increased popularity of ethno-nationalist parties. Ethnic and religious identities were entangled and the rise of ethnic and religious self-determination was particularly important when talking about Muslim identities in the early 1990s. Religious revitalization and ethnic nationalism continued to grow throughout

the entire process of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the war that split the country into six, largely, though not entirely ethnically based independent countries (Orthodox Serbia, Catholic Slovenia, Catholic Croatia, Serb Orthodox Macedonia, Muslim Kosovo, and a religiously mixed Bosnia). Bosnia itself was divided into predominantly Serb (Orthodox) and Croat-Bosniak⁷ (Catholic-Muslim) sections, rendering the two new republics into ethnically⁸ and more religiously homogenous entities.⁹ While much “ethnic cleansing” occurred in Bosnia during the war of the 1990s, it was the establishment of two entities, (*Republika Srpska* and *Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine*), and the actual conflict (including ethnic cleansing) that caused ethno-religious based demographic movements. While there is a clear separation between Muslims and Serbs in Bosnia, the loose federation of Muslims and Croats is also ethnically and territorially divided. After the war ended in 1995, significant numbers of Bosnia’s Muslims, men and women alike, turned to a more intense practice of Islam. This can be observed in what all social commentators agree is a noticeable increase in the number of men and women attending prayers at mosques, increased numbers of students in Madrasahs (Islamic high schools), and an increasing number of women wearing the headscarf in public, typically a sign of a pious Muslim. There seems to be no question

⁷ Bosniak was officially adopted during the war to refer to Bosnian Muslim. The term was adopted in September 1993 by Bosnjacki Sabor. Bosniak is an ethno-national term introduced to counter the use of Serb and Croat used to refer to Bosnia’s Serbian Orthodox and Catholic citizens.

⁸ I use term semi-republics here as a political statement regarding Bosnia’s present political situation. While there are officially two republics existing in Bosnia, their existence is contentious and problematic. I will further discuss this problem in Chapter 4.

⁹ Bosnia has a bicameral Parliamentary Assembly or *Skupština* which consists of the House of People or *Dom Naroda* (15 seats, 5 Bosniak, 5 Croat, 5 Serb; members selected by the Bosniak/Croat Federations’ House of Peoples and the *Republika Srpska*’s National Assembly to serve four-year terms); and the state-level House of Representatives or *Predstavnički Dom* (42 seats, 28 seats allocated for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and 14 seats for the *Republika Srpska*; members elected by popular vote on the basis of proportional representation to serve four-year terms); note-Bosnia’s election law specifies four-year terms for the state and first-order administrative division entity legislatures.

that Islam as a religion compared to Islam as an ethnic identity has reemerged in Bosnia as a force to be reckoned with. Budding religious revitalization is further observed in an increased number of mosques, growing diversity in practice (i.e., presence of Shi'ia, Salafi and other schools of Islam accompanied by their own specific religious centers, mosques and organizations), and a rising number of students getting university degrees throughout the Islamic Middle East and other majority-Muslim countries. In Bosnia reislamization is well-underway as it is in other formerly socialist nation states with significant Muslim populations (Abramson 2004; Ghodsee 2010a; Ghodsee 2010b; Kuehnast 2004). Paradoxically, though Islam is often thought to be unattractive to women, an increasing number of women in Bosnia are intensifying their practice of Islam as measured by the large number of women observed attending mosques and religious lectures in addition to organizing and attending faith based women-centered NGOs.¹⁰

One of the biggest questions is why some women remain associated with Islam as an ethnic and national identity, while others are adopting Islam as a defining factor in how they live, what they believe, and what they practice. I attempt to answer this question using three theoretical approaches including Islamic feminist scholarship, studies of post-socialist and post-war development (with specific attention to women and NGOs), religious revitalization (or reislamization) and the anthropology of religion, to interrogate, analyze and examine this question. In order to understand this change I ask what it means to be a Bosnian Muslim woman. However, to address this question I also focus on two additional

¹⁰There are at present around 8,000 registered non-governmental organizations in Bosnia in 2008. However, now there are many that are no longer in operation. Of those over half are women-centered. There are at least several dozen of faith-based NGOs (both Christian and Muslim) throughout Bosnia (Karčić 2010).

queries including: a) How do Muslim women live Islam (including what they actually believe and practice in their daily life?, and b) What is the role of NGOs and faith-based networks in how they understand their Muslimness and relationship to Islam? These questions all, however, center around my attempt to understand the presence and/or absence of agency and/or passivity in these women's lives. The issue of agency, and its antithesis passivity, is at the core of this dissertation and my aim is to understand different ways in which agency can be enacted and achieved. This dissertation therefore is about how Muslim women (both conventional and pious) experience agency and the ways in which they are able to exert autonomy and control over their own lives within two distinct patriarchal ideologies. These women all live in patriarchal structures, but the type of patriarchy (the secular and the religious) matters, as well as their strategies in combating and resisting it. Most importantly, I want Western readers to be able to understand the appeal of piety and devout Islamic lifestyle to women, as well as the ways in which Islam provides space for women to enact agency.

A new kind of Islam has emerged in Bosnia partly in response to the war, experiences of ethnic cleansing, genocide, dramatic changes in the nation's political and economic structure, and pressures from outside influences. This new kind of Islam, also referred to as reislamization, is bilateral, meaning that it is occurring at an institutional and individual level, and is part of a larger religious revolution underway that began in the 1960s and 1970s with the former Yugoslavia's President Tito's recognition of Muslims as a separate nation (*narod*)¹¹ (Bougarel 2003; Bougarel 2007). This revolution is intentional on

¹¹ See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of Muslim national identity.

an institutional level and is therefore partially located in women's religious organizations. However, the kind of reislamization I record and analyze in this dissertation is individual-level religious revitalization. It is not a political movement, but rather a conscious effort by an individual to adopt what they believe to be Islamic values (Sorabji 1988: 336). According to Sorabji, Islamic revivalism in the 1980s Sarajevo was a way for Muslims to reassert their identity as a group and their distinctiveness from non-Muslims (Sorabji 1988: 337).

Reislamization must be considered through the lens of gender. My research indicates that despite Islam's history of subjugating women and its highly patriarchal leadership¹², individual level reislamization is taking hold among women of Bosnia. My research observations indicate that the majority of women at the forefront of reislamization fall within groups, the first of which is the post-communist¹³ generation, i.e., born after 1975, or *moja generacija* (my generation), and second, the post-war generation, born at the dawn of Yugoslav dissolution (after 1990). Women of *moja generacija*, and their younger counterparts, have radically different world-views and experiences because they came to maturity after 1995 in a post-socialist world that is dramatically different from that of their mothers and grandmothers (women of the pre-1975 generation). Therefore, these young women, through their activism in non-governmental organizations and a small faith-based group (an informal grouping of women trying to live their life in piety), are challenging the

¹² In particular I refer to the positions such as Mufti (principal religious authority on the area on a mufti unit), Imam (worship leader and appointed administrator of a mosque), Reis-ul-ulama (supreme Mufti of Bosnia's Islamic Community), the council of the Islamic Community and the Constitutional Court of the Islamic Community, which are positions of religious authority both appointed and elected.

¹³ I use communist and socialist interchangeably throughout this dissertation since the two terms can both be used to describe Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia. The use of both terms is common to explain economic and political set-up of former Yugoslavia.

dominant androcentric ideology and policies that have come to permeate national and religious politics since the end of the war. Whether they are conventional or pious Muslims, young Bosnian women are challenging the dominant patriarchal ideology, including economic and political policies, that see women as the subordinate sex whose primary duties lie at home in the private sphere.

The Western countries of Europe and United States, and majority-Muslim Middle Eastern countries, appear to be growing apart. Their growing disconnection is represented in the proliferation of anti-Islamic incidents, sentiments, and laws, throughout Europe and the United States. The events of September 11th, 2001 in the United States, and later in other European metropolises, and the perhaps problematic revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, ongoing violence in Syria and elsewhere in North Africa and Middle East, have exacerbated already existing 'western' concerns about "fundamentalist" Muslims making a sizeable minority within their own borders (see Table 1.1 for exact numbers of Muslims in Southeast Europe). Explicit and persistent discrimination against Muslim people in Europe and the United States is exemplified by anti-headscarf laws in France (Bowen 2007) and Belgium, and prohibition against building Islamic religious centers and mosques in Denmark and minarets in Slovenia and Switzerland, among many other examples.

What is more, scholars from several disciplines, particularly since 1989, have noted the proliferation of Islamic ways of life in once communist areas (Abramson 2004; Ghodsee 2010a; Kuehnast 2004). In particular, this trend has been observed in those southeast European countries that are within the borders of the European Union. One of the biggest questions is whether a majority Muslim country can operate within a 'democratic' political

system, capitalist market economy, and Western European socio-cultural setting. It appears as though Bosnia is an example of the ways in which Islamic and western values and lifestyle can collaborate and co-exist. Although there have been a number of ethnographies of European Muslims (Mandel in 2002 on Turks in Germany; Lockwood (1975), Bringa in 1995 and Sorabji on Bosnian Muslims in 1989; Ghodsee on Bulgarian Muslims in 2010; and many others), there is limited scholarship on reislamization processes and lived realities of Bosnia's Muslims, particularly since the end of the war. Unlike Muslims who emigrated and settled within Europe over the past fifty years, Bosnian Muslims have lived and occupied this region for centuries. Therefore, what I describe in this dissertation represents a potential corrective to misconceptions about Muslim women, a contribution to the ethnographic research on Muslims in Bosnia, and a contribution to our understanding of Muslims living within the European continent.

Dozens of studies, dissertations, reports, and books have been written about Bosnia's Muslims following the destruction, death, and loss that occurred during the war. Often, the reports were about the survival, the spirit of resistance, and the fighting that these people endured during the war. Even the stories of those who escaped were recorded, with a number of studies about Bosnian refugees throughout the world (Mertus and Tešanović 1997). Yet, there are only a handful of studies about what it means to be a Bosnian Muslim. Apart from Cornelia Sorabji's dissertation on Sarajevo Muslims (1989), Tone Bringa's *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way* (Bringa 1995), and most recently Zilka Spahić-Šiljak's *Contesting Female, Feminist and Muslim Identities* (2012), there are few works on the lived experience of Islam in the post-war period, and even less so on the individual

effects of reislamization. While Sorabji's dissertation examines "double identity" for Sarajevo's Muslims in the wake of the war, Bringa's book focuses on an ethnically mixed Muslim-Croat village near Sarajevo and the role women play in defining Muslim identities. Although Bringa's study takes account of the role of religion as a defining part of their identities, much of her discussion focuses on inter-ethnic relations and women's role in the household. Finally, one of the most influential and important works on Muslim women's experiences is by Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, whose recent publication was timely in that it supported many of my own findings and conclusions. Spahić-Šiljak and her team produced a broad study of Muslim women's identities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo that assess the importance of faith, Islam, feminism, and most importantly the way of being Muslim among diverse population of women in two post-socialist and post-war states. My dissertation offers rich case material that amplifies and supports many of Sorabji, Bringa, and Spahić-Šiljak's conclusions. My dissertation provides detailed information about women's day-to-day activities and I quote them extensively throughout. Most importantly, however, my contribution is an answer to Bringa's call for an ethnography that doesn't only look at what Muslims say they believe, but documents what they actually do and the ways in which practice and belief contribute to how they understand their relationship to Islam as a lived experience. I want to portray Muslim women as more than just victims; that is, I wanted to present them as autonomous individuals with control over their lives. What this dissertation attempts to provide is an example of the ways in which being pious in Islam does not always necessitate subordination and loss of rights for women. My aim is to place women at the center of discussion regarding Islam in Bosnia, and more specifically,

discussions relating to *reislamization* movements and their effects on women. Particularly, I want to help provide another case study of the ways in which agency and complacency play out in Muslim women's lives, and the importance of redefining agency to extend beyond resistance and to include control of the body.

ETHNOGRAPHIC TERMS¹⁴ AND THE SPECTRUM OF MUSLIM WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES

The experience of Bosnian women with Islam differs, yet there is a clear distinction between Islam as it was practiced before the end of the socialist period and post-war Islamic lifestyle and practice. Based on the analysis of many interviews I conducted in Sarajevo and Zenica between 2007 and 2010, I identified several groupings into which I could split my informants – all women. I created two categories, conventional and pious, around which to construct my analysis and describe how Bosnian Muslim women live Islam. My data suggest a discernible difference in beliefs and practices between these two groupings.

I am aware of the potential problems associated with assigning informants within either the conventional or pious category. However, since the majority of the women self-assigned the classifications I felt justified in choosing these categories. Nevertheless, I want to make it crystal clear to the reader that these dichotomous categories are heuristic to a degree; they are categories that I based on different self-descriptors used by my informants, but ultimately I made the final decision on which terms to use. Among all the terms women utilized to describe themselves and their relationship to Islam conventional and pious situated my informants on a broad, albeit imperfect continuum that ranges from deeply

¹⁴ A detailed summary of ethnographic and local terms used throughout the dissertation can be found in Appendix I.

religious to intensely secular. The women I now refer to as conventional Muslim women described themselves alternatively as *tradicionalna Bosanska Muslimanka* (traditional Bosnian Muslim), *obična Muslimanka* (common or ordinary Muslim) or simply *Bosanska Muslimanka* (Bosnian Muslims) (see Appendix I for detailed discussion of local terms and their meanings). My pious informants on the other hand would characterize and describe themselves as *pobožna Muslimanka* (pious Muslim), *osvjescena Muslimanka* (conscious Muslim) or *prava vjernica* (true or correct believer). After considering all the terms my informants used, I settled on conventional and pious as the two categories that (I believe) best represent the range of *typical* experiences and worldviews.

Next I want to discuss the continuum of Bosnian women's experiences with Islam. The women I interviewed fall more or less midway between the two ends of the religious spectrum of religious commitment, with deeply atheist being the polar opposite of strictly devout, as exemplified in Salafi Islam (see Appendix VII). The wide range of experiences and identification with Islam in Bosnia suggests that many women indeed see Islam as part of their national and ethnic identity while other deeply pious women consider their identity as religious Muslims primary. The continuum of all their experiences allows us to see just how variable Bosnian's experience with Islam can be, but does not negate my two categories since most women I talked with cluster at two distinct locations, either to the left or the right side of the continuum.

Three distinct clusters of experience characterize conventional Muslim experiences within my continuum. The first cluster represents those conventional Muslims who were not particularly aligned with the institutional bodies of Bosnia's Muslims (most notably the

Islamic Community). This cluster is representative of the majority of my informants' experiences. The second cluster groups those people who became more pious in the last twenty years and who strongly aligned with the organization known as the Islamic Community¹⁵ (*Islamska Zajednica*). The Islamic Community plays an important role in shaping how the public face of Bosnia's Islam is presented today and its interpretation of what it means to be a Bosnian Muslims was derived from the nationalization period of 1970s (discussed in detail in Chapter 4). *Islamska Zajednica* is a very political organization that is closely tied to Muslim nationalist parties like the Social Democratic Party (SDA). There is a very tight relationship between all the nationalist parties (Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian) and the religious institutions (including the Catholic and Serb Orthodox church) most closely associated with each, and their interpretation of what constitutes Bosnia's Islam is based on their political and nationalist agendas. Finally, the third cluster is made up of conventional Muslims who still support the Islamic Community as the institutional body, but who remain secular and at times atheist. These are Muslims who never were particularly religious, and will most likely never become religious, but who see and recognize the importance of the Islamic Community in preserving their national and ethnic identity.

¹⁵ The Islamic Community (*Islamska Zajednica*) was established by the Austro-Hungarian authorities in order to accommodate the change from Islam as the state religion during Ottoman Empire. Ulemas and religious leadership are stripped of the role and importance they held during Ottoman control. Muslims in Bosnia, unsatisfied with Austro-Hungarian interference, formed a movement for religious autonomy of Muslims. This movement demanded autonomy and independence of Bosnia's Muslims in regards to religious authority and education. Thus, in 1910, the first Reis-u-lemma was elected to enforce Islamic religious and legal dogma and manage the affairs of the Islamic Community. The Reis-u-lemma was established as an independent institution responsible for the well-being of Bosnia's Muslims.

On the other hand, within the pious side of the continuum, there are three primary clusters of experiences that I recognize. The first cluster is made up of men and women who were pious even before the start of the war and who observe what they term “traditional Bosnian Islam.” The second group, to which the majority of my pious informants belong, are Muslims who adopted new and imported interpretations of Islam that resemble those of the Middle East and other majority Muslim countries. This type of a pious Muslim is often the most ostracized among all three, and they are rarely found in NGOs, or for that matter in the two communities where I did my research. They most commonly live in rural areas. It must be observed that, in recent years, their success in converting others has decreased and their numbers are not rising (Karčić 2010). The third group of pious Muslims is comprised of those who adopted a more pious Islamic identity based on the principles of the Islamic Community and European Islam.

When examining the continuum of Muslim experiences in contemporary Bosnia it must be noted that my sample and the women whose experiences I plot throughout this dissertation represents a very limited scope of women’s experiences with Islam. The women I deal with come from a variety of backgrounds and experience Islam in two primary ways (as conventional or pious); however, their experiences do not include the entire range of experience of Islam, particularly those women that fall somewhere between convention and piety, and whose experience I didn’t speak to or address. This middle, or what can be termed a third category of Muslim women’s experiences, is comprised of those women who experience and practice Islam in the way that is promoted by the Islamic Community. The idea of European Islam and the European Muslim, and thus a European Muslim woman, is

an important part of what makes up women's experiences of Islam. The Islamic Community is very important in suppressing continued growth of the Salafi interpretation of Islam among Bosnia's Muslims (Sarajlić 2010). Their experiences would certainly make this study more complete and I hope to get at their perspectives in future research.

Finally, I want to say a little bit about where the women I interviewed are located within Bosnia's society. The majority are university educated and come from middle class families where education is valued. Although they all now live, study, and work in urban areas (Sarajevo and Zenica), about a half of them originated from other parts of Bosnia (mainly medium size towns and cities scattered throughout the country) (see map in Appendix II). The majority of them are unemployed or university students and their positions are defined by the struggle to secure financial and personal stability. For a detailed summary of my informants' backgrounds see Appendix III. Considering Bosnia's current political and economic situation, I believe that the sample of the women whose stories I narrate here is representative of how most Muslim women in Bosnia live today.

An important contribution my research makes is in understanding why, after they had been liberated from the household, obtaining university educations, entering the workforce, and receiving, and presumably controlling, some portion of their own wages, do pious women choose to live their lives as conscious Muslims and uphold strict patriarchal structures and systems. As I discuss at length in Chapter 4, encouraging Muslim women to leave the confines of the domestic unit in the post-World War II period dramatically changed the structure of Muslim family, kinship organization, and, inevitably, the position of women. In one generation, urban Muslim women went from being more or less confined

to the home as wives, mothers, and daughters, to being educated and employed in a wide-range of careers (rural areas did not change as dramatically in terms of gender relations). In less than fifty years, Muslim women legally, if not actually, went from being completely dependent on male family members, to being fully participating citizens. Nonetheless, most observers say that most Muslim homes remained largely patriarchal. At the end of the communist period, despite having college degrees and jobs, the majority of Muslim women were still living in homes where their roles were clearly demarcated along gender lines. The typical Muslim home (as were Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish homes) in 1992 was headed by a man who was the primary breadwinner and authority over the household (see Chapter 4 pages 137-138 for detailed discussion). Although many of my informants have noted that they have felt that in their homes sons were preferred and thus treated better, there was little difference in educational pursuits of children. In fact, many parents thought that it was more important to send daughters to get higher education because of a belief that sons could always do manual work and that since daughters were weaker they had a higher need for education as a back-up plan. The typical family structure was of course partially dependent on the educational level of the parents. In urban educated homes, the gender lines were less strict, while in rural areas focus on gender roles remained deeply entrenched.

A number of scholars have observed that Bosnian women are turning to civil society and especially NGOs to address issues specific to their needs (Justice 2004). Because of the nature of the capitalist post-war and post-communist society in Bosnia in which the state still controls most social, cultural, and religious institutions, but in which many of the

socialist institutions have been de-funded and disbanded, civil society has become increasingly important to women. Many women (and men) are drawn to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which have replaced earlier socialist government-sponsored programs providing support to women. Women, in particular, are increasingly organizing support groups that fulfill personal needs that cannot be met at home, and can no longer be (if they ever were) met at work, school, or in other areas of social life. Yet, despite the popularity of NGOs people still rely heavily on the state and extended kin networks for support. Since NGOs have become a space where women can combat patriarchal ideology and structure, it is not surprising to find that religion, and more specifically faith-based NGOs, have come to serve a similar purpose. In 2004, a collective of NGOs on behalf of the United Nations reported that,

The patriarchal heritage of BiH [Bosnia and Herzegovina] reinforces the dominant cultural position of men in all spheres of life, while confirming their absolute dominance over the political and public life of the nation. This dominance is often viewed as a natural extension of the critical decision-making role of men. Due to harmful stereotypes relating to the inherent capabilities of each gender, many men and women alike accept and perpetuate the view that men possess superior leadership and decision-making skills. This assumption is rarely questioned, and for this same reason, men are also expected to govern within their family and their broader social community. At the same time, the traditional distribution of roles within the family, where household chores are reserved for women and girls, provides men with additional time and energy to engage in public activities. And so it is within such an environment that Bosnian society has created and nurtured the myth that women lack the talent or aspiration to engage in the political or public life of the country. [Justice 2004:10]

The report by the USAID indicates that despite the advances made during the communist period, and since the war, patriarchy remains strong in all facets of public and private life. Women, however, are finding personal solace and answers to larger life questions (often

associated with war trauma, unemployment and the shift from childhood to adulthood, and girlhood into womanhood) in two ways: through women-centered NGOs or in faith. Despite the limitations of Islam and its very rigid gender-role oriented structure, pious Muslim women are using their newly found beliefs and practice as a way of asserting their agency in the household and society, and are both empowering and advancing themselves. They are trying to carve out autonomous spaces apart from their brothers and fathers and live their own lives. They empower themselves as individual women, but more importantly as an emerging collectivity.

On the other hand, conventional Muslim women continue to regard Islam primarily as an ethnic/national marker and are not religiously devout, though they are attached to “traditional” Bosnian Muslim practices. Their questions about the meaning and purpose of their life (to the degree they ask them), economic and social struggles, are answered and met by the institutions and society as a whole that provide them with support in different areas of their life. The importance of war, and war narratives, cannot be forgotten in the discussion of Islamic revivalism. War plays a significant role in the growing reislamization movement in Bosnia but mostly for those men and women who are of the older generation (having grown up in the communist period). As the majority of my informants are younger, their experiences with war are not the primary cause behind religious revitalization and therefore the war narratives do not have a center stage in my discussion. Although research indicates that war did play a significant role in Islamic revitalization in Bosnia in the immediate period following the war, my own research, and research by Karčić (2010) and Sarajlić (2010) indicates that religious revitalization at present has only limited connection

to the experiences of war. Finally, my informants talked some about the impact of war and their relationship to Islam, and when they did talk about it, the role of war revolved primarily around the importance of being Muslim and the persecution they experienced as a collective group.

ISLAM

It is important to discuss the history of Islam in general, and Bosnia's Islam in particular. Islam started in the seventh century in what is now Saudi Arabia. Islam, translated literally as "submission to God," was brought to earth and the people by a prophet Muslims believe was chosen by God to deliver his teachings/word. Muhammad, an orphan since early childhood, grew up on the Arabian Peninsula, which at the time was the gathering place of many great world civilizations and religions, both monotheistic and polytheistic. Recounted stories indicate that Muhammad was raised by an uncle and over the years became a skilled merchant. Having caught the eye of a wealthy widow, his fortunes changed when he was in his early twenties. Marrying the widow Khadijah freed Muhammad from hard labor and gave him ample time to meditate on life. His meditations often took him to the many caves surrounding the city of Mecca. On one such trip to the caves, generally dated to 612 AD, the story is that Muhammad was approached by an angel (Gabriel) and instructed to deliver God's message to the people. Over the next 22 years, Muhammad recited, word for word, God's wishes and orders, as related by the angel Gabriel. The recitation resulted in the holy book of Qur'an. Those who sought to spread Islam throughout the Mecca and Medina areas of Arabia and then to the rest of the Arabian Peninsula caused a number of conflicts and full-out wars with non-Muslims. Over time, and with a growing body of followers, Islam

spread throughout the Middle East and today Muslims make up more than 23% (Lugo, et al. 2009) of the world's population.¹⁶

DUTIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Understanding what constitutes conventional versus pious Bosnian Muslim practice is helped by a thorough understanding of what is expected of all Muslims throughout the world. Thus, the next section focuses on the religious duties of each Muslim as prescribed by the holy book and Islamic jurisprudence. While Islamic duty and doctrine has changed over the past 1,400 years, some notions remain immutable. The five pillars of faith are one constant at the center of what constitutes and is required of a Muslim. The five pillars are the five duties expected of every Muslim, no matter their race, ethnicity, geographic location, or socio-economic status. In Arabic, *arkan ud-Din or arkan al-Islam* literally translates to pillars of faith. The pillars are in the Qur'an and are listed as a group within the Haddiths (or the recorded saying about Prophet Mohammad's life).

Chapter 46, verse 33 in the Qur'an says:

O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the messenger, and render not your actions vain. [Ali and Muhammad ibn Isma'il 1944]

This verse reminds the reader of the Qur'an that what Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w. or *salle alaa hu alaihi wa sallim*)¹⁷ says is the word of God and therefore should be treated as such.

¹⁶ Globally, the Muslim population is forecast to grow at about twice the rate of the non-Muslim population and Muslims will make up 26.4% of the world's total projected population of 8.3 billion in 2030. In the United States the population projections show the Muslims will rise from 2.6 million to 6.2 million in 2030. In Europe, on the other hand, the Muslim population is expected to grow from 6% to 8% of the total population (Lugo et al. 2009).

¹⁷ *Salle alaa hu alaihi wa sallim* means peace be upon him in Arabic, used by devout Muslims throughout the world. This is a sign of respect for the Prophet, and one is expected to use this term every time they utter the prophet's name. I acknowledge this term and am deeply respectful of its' meaning, but for the sake of space I will not use it in the remainder of my dissertation. When I write the Prophet I refer to the Prophet

When the Prophet Muhammad (henceforth simply Prophet) passed away in 632, it took decades for his life story to be collected and written down. This collection was compiled together into what is known as Haddiths. There are different levels of Haddiths, and some are considered more valid than others, but one unifying feature remains, and that is the five pillars of faith. Once collected, the five pillars were put forth as a duty of all Muslims. The fulfillment of one's life as a Muslim would be impossible without adherence to these obligations. Observance of these duties is said to have benefits both in this life and the next. The pillars are acknowledged and observed by all sects of Muslims, although Shi'ites add further obligatory duties, including jihad, payment of the imam's tax, the encouragement of good deeds, and the prevention of evil.

The five pillars of Islam are: 1) daily confession of faith or Shahaadah [*Šehadet*], 2) daily ritual prayer [*salat*], 3) paying the alms tax [*zakat*], 4) fasting during the entire month of Ramadan [*sawm*], and 5) pilgrimage to Mecca [*hadž* or hajj]. Of the five, three are expected to be practiced on daily basis, while hajj is expected only of those who have the financial means. Ramadan happens once a year for 5 weeks. Shahaadah is the first thing one says in the prayer. That means that the daily proclamation that Allah is the only God and Mohammed is his prophet is exclaimed five times a day. While Shahaadah would not be said in regular conversation or outside the context of prayer, it is nevertheless, one of the most important pillars of Islam. A Muslim is not only supposed to say the words, but believe and live through them.

Muhammad *salle alaa hu alaihi wa sallim*. The use of the entire phrase is common among pious Muslim women of Bosnia, but hardly mentioned among conventional Muslim informants.

Ritual prayer, or *klanjanje* (Salat in Arabic), is conducted five times a day, near dawn or *sabah namaz* (fajr in Arabic), just after noon or *podne namaz* (dhuhr in Arabic), in the afternoon or *ikindija* (asr in Arabic), just after sunset or *akšam* (maghrib in Arabic) and around nightfall or *jacija* (isha'a in Arabic). Prayers most often occur at home, though the Friday prayer, also known as *džuma* (Jumu'ah in Arabic), should be said at a local mosque with the rest of the congregation or *džemat* and sometimes *mesdžid* (masjids in Arabic). However, Friday prayer is only expected of men; women may join them, but few do as it is often seen as a way for Muslim men to pray together. Being that most Muslims in Bosnia, and especially women, work away from home and therefore the mosque between the hours of 7:00am and 4:00pm and sometimes later, it is not surprising that many people pray at work. For Muslims living in other parts of the Islamic world, this is easier because there are more mosques, and daily schedules, including work, are planned around prayers. During the prayer, one faces Mecca (in Bosnia, that was usually facing east) and is expected to recite the prayer from memory and in Arabic.

Almsgiving, or *zekat* (Zakat in Arabic), is charity, expected of all Muslims. The donations are used to benefit the poor in a variety of ways including funding food banks, maintaining mosques and other religious objects, and Islamic schools, just to name a few. *Zekat* is determined by one's income, wealth, and assets. Many Muslims, in addition to *zekat*, also perform acts of charity, or *sadaka* (Sadaquah in Arabic), by donating funds to the needy. Historically in the Muslim world, *zekat* was collected by the Muslim caliphate at the end of the year. However, today it is up to the individual Muslim to contribute of his or her own accord. Additionally, in Bosnia almsgiving is often associated with the end of *Kurban*

Bajram (Eid Mubarak), which falls during the last month of the Islamic calendar, (Dhu al-Hijjah).

Ritual fasting, or *post* (Sawm in Arabic), refers to any form of fasting, but it is generally connected with the month of Ramadan [*Ramazan*]. During Ramadan, all Muslims are expected to refrain from eating, drinking, and engaging in sexual relations (with their spouse) between dawn and dusk. By such abstinence, it is believed that Muslims can focus on their spirituality so they can commit fully to Allah and atone for their sins. Some Muslims, including a few of my pious informants, also fast during other times of the year as a sign of piety and spiritual cleansing.

As mentioned earlier, *hadž* (Hajj), or the ritual pilgrimage, is expected of every Muslim who has the financial means to make the journey and is physically able to do so. Many Muslims, in Bosnia and throughout the world, spend their lives saving for this event. *Hadž* is performed during the last month of the Islamic calendar. Close to two million Muslims come to the holy city of Mecca. Once a person completes the pilgrimage, they add a title of *Hadži* (Hajji) to their name. A majority of the Muslims who do attend Hajj will do so only once in their lives. Some, however, have gone on multiple occasions. If a person is unable to attend due to physical impairment or illness, they can appoint a proxy to attend.

There are three main denominations in Islam, with the Shi'ia and Sunni branches comprising the bulk of world's Muslims, and mystical-ascetic Sufism (Ernst 2011) having a small, but significant, number of followers throughout the world. The primary difference between the Sunni and Shi'ia lies in "a dispute over leadership succession soon after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 A.D. Over time, however the political divide

between the two groups broadened to include theological distinctions and differences in religious practices as well” (Lugo, et al. 2009: 9). Consequently, Sunni Muslims trace their heritage and doctrine through the caliphate (the body of men who learned from the Prophet himself), while the Shi’ia trace their lineage through Ali ibn Abi Talib who was the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad. Furthermore, it is important to note that Sunnis believe that the first four caliphs were the rightful successors to Muhammad; since God did not specify any particular leaders to succeed him, those leaders had to be elected. Unlike Shi’ias, who do not recognize the authority of caliphs, Sunnis believe that the caliph was to be chosen by the community (Aslan 2005; Ernst 2003; Joseph and Slyomovics 2001). The differences between the two denominations are found in more than just how they trace lineage, but in how they practice as well. Thus, while for the Shi’ia the Imams (or divine descendants of the Prophet) hold authority and power in matters of jurisprudence and doctrine, the Sunni shun absolute authority in individuals, and therefore rely on a number of sources to inform belief and practice.

The Pew Research Center reports that globally there are 1.57 billion Muslims of all ages living in the world today, representing 23% of an estimated 2009 world population of 6.8 billion (Lugo, et al. 2009:1). Of that 1.57 billion, Shi’ia Muslims represent a minority population at 10-13% of the world’s overall Muslim population and Sunni Muslims comprise the overall majority at 87-90% (Lugo, et al. 2009: 1). Within Sunni tradition there are four schools of law, including Hanafi,¹⁸ Maliki,¹⁹ Shafi’i²⁰ and Hanbali²¹ (Ernst 2003; Esposito

¹⁸ Hanafi school is observed by those Muslims living in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Muslim areas of Southern Russia, the Caucasus, most of the Muslim areas of the Balkans (including Bosnia) and Turkey and parts of Iraq, all follow this school of jurisprudence.

1998; Esposito 2003). On the other hand, Shi'ia follow Ja'fari, Ismaili, Zaidi, Alawites and Alevi schools of jurisprudence. While the Shi'ia share core practices with Sunnis, they disagree over the proper importance and validity of specific collections of Haddiths. The Haddiths are numerous and many remain under scrutiny today.

ISLAM IN BOSNIA

Islam was introduced into Bosnia in the fifteenth century, during the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans and much of Southeastern Europe. Since Ottomans were followers of the Sunni form of Islam, they introduced a Sunni interpretation and practice of Islam to Bosnia.

Bosnian Muslims belong to Hanafi school of Islam. With Ottoman control of Bosnia finalized in 1463, Sunni Islam became the predominant religion of Bosnians so that by the outbreak of the interethnic war in 1992 nearly half of all residents of Bosnia were Muslim.²²

However, in contrast to the more conservative and officially sanctioned (by the Islamic jurisprudence) Sunni Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Iraq as well as countries formerly under Ottoman Empire (Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt), Islam in Bosnia is considered mild. In part, this is due to a relaxed interpretation of Islamic duty and practice and the almost complete loss of Islamic lifestyles during the communist period (1948-1992); for example, all women shed the veil, and many took off the hijab (headscarf) during the

¹⁹ Maliki school is observed in North African and West African Muslim countries including Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria and others. Also, the Maliki madhab is the official state madhhab of Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

²⁰ Shahafi'i Muslims are found in Indonesia, Lower Egypt, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Coastal Maharashtra/Konkan and Kerala in India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Palestine, Yemen and Kurds.

²¹ Hanibali is the official school of Arabian Peninsula, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Syria, Iraq, and Jordan.

²² In 1990 Bosnia had 1,843,000 Muslims making 42.8% of total population. Those numbers have changed. In 2010 it was estimated that there were 1,564,000 Muslims in Bosnia, making up at that time 41.6% of the total population (Lugo et al. 2009).

1940s and dressed and behaved much as did their Serb Orthodox and Catholic neighbors. Revealing and western-style clothing was worn by some Muslim women. Many people consumed alcohol and pork. The enjoyment of music and dancing was common, as was premarital intercourse and inter-religious marriages, all behaviors that were and are banned and therefore rare in more conservative regimes of other majority-Muslim countries (Beeman 2011). I must point out that while this was some of the experience of Bosnia's Muslims in the communist period, the official Bosnian Islam as promoted and interpreted by the Islamic Community condemns these types of behaviors. During the communist period many of Bosnia's Muslims were either outright atheists or simply ignored what the Islamic Community purported. The second part as to why Islam in Bosnia is considered mild is due to long standing presence of Sufi orders or the mystical Islam that are considered heretical in many Muslim-majority countries throughout the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

Since all religious belief and practice was proscribed by the communist regime, many Bosnians were of ambiguous religious identity. Bougarel even argues that Bosnia's Muslims were some of the most secularized in all of the Balkans:

...the Bosnian Muslim population was for long one of the most secularized of the Balkans, while the traditional and rural religiosity of the Muslim populations of Western Thrace, Bulgaria or Macedonia facilitates the clientelistic practices of the notables, but hinders the diffusion of an ideological and militant notion of Islam. In the Balkans as elsewhere, Islamist movements appear in the ranks of the intelligentsia and of the academic youth, and substitutes itself for communist commitment as often as for traditional Islamic belief. [Bougarel 2003: 553]

During the socialist Yugoslav period, Bosnia's Muslims were not initially recognized as a nationality or nation different from Croats or Serbs. I will examine further the complex

nature of nationality/nation in Yugoslavia in Chapter 4; for the present it is important to note that nationality/nation refers to a group of people sharing a commonly agreed to ethno-religious identity. There is often a link, sometimes tenuous, to a specific territory as exemplified throughout the world in territorial claims based on belonging and ancestral presence of the group trying to occupy and/or take the land from another group. In socialist Yugoslavia, people of the Orthodox religion, especially but not exclusively those living in Serbia, were recognized as Serbs, Catholics were recognized as Croats, and Muslims were recognized only as Muslims, and at a few periods in history as Serbs or Croats of Islamic faith. During the largely secularized communist period, people kept whatever religious faith and practice they retained private and few worshiped publicly.

Growing civil unrest and economic instability related to the breakup of the former Soviet Union, the demise of Communist Parties throughout the region, rising inflation and debt, decentralization of power, death of Tito in 1980s, and the advent of neoliberal economic process in Yugoslavia finally resulted in war in 1991,²³ engulfing almost the entire Yugoslavia. The war in former republic of Bosnia lasted the longest and was the bloodiest of all of Yugoslav conflicts with nearly 100,000 deaths, two million people displaced or incarcerated in concentration camps, and a number of acts of torture and one officially proclaimed site of genocide (Srebrenica).

Much of the global popular coverage of the war depicted Bosnian women as rather more oppressed and downtrodden than they ever were. The ubiquity of these images was

²³ Even though the break-up wars of Yugoslavia started in 1991 with the conflicts in Slovenia and Croatia, the war did not reach Bosnia until 1992. Thus, it is important to note the two dates as they are both significant in this discussion.

in part a result of the length of the war, the specific nature of war techniques (i.e., rape concentration camps), and the sheer magnitude and length of the conflict. Furthermore, as the western media reported on mass Muslim expulsions many of the images that began circulating were of the rural population, which in the war suffered the most. In order to gain sympathy for the plight of the Muslim population many reporters showed images of persecuted rural Muslim women in dowdy clothing and headscarves. These kinds of reports, though positive in that they brought attention to the plight of the Muslim populations, were also negative in that they produced an image of Bosnia's Muslims that suggested they were uniformly poor, uneducated, and defeated. With an already tenuous relationship between Western and Muslim countries, such reports contributed to the existing hegemonic stereotypes regarding Islam and particularly Muslim women.

Fascination with the Orient has permeated European consciousness since colonial times (Said 1978). Moreover, as Bowen observed in his studies of French Muslims, perceptions that Muslims were moving into European spaces were further exacerbated by the images of Bosnia's Muslims, who unlike Western European Muslims, have a long standing history within the European continent (Bowen 2010; Goodman 2010; Hancock 2008). Despite the long-standing presence of Muslims in Western Europe since early days of colonization, it was not until the 1980s that Europe began addressing their needs and wants. This was precipitated by an eruption of rallies where Muslims demanded equal treatment and integration within European social and political life (Bowen 2007; Bowen 2010). As the dissidents demanded an upgrade from their second-class citizenship the growing unrest in

the Middle East and finally the events of September 11, 2001 sparked even greater anti-Muslim sentiments throughout Europe and the United States.

Since the start of the so-called War on Terror in 2003 in the United States and increased conflict between the Islamic and Western countries in Iraq and Afghanistan, Bosnia has been identified by the United States Department of State as a potential breeding ground for Islamic terrorists (Carpenter 2009; Karčić 2010b). One event that contributes to Bosnia's reputation as unsafe (according to the recent reports by the State Department and the European Security Commission) is the growing number of visibly Muslim women (most notably those wearing hijab and niqab),²⁴ freely walking the streets of both rural and urban areas of Bosnia. The response by secular and non-Muslim leadership (both political and social) to this new trend and public expression of Islamic belief and practice has been labeling visibly Muslim women as uneducated, brainwashed, and oppressed for adopting Arab-style dress, beliefs, and behavior. The Arab-style refers to Salafi (or Wahhabi) belief and practice commonly associated with fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. Originating in Saudi Arabia, Salafis practice a 'romanticized'²⁵ form of Islam they believe was lived by the Prophet himself almost fourteenth hundred years ago. Salafism has been named the official interpretation of Islam in Saudi Arabia by the current ruling monarchy that took power in the late 19th century. With the economic strength of Saudi Arabia's oil fields and Saudi Arabian foreign aid, Salafism has taken root in almost every country around the globe, including Bosnia. Bosnian Muslims themselves (including the Islamic Community itself) are

²⁴ Niqab: a face covering usually revealing only women's eyes and worn in relation with long loosely fitted black robes.

²⁵ Romanticized in this context refers to Salafi focus on 'simpler' way of life, a life free of 'modern' influences (i.e. technology) and one in which 7th century lifestyle is observed.

deeply concerned about Salafism because they see it as a threat to Bosnia's traditions and "unique" practice of Islam. It is also important to mention that because of the Salafi presence, Bosnia was placed on a list by the State Department as one of the countries that pose a threat to Western countries and nationals (Carpenter 2009; Karčić 2010b). Most importantly, however, it has been Salafi communities themselves and their adoption of what they regard as an 'orthodox' Islamic lifestyle that has contributed to the already enormous rift between Bosnia's Muslim and Christian populations. Moreover, Salafi, and other forms of 'orthodox' Islam, present a problem for a country trying, perhaps hopelessly, to join the European Union. The fear of "foreign" Islam taking hold within Bosnia's social and religious milieu has been a topic of a number of discussions, both in and out of the country (EU and the United States) (Carpenter 2009; Karčić 2010b).

STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

For the moment, it is sufficient for the reader to understand that what I call conventional Muslim women share several practices with pious women, including: a) belief in Allah as one god; b) being born into a Muslim family and thereby being a "Muslim by birth;" c) paying dues to the Islamic Community (*Islamska Zajednica*); d) giving alms to the poor; and e) giving children Muslim names. What is more, conventional Muslims, also referred to as *tradicionalini Muslimani* (traditional Muslims), have other common characteristics not shared with pious women including: a) a relatively limited knowledge and practice of prayer and Koranic textual knowledge; b) celebration only of the end of Ramadan (*Ramazan*); and c) the observation of Bosnian traditional Islamic rituals (*tradicionalni obredi*) such as *tevhid*²⁶

²⁶ A rite observed for those who have passed away.

and *mevlud*.²⁷ Although both conventional and pious Muslim women have Muslim names, I only do a thorough discussion of the topic for conventional Muslim women. I do this because Muslim names came up as an important topic for conventional informants as a way of affirming their belonging to Islam. Additionally, for some conventional informants, not being pious themselves but having identifiably pious family members is also an important part of what they see as *tradition*. This type of definition and understanding of conventional Muslims is the norm in Bosnia, and as such these are the normative type of Muslims that live and operate within the country's cultural, historic, and religious context.

I will refer to pious Muslim as women trying to live their lives as conscious Muslims (or in their words as *osvješćena Muslimanka* or *pobožna Muslimanka*). I have identified several common characteristics centered around, but not limited to the following characteristics: a) ritualized prayers 5 times a day; b) observation of not only the end of Ramazan but also the month-long fast; c) an expressed desire to attend the once in a lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca called the hajj; d) wearing of modest clothing²⁸; e) observation of *mahrana* (covering the head and hair with a specific kind of headscarf); f) avoidance of places and situations in which alcohol is served; g) avoidance of any physical contact with unrelated men; h) studying Koran and other texts; and finally, j) adoption of Sharia dating (*Šerijatsko Zabavljanje*) and in some cases trial marriages (*probni brak*).

²⁷ A feast celebrating Prophet Muhammad's birthday.

²⁸ Usually modest clothing implies clothes that are not tight fitting on the body or revealing. Pious Bosnian women usually wear long-sleeve shirts and pants/skirts. In some cases it also means that a woman is wearing the hijab.

I show through personal stories and narratives of individual women's lives that being Muslim in Bosnia has changed dramatically since before the war of the 1990s and the end of the socialist economic and political system. Through excerpts of narratives, I weave a tapestry of Muslim women that is complex, unique, and which shows their relationship with Islam (whether pious and devout or conventional and ethnic in nature) as an integral part of identity. Moreover, through individual narratives, I attempt to depict all Muslim women as autonomous and in control over their own lives. Using my informants' own words I am able to at least categorize them as either conventional or pious Muslim. From this, I am able to develop an understanding of those beliefs and practices shared between conventional and pious women, as well as those that are different. Understanding the differences and commonalities of all the women I interviewed helps us understand what it means to be a Muslim woman.

In chapter 2, I discuss the history and background of how this dissertation project came to life. I outline the trajectory and important events in how the thesis was formulated. Furthermore, I detail different strategies and methods I used to collect data. Finally, I work through all the theoretical approaches that inform this dissertation. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the methods and tools I utilized to collect all the necessary data. In addition, I introduce the reader to the sites of research, thus making them familiar with the locations where my research was conducted.

Then, I relate the history of Islam, Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular, in Bosnia since the late nineteenth century in Chapter 4. Particularly, I examine the development of Muslim national and ethno-religious identity since the retreat of the

Ottoman Empire in 1878. The majority of the chapter examines the historical trajectory of the development of Muslim consciousness in Bosnia. Moreover, this chapter is meant to help the reader understand the historical events that have led to the current state of affairs in the region and to the development of my hypotheses and objectives.

Chapter 5 discusses and analyzes various support networks women organize and use to highlight some of the ways they utilize the civil sector and personal networks in order to find support. Whether the support is formal or informal, secular or religious in nature, I demonstrate the importance of different support networks in helping women navigate the hyper-patriarchal structure in which they live. Further, I show how women are redefining and building Bosnia's society from the margins through these support networks. Women's action is well exemplified in their construction of small, faith-based networks and formal organizations that address their need and wants. This chapter looks at different ways in which these women are transforming Bosnia's society one day at a time, starting with themselves.

In Chapter 6, I focus on religious belief and faith as it is experienced and seen by both conventional and pious Muslim women. Specifically, I examine the religious aspects of Muslim identity. One of my informants said to me once, "to be a Muslim in Bosnia is no longer a consequence of simply being born into Islam". For a growing number of women being Muslim now incorporates a set of beliefs and practices that is defined by the examination and application of religious duty and doctrine, and divorced from what is commonly referred to as *tradicija*. Bosnian Muslims exist in a world where ethnicity and

religion have become signifiers of their identity, but also have become so entangled with their political and social identities that it warrants extensive exploration.

In Chapters 7 and 8, I focus on the way in which Islam in Bosnia is practiced by conventional and pious Muslim women. Generally, being a Muslim is not dependent on one's observance of rituals or a feeling of faith or belief. All Muslims are equal before God, and despite different levels of observance, one cannot identify another as a good or bad Muslim. Yet in these two chapters I make observations and distinctions between pious and conventional observance of the Islamic duties. In this chapter, the notion of agency, as it is exemplified in practice, is explored and numerous examples are offered. The primary questions and theoretical approaches are addressed and utilized, with a special emphasis on agency and empowerment in practice.

Finally, Chapter 9 makes use of the anthropology of religion through an ethnographic inquiry into the conversion process as experienced by pious women. In this chapter, I share some of the feelings and emotions of Muslim women, as they were expressed to me, which provide us with insight into what it is that shapes them into who they are. Stories of transformation, religious conversion, or lack thereof, provide a deeper insight into the lives of Muslim women of present-day Bosnia.

Finally, Chapter 10 is the summary of all my findings and conclusions. In this chapter I recap some of my main arguments and the important conclusions regarding differences and similarities between pious and conventional Muslim women's experiences. Moreover, I examine my own scholarly contributions, as well as different ways in which my own

research can be used and even improved. Lastly, I offer my suggestions for future research and improvement of this topic, as well as closely related questions of interest.

TABLE 1.1: APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MUSLIMS IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Country	Numbers	Share in General Population (estimate)	Muslim Community
Kosovo	1,800,000	90%	Muslim Majority
Albania Including Bektashis	2,300,000	70%	
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2,200,000	48%	Very Large Muslim Minority
Macedonia	700,000	33%	Significant Minority
Montenegro	110,000	18%	
Bulgaria	1,100,000	14%	
Serbia Sandžak Preševo Vojvodina	500,000	5%	Small Muslim Presence
Greece	130,000	1.5%	
Croatia	50,000	1.3%	
Romania	50,000	0.3%	

This table was adjusted to describe Muslim majority and minority in Southeastern Europe.

The numbers and categorizations are drawn from Kerem Oktem's paper (2010) on new Islamic movements in Southeastern Europe.

CHAPTER II: ANTHROPOLOGIST IN THE FIELD AND CRUCIAL SCHOLARSHIP

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss my position and background in relation to how this research was formulated and later conducted. In other words, I look at my positionality as a Bosnian Muslim woman, and the impact of my belonging to the group I study. Then, I outline the history of my fieldwork between the initial contact in July 2004 and my final visit in January 2010. Then, I discuss processes and events that made this project possible. Finally, I reflect on personal experiences, both positive and negative, and their impact on the development of my study.

My background as a Bosnian-born, U.S. educated conventional Muslim woman, without a doubt played a significant part in how I came to the questions I address in this dissertation. As Lila Abu-Lughod stresses in *Writing Against Culture*,

Feminists and halfie anthropologists¹ [I identify as a “halfie”] cannot easily avoid the issue of positionality. Standing on shifting ground makes it clear that every view is a view from somewhere and every act of speaking a speaking from somewhere. [Abu-Lughod 2006: 468]

As Abu-Lughod suggests, “we must constantly attend to the positionality of the anthropological self and its representations of others” (Abu-Lughod 2006: 469), and one aim of this chapter is to do precisely that. Therefore, understanding my position as a Bosnian, a Muslim, a woman, and a refugee who is deeply rooted and connected to both the United States and Bosnia helped me address problems associated with what a number

¹ Abu-Lughod uses the term halfie anthropologists to describe those individuals who were born in the United States but whose parents come two distinct cultural backgrounds. However, my own case is different in that I was born in Bosnia and lived there during the majority of my formative years. In this case, I am a halfie anthropologist not because I have parents from distinct cultural backgrounds, but because I find myself belonging in two worlds, and in which I only feel partial belonging.

of anthropologists have identified as partiality, or the bias of the observer. Abu-Lughod observed that the 'halfie anthropologists' position within two communities makes for an interesting discussion on the politics of representation. In this chapter, the reader will notice a number of instances of where my position, as a native or as a stranger, have either opened or closed doors to me. The politics of representation has directly contributed to my scholarly discourse and vice versa.

Without wanting to fall into the common anthropological experience of simply consuming and producing knowledge about "others" (Forte 2011), I wanted to write a dissertation about *others* to whom I felt in some way that I also belonged. By writing about a group to which I was strongly tied, I felt that perhaps I could tell a different story, one that was more honest, or even, more complete. It took a long time after I arrived *in the field* to realize that my idea of belonging was a romantic notion, one skewed by living in diaspora. My own diaspora membership has been a state of being that retains some ties, however limited and misconstrued, to the country of my origin. In reality, my belonging to the women I describe here, is only a part-time membership, one defined by diasporic and transnational experiences. Thus, this dissertation is as much about me, and who I am, as it is about conventional and pious Muslim women of Bosnia. I focus on *moja generacija* (my generation, born between 1975 and 1990) because it is the generation that grew up in the time of peace, and came of age in the time of war. Without a doubt we came of age too soon. The story of *moja generacija* here exemplifies the internal struggle I myself have felt since the breakout of war in spring of 1992. As my world became tainted by blood, smoke and darkness, my own identity began to shape. To a degree this dissertation was about

making sense of what it's like to be caught between two worlds, the one you know (the secular world) and the one you long for (the religious one). There is comfort in faith, and those of us that lived through the war, found it an attractive alternative to emptiness and darkness left by no faith. My own ethno-religious identity is in flux as much as it is for my informants. However, I am grateful for my informants' willingness to share their own narratives and struggles. At the end of the day, this dissertation is a moment in time, a piece of a narrative that makes up not only one life, but a piece that helps define an experience of a generation.

THE RESEARCHERS' POSITION

I left Bosnia as a refugee when I was a teenager. My family and I are from northern Bosnia, a region that now belonging to the Serbian Republic and a place to which I have made very few trips since entering into exile. Exposed to the heavy artillery of Serb forces, we left our home in the summer of 1992, and went to eastern Croatia, where we lived for over two years. With no means of survival and no indication of when the war would end, my parents decided to relocate to United States to start a new life in late 1995. My family arrived in the United States on Halloween in 1995, making it a rather interesting first day for us. Having left the horrors of war behind, not to mention our home and extended family, we settled into life in the American Midwest, just like thousands of other Bosnian exiles and refugees. In the months prior to the end of the war in December 1995, the United States opened its doors to Bosnian refugees, accepting thousands of families. Today the number of Bosnians in the United States has reached close to half a million, with the number steadily increasing as second and even third generation Bosnian-Americans are born. St. Louis, Missouri, in

particular, is home the largest enclave of dislocated Bosnians, with over 75,000 residing in this heartland city.

I was fortunate to have arrived at a young enough age to complete my high school and college education in the United States. During those years, I did not struggle with who I was and what I wanted to be. Rather, I simply focused on completing my education. However, the events of September 11, 2001 made me begin to question my identity. With the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic sentiments in the United States, I remembered what persecution involved and how it felt. Once again, being Muslim was not in my interest, and the injustice of being persecuted for a religion that few of us practiced or really knew much about became all too real for the second time in my life. In the end, I embarked on a dissertation project that was originally more of a personal quest than anything else.

As a first year graduate student at the University of New Mexico, I was waiting outside a professor's office during the fall semester of 2004, when another student arrived and stood next to me, also waiting to meet with the professor. Small talk turned into a discussion of our interest in anthropology and the study of human behavior. I quickly found that this woman's interest in anthropology, though undoubtedly valid, was saturated with what I regarded as ignorance of Muslims. She told me a story about her boss, who was "some sort of Arab" and described his wife as being clearly oppressed, subjugated, and veiled (i.e., wearing the hijab). She did not like it that her supervisor was a Muslim, nor that Muslims were allowed to "practice" their "barbaric traditions," here in United States. I stood there speechless while she spoke of the injustices in the Muslim world, the

oppression of Muslim women, and the inhumanity of the way in which Muslim women are treated.

As the gravity of her words settled in my mind, for the first time in my life I felt an overwhelming sense of duty to address common misunderstandings and misapprehensions about Muslims. After all, I was a Muslim myself, though not a particularly religious one. I first told the woman that not all Muslims were Arabs. I then inquired as to whether she had ever spoken to this apparently subjugated woman with whom she worked or were her assumptions based on the images and reports she saw in the media. In that moment, I realized that I was no longer just a girl from Bosnia; I was now an American citizen, and I felt a duty to protect that part of my identity that for a long time was suppressed for fear of discrimination. While I heard many comments over my years in the U.S. about Muslim terrorists, barbaric Muslim men who rape little girls, misinformation about teachings of Islam, I no longer felt like keeping my mouth shut. I certainly never looked or spoke the part of a commonly stereotyped Muslim, which undoubtedly encouraged some people to express their bigotry to my face.

I grew up in a household where religious practice included plastic Christmas trees and Easter egg hunts with the Serb Orthodox side of my family. Even though the other side of the family was Muslim, we never engaged in Islamic practices aside from marking the end of *Ramazan* (Ramadan) and *Kurban Bajram* (Eid Al-Adha²). Yet, my family suffered and lost everything because they were defined by others as Muslims. While I stood next to this woman explaining that Islam was not a monolithic or an oppressive religion, I decided to do

² Also known as festival of sacrifice, celebrations start after the end of Hajj pilgrimage or seventy days after the end of Ramazan.

something about the mis-representation of Muslims. I realized that I needed to break down the stereotypes of Muslims in general and find out specifically what was, and continues to be, so threatening about Bosnian Muslims that, in the former Yugoslavia, justified murdering over 100,000 of them. I also wanted to learn about the more generalized anti-Islamic prejudices and discrimination throughout Europe and the United States.

My desire to right a wrong turned into a mission and my forthcoming PhD project became an integral part in how I could combat the growing ignorance and injustice towards Muslims in the past decade. Unsurprisingly, my anthropological plans involved a personal quest to find out what it was about my ethnic group, Bosnian Muslims that warranted their exile by the millions and their murder by the tens of thousands? The answer was not easy to find, not because there was not enough literature to tell us about what happened in Bosnia during the war. Rather, it was because there was little ethnographic literature about Bosnian Muslims in general. The people I belonged to, at least within scholarly and academic circles, were a people with a scanty ethnographic record and history

Overlooked by the communist Yugoslav regime, except when it needed to show ethnic multivocality or advance political agenda, particularly during the formation of the non-aligned movement, Muslims of Yugoslavia, and particularly those from Bosnia, were rarely overtly acknowledged. However, this does not mean that Muslims were not present in Yugoslav leadership. Simply referred to as Bosnians or Muslims they nevertheless were subjects of the Yugoslav state and as such needed to abide by the rules and regulations, and nationality identifications as were prescribed by Belgrade. Yet, they became the main subject of discussion and worldwide pity when it was already too late; that is to say, when

the bombs of Yugoslav National Army (headed by Serb and Serbian³ leadership) had already began the destruction of all that was Muslim, including the people themselves.

Undoubtedly, ethnically motivated atrocities and violent crimes were committed on all three sides of the conflict (Bosniak, Serb and Croat), but the undeniable fact remains that the Muslims of Bosnia, were “cleansed” from many parts of the former Bosnia (including my hometown) (Hunt 2004; Malcolm 1996; McMahon and Western 2009; Sells 1998; Sonyel 1994). In many places, it was not enough to kill or force Muslims into exile, Serb and Croat forces, and civilians also burned Muslim-owned homes, tore down mosques (as in the case of my hometown) and other holy sites, and sowed crops and built soccer fields on once Muslim graveyards (Hunt 2004; Mertus and Tešanović 1997; Sells 1998; Sonyel 1994).

ORIGINS OF RESEARCH PROJECT

Ethnographic fieldwork can be easily flawed, especially when it comes to project development and execution. Therefore, how we anthropologists conceptualize our research project, and how our project unfolds, often differ. My own project development became a casualty of circumstances. At the start of my graduate studies, my original hypothesis was that NGOs are helping Bosnia’s women rebuild and reconstitute broken kinship and broader social relationships disrupted by the war. The proposed research focused on how women dealt with everyday challenges, including the type and nature of their employment, their workplace conditions, their religiosity, as well as their social and political position in the wake of the war. In addition, I aimed to address the overall

³ I make a distinction between Serb and Serbian leadership. Serb leadership refers to Serbs from Bosnia, while Serbian refers to Serbs from Serbia. Their experiences are slightly different, a point upon which I further elaborate in Chapter 4.

importance of NGOs, specifically those focused on women's issues and gender relations, to the building of and activities performed by the civil society. However, despite my interests, my attempts to investigate the benefits women gain from the civil society became complicated by my growing interest in religious identity. While I do focus on women's participation in the formal institutional sector, the conclusions I draw about their involvement there are not part of the larger discussion about post-socialist emerging civil society and post-war development. This early project focused on the following questions: How have the women of Bosnia been influenced and transformed by post-war reformations of political, economic, and religious institutions? How do NGOs influence women's understanding of their new status and citizenship in Bosnia? Specifically, what roles do Islamic NGOs play in defining women's familial, social, and ethnic identity?

To answer those questions, I traveled to Bosnia on three separate occasions between 2004 and 2006 to conduct preliminary dissertation research and make local contacts. I stayed for about a month in 2004, during which time I got my bearings of the country and the situation. During this time I contacted several women-centered organizations around the city of Sarajevo. I chose Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as the primary point of my fieldwork because of the high concentration of non-governmental and religious organizations. In addition, Sarajevo was a place where I felt I could get the most answers to the questions I planned to ask because the city housed the highest concentration of different schools of Islam and it was where the leadership of Islamic community was based. In retrospect, I also chose Sarajevo because I felt safe there.

I had a number of family members in Sarajevo that I believed I could rely on if difficulties occurred. Yet, I am not a Sarajevan and had little experience of the city prior to 2004.

In the summer of 2006, I returned to Sarajevo for another brief stint to establish face-to-face contact with Kewser, one of the educational/support organizations that promoted the image and lifestyle of Muslim women. Kewser's mission and goal was religious in nature. Accordingly, I thought this particular setting would provide a vivid contrast to the other two secular organizations I planned to observe. After several meetings with the director and various members, I was given permission to conduct research the following year, when I planned to return to set up residence and begin the actual fieldwork.

Upon returning in 2007 to begin long-term work, I was shocked to find that I no longer had the access to Kewser I had been promised a year earlier. I met again with a few members and the director, only to find myself being interrogated about the nature of my project. They asked why I wanted to do this project and my answers were met with critical commentary about western perceptions of Islam, the ambiguity of any project funded by the American government (I had an IREX - Individual Advanced Research Grant), and the potential problems that the results of my research might cause. The most pressing difficulty seemed to be that I came from an American research institution and was ostensibly funded by the American government. These objections were, I think, symptomatic of the larger fear and uncertainty Muslims have about the United States.

In effect, the perceptions of the women from Kewser were ironically just those I wanted to investigate and account for. While I was trying to identify ways in which one

could be a Muslim, I was simultaneously trying to break down negative perceptions of Muslims. It became obvious that my project would not simply be about what it meant to be a Muslim. Official and general apprehension about my research seemed to me to be a result of the ever-thickening membrane dividing the Muslim East and Christian West. I found out later on that Kewser's funding comes largely from Iran and their mission is closely aligned with a number of Shi'ia values and traditions. Knowing this, I am now much more understanding of their apprehension about my research and me.

As noted above, my positionality worked against me while I was attempting to establish a rapport with two different Muslim women's organizations. Having been unwelcomed by Kewser, and ignored at Žene Ženama (another organization where I planned to conduct my research), I began to think about issues associated with my positionality. Being dis-invited to conduct research in communities to which I thought I *belonged*, but clearly did not, illustrates the problems associated with belonging to two worlds, but not wholly fitting into either (Abu-Lughod 2006). Once I was turned away from Kewser, I had to rethink my entire project, which, at the time, seemed to be doomed. Yet, as the majority of stories from the field recount, only rarely does anyone's actual fieldwork follow their original proposal.

With renewed determination, I adjusted my research goals and began seeking out other organizations that were willing to work with me. I began meeting with several different formal organizations and found a home at three new organizations: Nahla, Medica Zenica, and CURE. Each organization differed from the others, thus providing the added benefit of making my research more desirable since my original research goal was to obtain

a broad and diverse sample of the kind of services that different women-centered NGOs were providing for women in Sarajevo. These three organizations shared one commonality; they all relied on foreign funding. Two of the three organizations have since become (involuntarily) self-sustaining and receive little, if any, foreign moneys.

In the process of determining new research goals and establishing a positive partnership with these organizations, I decided to examine and identify the successes and failures of foreign-funded NGOs, especially as they contrasted with locally founded grass-roots organizations such as Nahla and CURE. I focused on the efforts initiated by these organizations to alleviate economic troubles, as well as the impact they had in general in helping women become more effective within political and economic arenas of post-war Bosnia. While I kept my focus on emergent ethno-religious identities among Muslim women as they participated in Nahla, Medica Zenica, and CURE, I also planned to interview women about the role they play within their community and family.

I thought that focusing on women-centered NGOs would elucidate the ways in which religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status and geographic background intersected to reveal the principal social factors characterizing the post-war experiences of Muslim women. However, I observed that there was a need to look at Muslim identity from the perspective of religious revitalization and women's agency. Thus, I decided to focus on women's institutional and non-institutional networks building and organizing and the formation of their religious identity. Therefore, my newly articulated project is intended to provide a general understanding of Muslim women, especially those Bosnian Muslim women who are constructing a religious identity outside the parameters of Bosnian Islamic

tradition, and belong to what my conventional informants often refer to as new Muslims [*novi Muslimani*].

While my reformulated research project was to focus on the three named organizations, I dropped CURE soon thereafter because it did not fit as well as I had hoped. Cure was a service and public outreach organization that did not have members with whom I could build rapport and conduct one-on-one interviews. Their work was primarily out in the community, and while they would reach out to a large number of women, their contact with them was limited beyond the first presentation/workshop. Eventually I decided to find people to interview through my own networks of ex-patriots, friends and family as a way of getting a larger sample of women. This technique yielded a number of contacts whose stories helped develop the discussion of conventional Muslim women.

The two remaining research sites were Nahla Women's Educational Organization in Sarajevo, and Medica Zenica Women's Rehabilitation Center in the city of Zenica. In addition, as the research project began to focus more and more on the religious lives of Muslim women, I began attending and visiting numerous mosques and other religious centers. As a result, I added a number of institutionally unaffiliated women to the protocol. While at the organizations, I began asking questions about what it means to be a Muslim. The primary questions I focused on included: What does it mean to be a believer? What is the importance of Islam in one's life? What Islamic practices do women observe? What do they know about Islamic duties and obligations? What does the term Bosniak mean to them and what is their connection to it? What do they know of Islamic texts and jurisprudence? And finally, I asked each woman to explain her motivation for joining a

formal organization and the role that the organizations played in her daily lives? I was particularly interested in what appeared to me to be the changing nature of religious belief and practice among Bosniak women and therefore focused on women who appeared to be living their lives as pious Muslims.

Since the organizations were located in different cities, they provided my research an important comparative perspective. The women I interviewed had diverse personal biographies, including varied educational access, economic conditions, and geographic settings. During my period of intensive fieldwork between June 2007 and August 2008, I spent the majority of my time within the walls of Nahla and Medica Zenica, familiarizing myself their operations, work, and the kinds of services they provided women in their respective cities.

STUDIES OF MUSLIM WOMEN AND ISLAMIC FEMINIST THOUGHT

In this dissertation I utilize three different theoretical approaches, including Islamic feminist thought, literature on post-socialist and post-war development (with particular attention to NGOs) and finally, religious revitalizations or reislamization with special focus on the anthropology of conversion. With the increased Islamic revivalist movement throughout the world, an examination of the roles that Islam plays in peoples' lives, and even more so in the lives of women is appropriate (Karam 1998: 9; Karčić 2010a: 151; Karčić 2010b: 523). A number of Islamic scholars have observed that historically, Western scholars have characterized Muslim women as passive and subjugated by men (Afshar 1984; Mahmood 2004; Mernissi 1975; Nageeb 2004; Neuburger 2004; Pollitt 2009; Saktanber 2002; Sharify-

Funk 2008; Wadud 2006; Weber 2009). Abu-Rabia argues that Western aversion to Muslim women:

...goes back to colonial times when Western imperialists saw the veil as a symbol of inferiority, and believed their mission was to civilize the primitive and oppressed people of the colonies from South Asia to North America. [Abu-Rabia 2006: 92]

Roksana Bahramitash claims that the western antipathy for Muslim women is an outcome of Feminist Orientalism defined by three primary characteristics, including:

First, it assumes a binary opposition between the West and the Orient: The Occident is progressive and the best place for women, while the Muslim Orient is backward, uncivilized, and the worst place for women. The second characteristic of feminist Orientalism is that it regards Oriental women only as victims and not as agents of social transformation; thus it is blind to the ways in which women in the East resist and empower themselves. Therefore, Muslim women need saviors, i.e., their Western sisters, as in the case of Afghan women, who, always being covered, are seen as unable to become agents of their own liberation. The third aspect of feminist Orientalism assumes that all societies in the Orient are the same and all Muslim women there live under the same conditions. [Bahramitash 2005: 222]

Scholarship on Muslim women is characterized by politics of representation. According to Saba Mahmood (2001) western scholars and non-scholars have used political agendas not only to promote negative images of Muslim women, but as a way of justifying western superiority. In particular, western feminist tradition has applied western paradigms to Muslim women's experiences. According to Mahmood,

If there is one thing that the feminist tradition has made clear, it is that questions of politics must be pursued at the level of the architecture of the self, the processes (social and technical) through which its constituent elements (instincts, desires, emotions, memory) are identified and given coherence. My argument simply is that in order for us to be able to judge, in a morally and politically informed way, even those practices we consider objectionable, it is important to take into consideration the desires, motivations, commitments, and aspirations of the people to whom these

practices are important. Thus, in order to explore the kinds of injury specific to women located in particular historical and cultural situations, it is not enough simply to point, for example, that a tradition of female piety or modesty serves to give legitimacy to women's subordination. Rather it is only by exploring these traditions in relation to the practical engagements and forms of life in which they are embedded that we can come to understand the significance of that subordination to the women who embody it. [Mahmood 2001: 224-225]

The world Muslim population is expected to grow at twice the rate of non-Muslim population including a sizeable increase in Europe and United States over the next two decades (Lugo, et al. 2009). As women make up over half of the Muslim population, their role is likely to change, and their participation will most likely increase. In particular, Muslim women who have experienced social and cultural changes, most notably those associated with feminism, and who are educated and enjoy relatively high socio-economic background, will begin to play an important role in global Islamic experience. Therefore in order to understand what it means to be a Muslim woman in present-day Bosnia, I must address the question of why Islam (as a lifestyle) appeals at least to some women across the socio-economic and educational spectrum, while other sociologically similar Muslim women remain committed to preservation of secular tradition? The primary thread that runs through my dissertation is that of agency vs. passivity. In the context of my research I use Azam Torab's definition of agency which "implies that individuals are not predetermined by structure but have the capacity to act effectively on their lives" (Torab 1996: 23). Passivity on the other hand is understood as the opposite of that and refers to those individuals who do not have the capacity to affect their own lives in the direction that is most beneficial to them. My underlying interest in having a discussion of agency and passivity is in helping understand why a religion that appears, and to a degree is, authoritarian and patriarchal

appeals to women. In order to really understand how Muslim women enact agency and passivity I focus on belief and practice and how each of these concepts plays out in these women's lives. Moreover, looking at belief and practice helps me understand how agency and passivity can be attained or lost. The discussion of agency is about how Muslim women are carving out a space for themselves, the extent of the autonomy they have over their own lives, and the extent to which these experiences allow or take away their agency.

Finally, I use three theoretical approaches to analyze and examine agency and passivity, including: Islamic feminist scholarship, studies of NGOs and small faith-based groups, and finally, reislamization including a specific focus on anthropology of conversion. My primary aim in using these scholarly works is to show that despite the negative characterizations of Islam, its strict gender roles and seeming anti-women stance, Islam *can* be empowering to women. In doing this I demonstrate some of the reasons for the success of reislamization among my informants.

ISLAMIC FEMINIST THOUGHT

The inquiry into the position of Muslim women in their respective societies has proliferated since the 1970s. A number of Islamic feminists have contributed to the exploration of Muslim women's lives and the ways in which they have transformed and challenged their seemingly oppressive positions (Afshar 1984; Badran 1995; El-Solh and Mabro 1994; Karam 1998; Mernissi 1975). The need for a different image of a Muslim woman is necessary because,

...they offer a powerful challenge to stereotypical images of Muslim women as either "passive" or "oppressed," as well as highlighting individuality and diversity among Muslim women. As role models who clearly demonstrate that they have been empowered by their faith rather than constrained by it,

they challenge media and secularist discourses that assume that Muslim women's liberation will arise from assimilation into "western" and (European) Enlightenment values. [Gilliat-Ray 2010: 218]

Islamic feminists most often examine Muslim women's experiences in one of three ways: a) through examination of the politics of piety; b) textual knowledge and authority, and c) finally, by exploring the ways in which women inhabit or resist norms (in this case those of modesty and veiling). Most importantly, these scholars look at different ways in which Muslim women have or do not have autonomy and control over their decisions, and particularly when those decisions lead them into a life of piety (meaning adoption of norms and practices that are seen as extremely patriarchal and oppressive to women). The cases I use to analyze Muslim women's positions in Bosnia are informed by the experiences of women throughout the world from Middle East to Europe.

POLITICS OF PIETY

The relationship between piety and women's subordination is one of the most emotionally charged and important arguments within Islamic feminist scholarship. Western scholars assume that within Islamic religious tradition piety and subordination are irrevocably dependent upon each other. Furthermore, western scholars have a difficult time understanding how piety can help women attain agency. This is in part because agency in western feminist tradition implies resistance, and piety necessitates compliance. In this way it is not surprising that piety is seen as an antithesis to women's progress and self-determination. However, scholars of Muslim women have found that piety can indeed serve as a way of challenging male domination and their subordinate status. The politics of piety have led women throughout the Middle East to focus on meticulous and detailed

observance of Islamic duty and obligations as a way of achieving Allah's approval (Abramson 2004; Franks 2005; Kuehnast 2004; Mahmood 2005). Saba Mahmood presents the most important argument for the utilization of piety as an essential part of the reform movement in Egypt, thereby showing that the activities of individuals have a significant impact on the workings of the state (Mahmood 2005). Much like Mahmood, other scholars observe that faith can serve as a way for women to empower themselves (Pang 1997; Torab 1996).

Mahmood observes that:

The pious subjects of the women's mosque movement occupy an uncomfortable place in feminist scholarship: they pursue practices and ideals embedded within a tradition that has historically accorded women a subordinate status, and seek to cultivate virtues that are associated with feminine passivity and submissiveness (e.g., shyness, modesty, perseverance, and humility-some of which I discuss below). In other words, the very idioms that women use to assert their presence in previously male-defined spheres are also those that secure their subordination. [Mahmood 2001: 204]

A number of scholars have observed that modesty and piety prescribed by Islam provide an alternative and a safe space (Bowen 2010; Cinar 2008; Day 2008; Mahmood 2005). In Iran Azam Torab observes that,

Pious women such as Mrs. Omid commit themselves to religious practice in single-sex gatherings as a way of securing holy blessing and gaining relative control over their lives. They construct ideas of faith and intention in ways that sustain and dignify their actions, and also allow a sense of well-being and agency. Through their ritual discussions and performances the women can alter themselves and their circumstances as well as those of others, in a positive way in this world and the next. [Torab 1996: 247]

Islamic feminist theory discussed here demonstrates that Islam has come to serve several roles in women's lives. Pious Muslim women use Islam (and uphold patriarchal values) against hyper-sexualization of their society and in that way gain agency. In my study, I examined my interviews to see if and how Bosnian women engaged in similar practices and

if and how their beliefs also challenged women's position within Islam and helped them to assert agency in a male dominated society. Thus, I provide another example of a similar phenomenon, but within a different socio-cultural, economic, and historical environment than that of the Middle East and Europe.

In 2002 in Turkey, Ayse Saktanber observed an increase in piety among once secular Muslim women. In addition to wanting to live their lives as conscious or pious Muslims, women she studied moved into devout Islamic neighborhoods where they would be surrounded by men and women with similar convictions and lifestyle. During the 1990s, Azza Karam (in Egypt) and Fatima Mernissi (in Morocco) observed an increase in Islamic feminism focused on using Qur'an and Islamic lifestyle as a way to combat women's subordinate position. Throughout Middle East and other majority Muslim countries women pursuing piety are also understood to be living their lives as "conscious Muslims". Being a conscious Muslim (or pious Muslim) refers to strict observance of Islamic duties and obligations (Karam 1998; Mernissi 1975; Mernissi 1991; Saktanber 2002). In Saktanber's case, living a life as a pious Muslim was also used as a way of combating subjugation, exclusion and gender inequality women experienced.

Being a pious Muslim refers to those women for whom having been born into a Muslim family or acceptance and following the five pillars of Islam is simply not enough. Saktanber observes that, "To be a conscious Muslim, one's entire life should be led in accordance with Islamic precepts" (Saktanber 2002: 164). Furthermore, being a pious Muslim means "taking the Prophet's thoughts and deeds as an example, setting the boundaries of correct actions in a modern secularized world becomes the most appropriate

way to create morally justifiable ways of living” (Saktanber 2002:165). This type of lifestyle and imagining what earlier ways of practicing might include has been observed in other throughout Muslim-majority and large Muslim minority countries including Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Uzbekistan, Kyrgistan, Bulgaria, and more recently Bosnia. Without a doubt, and as my analysis demonstrates, pursuit of piety challenges Bosnia’s traditional (communist period) interpretations of Islam particularly when it comes to gender roles, male-female relations, and women’s position in the society⁴.

RELIGIOUS TEXTUAL AUTHORITY

Women have reinterpreted the Qur’an to reconcile secular traditions with Islamic expectations regarding women’s duty (i.e., marriage and childrearing) as well as master religious texts in order to achieve greater knowledge of what is expected of them as women and the rights they are guaranteed by Islam (Franks 2005; Mernissi 1987; Ahmed 1992; Wadud 1999; Wadud 2006). Islamic feminists argue that the Qur’an itself offers liberation to women, claiming that its emancipatory message has been distorted by male domination of the interpretative process. However, a female centered interpretation of Islam has been part of Muslim women’s experiences from the beginning (Franks 2005; Wadud 1999; Wadud 2006). Scholars suggest that the text itself was one of the central means for the transformation of women’s position in the Islamic world and that Muslim women “also use Islamic sources, like the Qur’an and the Sunna (the Prophet's actions and sayings), but their aim is to show that the discourse of equality between men and women is valid, within

⁴ By traditional interpretations of Islam, I refer to the ways in which Islam was practiced from 1948 to 1995 in Bosnia. In other words, it was mostly private, few people professed faith or attended Mosques; women did not veil or refrain from “revealing” clothing; many Muslims ate pork and drank alcohol, few fasted during the entire month of Ramadan, and few made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Islam” (Karam 1998: 11). Another important aspect of women’s re-interpretation of the holy texts has led to a conclusion that the mastery of Islamic text and Islamic lifestyle can serve as a source of agency and empowerment (Bowen 2007; Bowen 2010; Cinar 2008; Mahmood 2005). Fadwa Allabadi finds that Palestinian Muslim women use the Qur’an to,

find a precedent for a strong Muslim woman in the Qur'an and teachings of Muhammad, and reject current conservative attitudes about women as false notions concocted by men attempting to manipulate history and the teachings of Islam. [Allabadi 2008: 183]

Several ethnographic studies in formerly communist areas with significant Muslim populations specifically demonstrate that women are able to empower themselves through a better understanding of Islam via the attainment of religious education (Khalid 2007; Pang 1997). In China, Pang found that Islamic revivalism demystified Islamic knowledge as an inherently male privilege. This has allowed women empowerment within other areas of their public lives, including economics, stating:

Socially confident among friends and assertive in their familial contexts as wives, daughters, and sisters, Utsat women now derive significant prestige from their roles as important economic contributors to their families. An emphasis on being more strict Muslims did not change that. I argue that Utsat women have been empowered by this Islamic fundamentalist trend. In a society where women previously had no serious formal Islamic education, three Utsat women, encouraged by their families, pursued formal Islamic education on the mainland in 1988 and graduated as certified religious teachers in 1992. This enabled Utsat women to understand Qur’anic teachings through female religious instruction and interpretations--an important milestone indeed. Increased religious knowledge did not lead to any level of fanaticism in Utsat society. The Utsat women adopt a very pragmatic approach--they recognize that Utsat women need to continue their economic activities. [Pang 1997: 49-50]

Inquiries into women’s mastery of religious texts and holy books as ways of challenging women’s position have been numerous (Ahmed 1992; Mernissi 1987; Pang 1997; Torab

1996; Wadud 1999; Wadud 2006) and my own research contribute to this discussion. These are two important examples of the way in which direct engagement with Qur'anic scriptures has encouraged individual interpretations of the holy text by women. This has resonance with the lived experiences of the women interviewed for this research.

MUSLIM WOMEN INHABITING THE NORMS

Finally, Islamic scholars have debated over whether or not the pursuit of piety (and particularly wearing the hijab and other head and body covers) is always a political act (as in the case of re-veiling movements in Europe, Egypt, and Turkey) and if at all it can be a matter of choice. As might be expected, discussion of choice and autonomy is a hotly debated topic in Islamic scholarship. For Mahmood choice and freedom must be seen outside the western feminist tradition and incorporate de-centering of power to incorporate respect for religious practices (Mahmood 2005). The debate over whether or not this is a matter of religious freedom or politics is one of the primary points of discussion (Abramson 2004; Franks 2005; Mahmood 2005; Pang 1997; Saktanber 2002). Closely tied to discussions of freedom is the notion of agency. Several Islamic scholars argue and demonstrate that piety and veiling can be seen as examples of agency. In an ethnographic study of how women use piety as a way to empower themselves in Iran, Torab notes that piety is closely dependent on faith and that: "to exist, she must have faith. It gives certainty to her thoughts and actions and is the foundation of her agency (Torab 1996:23). Torab also notes that,

faith can constitute forms of resistance by interpreting and challenging established versions of gender within certain structural constraints. 'Subversion' may be too strong a word, and it is never used by the women concerned. Rather than contest the dominant discourses, the women

appropriate and transcend them through their particular constructions of piety. Agency means autonomy of action, responsibility and self-definition, and includes the capacity to reinterpret received gender models contextually. By resistance, I do not necessarily mean overt resistance or organized protest. Like Okely (1991) and Scott (1985), I am concerned primarily with specific incidents or communications, which may be momentarily fragile and often not even conscious. [Torab 1996: 249]

Sherine Hafez (2011) observes that Mahmood calls for what can be termed “situational and historically specific agency”. Mahmood argues that veiling (and pious lifestyle) become a ‘selving’ technique through which women cultivate the sense of the self. She challenges the western concept of choice and autonomy, and argues that agency does not have to imply resistance, but that can be seen in the multiple ways in which individual’s inhabit norms (Mahmood 2005: 15). Mahmood states that,

if the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific (both in terms of what constitutes “change” and the means by which it is effected), then the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectivity. Viewed in this way, what may appear to be a case of deplorable passivity and docility from a progressivist point of view, may actually be a form of agency—but one that can be understood only from within the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment. In this sense, agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that resist norms but also in the multiple ways in which one inhabits norms. [Mahmood 2005: 15]

This means that agency can be dependent upon submission to religious practices (which although in part can be seen as patriarchal and subordinating to women), which when repeated can discipline their bodies and allow for situational and historically specific agency (Mahmood 2005). Furthermore, Mahmood makes a strong argument that adopting patriarchal values and position can be a form of resistance in itself, meaning that upholding Islamic patriarchal values and gender roles can be an example of agency. This particular

argument is especially important in terms of understanding why Islam has become attractive to so many of my informants and why so many women wore the veil. Mahmood argues that,

...the veil is a necessary component of the virtue of modesty because the veil both expresses "true modesty" and is the means through which modesty is acquired. They draw, therefore, an ineluctable relationship between the norm (modesty) and the bodily form it takes (the veil) such that the veiled body becomes the necessary means through which the virtue of modesty is both created and expressed. [Mahmood 2005: 23]

A number of scholars argue that veiling, the pursuit of piety and Islamic revitalization among women is not only about religious expression, but are also statements about national belonging, identity and ethnicity (Abu-Lughod 1998; Abu-Rabia 2006; Afshar 2008; Mahmood 2005; Mernissi 1991). This is particularly true among those Muslim women living outside majority-Muslim societies. In Uzbekistan Abramson observes that Muslim women's piety is a political act and states that,

veiling transnationally can be interpreted as a statement of solidarity with Muslims around the world on issues of common concern. But it also derives its power by symbolizing a rupture with Soviet Uzbek past in ways the Uzbek style of veiling cannot. [Abramson 2004: 72]

Similarly, John Bowen's work in France demonstrates that Muslim women pursue piety, and wear the hijab as a political statement against their second-class citizenry and treatment.

Bowen argues:

Wearing a headscarf in France today involves negotiations, anticipations, and weighing of benefits and costs. It is not simply an "obligation" or a "choice," but a subtle dance among convictions and constraints. [Bowen 2007: 81]

Even those women living in majority-Muslim countries, but with secular governments, face a similar set of problems. Aref Abu-Rabia's research in Egypt suggests that women adopt Islamic lifestyle as a statement against western principles and policies, writing,

Many young women find the veil a symbol, a positive identity and a source of esteem sanctioned by Islam. In recent years, many working class women in Cairo have embraced veiling, in a kind of voluntary women's movement to abandon Western clothes in favor of Arab-Islamic dress. This is an expression of a contradictory message of both protest and accommodation. [Abu-Rabia 2006: 93]

Pursuit of piety in Bosnia resembles the above listed examples. Women living their lives as pious Muslims in today's Bosnia attempt to define themselves as Muslims and as women. For young pious women facing unemployment, changing gender roles, and hyper-sexualization of their bodies choose Islam because it provides them with a sense of dignity and protection. Fatima Mernissi observed similar events twenty years earlier in Morocco concluding that the "the veil helps women to preserve a degree of modesty and sense of dignity" (Mernissi 1987). Nevertheless, whatever the argument, my pious informants feel empowered through Islam because it provides security and stability of family and home, which were overwhelmingly disrupted and transformed by war and the new capitalist market economy.

Undeniably, the politics of piety and its impact on the working of the state can also be discerned in Bosnia. Most notably, this was demonstrated by women's activism in NGOs, which although limited, has some impact on the working of the state (exemplified in how women vote [i.e. Muslim nationalist party such as SDA or inter-ethnic party such as SDP⁵]).

⁵ SDP-Social Democratic Party is often multi-ethnic and is fighting against further separation of ethnic groups politically, economically and socially.

This point is particularly important in my research because individual-level reislamization movement among women can then be seen as a political act and a result of reislamization projects including the focus on European Muslim identity promoted by the Islamic Community and SDA. However, the political activism of my pious informants has been different from those of the Bosnian Muslim nationalist parties and religious leadership. My pious informants made it a point that they did not support the ideas of Muslimness as promoted by the Islamic Community, and instead offered their own idea of what it means to be a Muslim. In this way, my pious informants can be seen as empowered political beings because they did not always support and promote the nationalist agendas, and in most cases chose not to vote for Muslim nationalist candidates and parties. Moreover, organizations like Nahla have become an important part of Bosnia's Muslim community and their power and recognition is continuously growing.

BUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY

Being a Muslim woman in post-war Bosnia has been drastically altered by the politics of post-socialist transformation, which has taken place in the region since 1989. Scholarship on the growing civil society in the former Soviet Union, and other socialist countries, has played a significant role in ascertaining the altered position of women. While there are women who actively participate at many levels of government and other institutions at present, their numbers are small and have actually declined since the end of the war (Cockburn, et al. 2001; Helms 2006; Helms 2007; Hunt 2004). Much like in the rest of Eastern Europe, during socialist period Bosnian women held largely subordinate positions (i.e., non-decision making positions) (Hunt 2004). Meaning, while women participated

equally in the workforce, their influence was limited and largely marginal. With the end of the socialist period and in other developing countries, participation in NGOs, religious or non-religious, has provided women with avenues of empowerment and agency denied by the new economic and political order (Haghighat-Sordellini 2010; Hasso 2009; Mahmood 2005). Katherine Verdery observes that the end of communism saw the influx of western (and capitalist) ideas of “proper” democracy and civil society (Verderey 2002). In Armenia, Armine Ishkanian observes democratization processes through the establishment of numerous NGOs and notes that the foreign (western) donors,

were motivated to fund NGOs, because they were perceived as panaceas for the political cynicism, apathy, disaffection, and overcentralization that marked post-Soviet societies. Of course, NGOs also counted as one of the fundamental signs of democratization. In the 1990s, the U.S. agencies and other industrial-world donors embraced the idea that the development of civil society was critical to democratization and a “successful transition.” [Ishkanian 2004: 264]

The feminization of NGOs was an outcome of the NGO boom in post-war Eastern Europe, and in the case of Bosnia, Elissa Helms observed that,

women have been marginalized from (or were never well represented in) most avenues of power such as politics, business, and crime. This has partially been the reason for their gravitation to the NGO sector, albeit mostly in “humanitarian,” nurturing social service roles previously covered by the socialist state...The stigma fell, however, on NGO activity perceived as *political*, a realm avoided by many women for its association with immorality and males. Indeed, many women activists felt there had been a masculinization of the top ranks of the NGO sector, especially after the end of the war and men’s coinciding military duties. [Helms 2003: 41]

In addition to democratization projects and the feminization of NGOs Eastern Europe has also seen an increase in religious organizations. For women, in particular, religious organizations play a significant role in providing an alternative and a solution to their

subjective position (Abramson 2004; Hafez 2003; Kucinskas 2010; Kuehnast 2004; Mahmood 2005). In addition to professional development, training and leadership opportunities, religious organizations have been pivotal in helping women explore their religious and ethnic identities.

Examination of literature on civil society building and NGOs is important in a post-war and post-socialist environment like Bosnia. With nearly half the labor force unemployed and 80 percent of industrial production halted since the breakout of the war in 1992, Bosnia has lost ground in terms of economic development, Gross Domestic Product, and gender parity in politics and other institutions.⁶ Another consequence of post-socialist changes has been an influx and growth of religious fervor among once secular populations. Post-soviet scholarship finds that religious revival was not necessarily a backlash to the anti-religious militant state policies of the past, but rather a rise of new religions focused on 'truth, morality and visions of the future' (Pelkmans 2009: 2).

Civil society was not completely absent in pre-war and communist Bosnia. Bill Sterland suggests that civic engagement has a history in former Yugoslavia. Civil society dates back to nineteenth century and included religious, educational, humanitarian and cultural organizations. However, Sterland argues that,

while these organisations reflected concerns for community solidarity and individual advancement through literary campaigns and education, in many cases they came to be associated with movements of national awakening,

⁶ The interethnic warfare in Bosnia and Herzegovina caused production to plummet by 80 percent from 1992 to 1995 and unemployment to soar. With an uneasy peace in place, economy recovered in 1996-99 but growth slowed in 2000-02. Though between 2003-08 GDP growth exceeded 5 percent per year, a decline in GDP of more than 3 percent in 2009 was inevitable reflecting local effects of the global economic crisis. Unemployment rate in 2010 was estimated at 43.1 percent with the public debt making up 39 percent of the total GDP. Country's industrial production growth rate has been only about 1.6 percent with GDP growth rate of only 0.7 percent (Agency, 2010).

and political aspirations for greater freedoms and self-expression, both under Ottoman rule in the 19th century, and later within the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. [Sterland 2006: 11]

In today's Bosnia, civic engagement and civil society primarily exists in forms of NGOs that serve the needs of the disenfranchised population. However, that was not the kind of civil society that existed in socialist Yugoslavia. Social scientists argue that the strength of civil sector is dependent on the amount of autonomy citizens have to form groups outside the public or state sector (Buchowski 1996; Eberly 2008; Sterland 2006). However, in the case of former Yugoslavia, citizen autonomy was highly regulated, which made civil society somewhat limited in its purpose and operation. The communist state took over the care of its people through socialized healthcare, education, and housing.

Following the devastation of World War II, a kind of civil society emerged out of post-war reconstruction concentrated on building the basic infrastructure and means of production (i.e., modernization). The generations that came of age during the late 1940s and 1950s, a time of voluntary actions that emphasized hard physical labor for the good of the state (known as work actions [*omladinska radna akcija*⁷]), came to understand the importance of individual citizenry in building of the nation-state. However, as Yugoslavia gained an economic and political foothold over its neighbors to the east, the ideas of building civil society as a responsibility of its citizens began to dissipate (Sterland 2006; Žeravčić and Biščević 2009). The lack of social responsibility was in part due to increased standard of living, which allowed most Yugoslavs access to basic as well as higher education and specialized training. After reaching high standards of education and solid standards of

⁷ Common after WWII, *radna akcija* was revived during 1970s as a tool to organize the youth and get them involved in politics and the Communist Party.

living, the second half of Yugoslavia's existence as a state (between 1966 and 1991) was characterized by a civil society that consisted of organizations focused on culture, music, folklore, and other non-political missions (Leban 2003; Sterland 2006; Žeravčić and Bišćević 2009). In the post-communist period, individual and community responsibility as it once existed has come to be replaced with the notions of 'community development' or 'community empowerment' which, according to (Stubbs 2006) "is often presented as having two faces, as a progressive strategy for deepening democracy from below, on the one hand, and a conservative strategy for placing greater responsibility on communities in the context of a reduction of welfare services, on the other". In any case, NGOs have transformed local civil society into an 'issue-specific interventions' (Stubbs 2006) and have replaced the communist period's 'participatory socialism' that was dominated by self-management communities of interest, work-based, professional and service-based organizations, which eventually gave rise to autonomous public sphere.

In the post-1989 period, many of the NGOs established in Eastern Europe have been described as a remedy for the "postsocialist state's crumbling social service infrastructure" (Phillips 2005: 493). Moreover, many civil society building projects have been based on the western model and as such did not fit in the post-socialist social and cultural order. The end of the socialist period and the war left Bosnia in a state without a unified government, ethnically cleansed enclaves, and the majority of its infrastructure destroyed or irreparably damaged. In this environment thousands of NGOs emerged (In 2008 there were 12,189 registered NGOs in Bosnia) following the peace agreement, many of which ceased to operate once their funding dried up or they fully achieved their missions. At the very least,

however, these projects created temporary jobs for a large number of Bosnia's unemployed. Western NGOs for the most part did not succeed in instituting lasting change in all areas of society (but were successful in some and whose outcome is presently debatable) or to integrating individuals into the decision making process at the state level. Unfortunately, the civil sector and its employees were left with a difficult task of,

doing advocacy and relief work while representatives of state institutions have remained relatively disinterested in the plight of these populations, withdrawing their efforts to focus on markets and globalization. [Phillips 2005: 494]

Furthermore, the civil sector has been excluded from political decision-making processes in post-war Bosnia. Findings indicate that: "the ability of the civil sector to participate in the creation of public policies is almost negligible" (Žeravčić and Bišćević 2009: 145). Finally, because civil society was structurally different and served different citizens' needs before the war, and since the majority of post-war civil society development came from outside the country and from foreign donors (and utilized foreign-models for civil society building), it is not surprising that civil society in the new Bosnia remained weak and its level of involvement unsustainable. Furthermore, Elissa Helms observed that in Bosnia NGOs are only somewhat centered on political advocacy and instead,

rests more on an NGO's approach toward multi-ethnicity rather than political engagement. Indeed, the present international aim is to support whomever seems mostly likely to contribute to the ability of the Bosnian state to function independently, regardless (for the time being?) of ideology. Given this policy, and conflicting donor- inspired or created descriptions of civil society as a force that does not oppose but shapes and guides the state, considerable confusion exists among NGO participants and donor representatives themselves about the role of NGOs and civil society. [Helms 2003: 40]

Despite these problems, the continuing presence and influence of the civil sector, and most notably some of the women-centered organizations is undeniable and must be analyzed.

The establishment of NGOs in Bosnia since the end of the war was a direct result of Western agendas aimed at promoting democratic and capitalist principles in former communist countries. Much like in other post-Soviet countries “donors were motivated to fund NGOs, because NGOs were perceived as panaceas for the political cynicism, apathy, disaffection, and over-centralization that marked post-Soviet societies” (Ishkanian 2004: 264) and has led to the development of a belief that the building of civil society would be impossible without the NGO sector (i.e., foreign influence). One negative outcome of the foreign NGOs missions was observed by Helms, who states:

The effects of international approaches on women’s activism presented a paradox for the women they targeted. NGO women were charged with accomplishing the highly political goals of reconciliation and return, while the images used to mobilize them effectively marginalized women from the circles of real political power. Even initiatives aimed at increasing women’s participation in formal politics, only somewhat coordinated with donor policies towards women’s NGOs, effectively constructed women as less significant political players. In the immediate, portrayals of women as (morally respectable) nurturers and outsiders to politics were helpful in getting women elected by voters who were fed up with corrupt “politics as usual.” They were unhelpful, however, in allowing women to be taken seriously as politicians. They encouraged women’s equal participation in politics, as in civil society, but with the message that they should do so in the guise of their home-sphere roles of mother and natural peacemaker, the one who cleans up messes. Men continued to hold the vast majority of decision-making positions and to shut women out of their own party processes, expecting women parliamentarians to stay silent and vote as the male leadership instructs them. “Real” politics, therefore (where the messes are made), remained the realm of men. [Helms 2003: 233]

Nevertheless, the importance and continued presence of NGOs in present-day Bosnia will continue as their financial resources are important part of Bosnia’s economy. In

2010 and 2011 8.5 million Euros (around 2.5% of total funds allocated to the country) were donated by the World Bank, the EU and the USAID (Balkan Civic Practices #8 2012). The Western donors, therefore, funded those agendas and missions they deemed appropriate, including environment, economic and private sector development, human rights and others. While every single agenda is important, there was often no attention paid to local agendas and donors often funded existing organizations with existing capacities instead of working with local smaller organizations (Balkan Civic Practices #8 2012). In neighboring Croatia (and most likely in Bosnia) Paul Stubbs found that NGOs were geographically uneven with the majority concentrated in urban areas, and that the NGO work was nearly always tailored to donors' interests (Stubbs 2006: 11). Unfortunately the number of operational and successful NGOs declined as Bosnia disappeared from international news after about 1998, and other neighboring countries emerged from conflicts, i.e., Kosovo. In 2009 USAID NGO Sustainability Index reported that overall NGO sustainability in Bosnia had improved but remained stagnant. Figure 2.1⁸ exemplifies this trend with 7 indicating a low or poor level of development and 1 indicating a very advanced NGO sector (USAID 2010). In 2009, USAID ranked Bosnia at 3.7 on the scale indicating that NGO sector's sustainability was minimally affected by practices/policies in this area. In addition, a 3.7 score indicates that the progress may have been hampered by a stagnant economy, a passive government, a disinterested media, or a community of good-willed but inexperienced activists.

In addition, USAID suggests that citizen involvement and philanthropy was still very low in 2010, however there is "a clear increase in informal support for diverse NGO

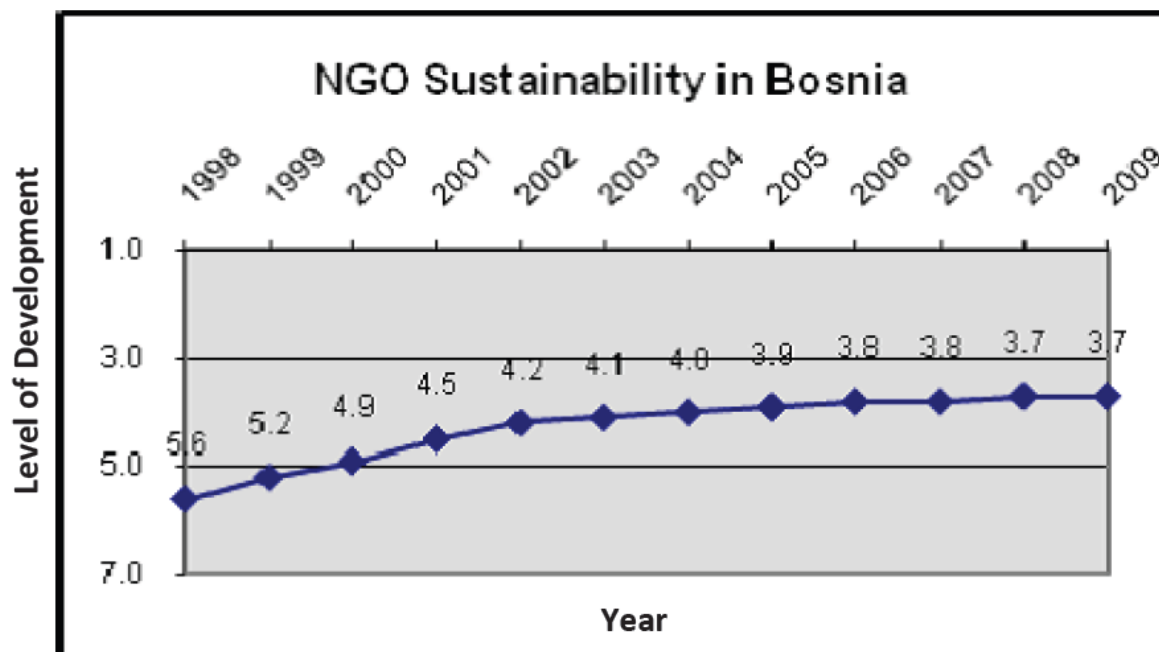
⁸ The table was adjusted from USAID NGO Sustainability Index report on Bosnia and Herzegovina (2009).

initiatives, which can be attributed to the greater use of Internet tools” (USAID 2010: 74).

Regrettably, pursuit of economic stability and funding created local divisions among NGO leaders, the duplication of agendas and lack of cooperation among different organizations.

In this environment only a few NGOs (including Nahla and Medica Zenica) have been able to sustain themselves amidst dwindling funding and increased competition.

FIGURE 2.1: NGO SUSTAINABILITY IN BOSNIA



RELIGIOUS REVITALIZATION AND CONVERSION

Islamic religious revitalization has been observed in all countries that are home to significant Muslim populations, both in majority Muslim countries with secular governments, as well as former communist countries (Abramson 2004; Bowen 2007; Bowen 2010; Dwyer 1999; Kuehnast 2004). Therefore, it is important to examine some of the venues in which this revitalization has taken place, i.e., faith-based organizations. As

Ghodsee observes in Bulgaria, “Islamic organization focused on social justice and promoted Islam as a way to restore community, morality, and prosperity to their otherwise chaotic societies” (Ghodsee 2010a: 537). These organizations are seen as having helped restore those aspects of society that were destroyed by the rise of a capitalist market-economy. Scholarship suggests that many revivalist movements were based on challenging the Western (and Soviet) political dominance (Abramson 2004; Kuehnast 2004) and often,

based itself on a residual defensive sentiment against the supremacy of the West, aiming at the restoration of a golden and 'purely Islamic' past which accommodated, however, the requirements of the contemporary world.
[Saktanber 2002: 32]

Exploring the failure of conversion and religious movements during the communist period, research suggests that there was little direct opposition to the state, and those that occurred (namely among the Croats) were subdued. With the political, social, and economic changes that occurred with the introduction of capitalist production and distribution, people were presented with different challenges. These resulted from a global trend in which:

contemporary societies with high rates of conversion tend to be those in which grand projects of modernization have run into disarray or have been overtaken by the destabilizing effects of global capitalism. [Pelkmans 2009: 5]

While many of Bosnia’s present problems have internal causes, since the end of the war, social, political, and economic instability has been further perpetuated by the undermining forces of market capitalism resulting in growing class differences, exploitation, deep seated corruption, and continued unemployment. Bosnia’s economic and political situation has been in flux since the early 1990s. The CIA “*World Factbook*” indicates that Bosnia’s 43.1

percent unemployment rate in 2010 has remained the same since the end of the war (1995). In addition, foreign investment has dropped sharply since 2007 and government spending (around 50 percent of GDP) remains high in comparison to other countries in the region. With only \$6,600 GDP per capita, Bosnia also has 18.6 percent of its population living below the poverty line. Needless to say, the unstable political and grave economic situation has made Bosnia a fertile ground for religious revitalization. In a 2004 report to United Nations and CEDAW,⁹ Bosnia's NGOs reported that:

The problem of economic inequality of women in BiH [Bosnia and Herzegovina] is deeply rooted in the country's patriarchal heritage, its socialist and Communist past, and in the disastrous consequences of the war on all sectors of the economy. At the same time, the inequality of women in the political arena, and the near total control by men over all positions of political power, is also directly linked to gender-based discrimination in the economic arena. [Justice 2004: 13]

There are no state or local level initiatives or attempts at measuring gender parity in the economic and political sectors. However, independent reports indicate that women in the 16-64 year old age group made up just 35 percent of the labor force in 2010. With a 3.1 percent inflation rate and little investment in building Bosnia's economic capacity, women will continue to face greater economic problems than men. Moreover, some poverty assessments indicate that women are more frequently living in poverty than men. The same report finds that "women head 25 percent of all households in BiH, with 16 percent of the entire population living in women-headed households" (Justice, 2004: 6). Therefore, gendered poverty and women's lack of economic opportunity are inextricably linked and indicative of women's overall position in Bosnia's society. The aforementioned studies

⁹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

underscore the importance of socio-economic and political changes and their influence on the rise of Islamic fervor in these regions, and, more importantly, among women.

In addition, research in post-socialist countries suggests that one of the primary motivations towards religious conversion is a search for social justice and morality, and an orienting force in an often unrestrained and biased capitalist system (Abramson 2004; Ghodsee 2010; Heyat 2008; Pelkmans 2009). What this suggests, and what has been observed throughout the post-socialist region, is that although the communist system was undoubtedly flawed it nevertheless provided citizens with greater resources and protections. Thus, in the new economic and political system the citizenry is left to fend for itself with little protection or care by the state. As a result, religion and religious institutions have replaced the socialist state as the caretaker of the citizenry. In her study of the Bulgarian Muslims, Kristen Ghodsee notes that,

After 1989, they gained unbridled religious freedoms but saw their communities economically devastated by the corrupt privatization and bankruptcy of the lead-zinc mining enterprise that was the core of their livelihood. To these Pomaks, “orthodox” Islam promises to be an ideological third way, combining the benefits of both systems: spiritual freedom and honest economic prosperity. [Ghodsee 2010a: 523]

David Abramson observed a similar trend in Uzbekistan, finding that Islam had become a shelter and protection after people were abandoned by the state in the new system. With deep corruption on all levels of the state and in almost every institution (both state and independent), the people of Uzbekistan have found solace in faith. Critiquing the problems left behind by the Soviet practices, Abramson observed that:

The revival has drawn much of its strength from the perceptions that there is little of substantive value to what either socialism or nationalism has had to offer. There are myriad reasons for this, not least of which is the widely

shared sense that not only did socialism fail but so also did the Soviet nationality policies that were crucial to promoting socialism in a multiethnic society. [Abramson 2004: 67]

Moreover, religious revitalization is attributed to the subjugating nature of the socialist experiences in which people's core values were rejected for the moral unity of the communist doctrine. Keng-Fong Pang observes that:

It was not until 1981, fifteen years later, when religious instruction and religious practice were once again officially sanctioned, that the Utsat began to reaffirm communally their Islamic faith and revitalize their Quranic learning. Having lacked any systematic means of teaching the Islamic faith in the community for about fifteen years, the Utsat accelerated the revivalism of Islamic knowledge by inviting two elderly religious teachers from Gansu Province in Northwest China to reside in their two villages for over a year in order to instruct or re-educate the Utsat about Islam and Quranic learning. The fact that the very core of their cultural identity as Muslims was threatened and questioned for a decade was not just a motivation for a revival of religious practice and understanding, but also a psychological reaffirmation of their self-hood as a people quite distinct from the Han Chinese or the formerly "aboriginal/tribal" communities of Li and Miao. [Pang 1997: 44]

Thus, religious revitalization is a direct result of the past and current failures of the political systems under which some Muslim populations live. This is true for those Muslims living in formerly communist as well as democratic and secular countries with significant Muslim populations. No matter their location, women see restrictions placed upon them by Islam as "a small price to pay in exchange for the security, stability and respect that, through the actualization of Islamic ideologies, they were promised" (Saktanber 2002: 37).

REISLAMIZATION IN BOSNIA

As western scholarship continues to perceive Islam in opposition to modernity (Hafez 2011), it is imperative to ascertain the reislamization processes both at state and institution, and individual level. In particular, I would like to focus on the process of reislamization in Bosnia

specifically. The secular and religious leadership¹⁰ of Bosnia, through their official propaganda, promote and offer the EU and the rest of the world images of a moderate¹¹ and modern Muslim community that is non-threatening to European secular values and practices. While I contend that in recent history (1945-1991) most Bosnian Muslims were more ethnic than religious, engaging in limited observance of religious duty, many of the country's Muslims no longer fit this characterization. Bosnia today is therefore experiencing a religious revitalization, and in the case of Muslims, a reislamization. In Bosnia, Bougarel observes an "unquestionable renewal of activity", however, he contends that a number of other problems have arisen, stating:

many mosques are still in a state of neglect, many imams and religion teachers have a weak religious knowledge (therefore the priority to the opening of new madrassas), and the Islamic religious institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Bulgaria experienced serious internal crises. [Bougarel 2003: 352]

Reislamization is not a post-1995 war phenomenon, but rather a process that began in the mid-sixties following the recognition of Muslims as *narod* (a nation). In 1980s Cornelia Sorabji found that Islamic revival was indeed taking place and that,

This local brand of revivalism differed from the revivalist fundamentalism of some Muslim dominated countries in two respects. Firstly, it is not a political

¹⁰ Religious leadership here refers to the Islamic Community (Islamska Zajednica) as the official institution introduced following the retreat of Ottoman Empire. The Islamic Community's mission is representation and protection of Bosnia's Muslim population.

¹¹ For many Bosnian Muslims, religion often served as a community or ethnic identifier, and religious practice was confined to occasional visits to the mosque or significant rites of passage such as birth, marriage, and death. Nevertheless, religious leaders from the Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox communities claimed that all forms of observance were increasing among young people as an expression of increased identification with their ethnic heritage, in large part due to the national religious revival that occurred as a result of the 1992-1995 Bosnian war. Younger believers who grew up in the post-communist period also had more freedom to practice their religions and more access to religious education. Leaders from the three main religious communities observed that they enjoyed greater support from their believers in rural areas of Bosnia than from those in urban centers such as Sarajevo or Banja Luka (International Religious Freedom Report 2006).

movement and makes no calls for the reinstatement of Shari'a law. In a state in which one may be imprisoned merely for suggesting that a Muslim should marry another Muslim rather than a Christian, it is hardly surprising that no-one openly proposes a return to the rule of Shari'a.

Rather than propose a return of Shari'a law or a change in the structure of family and marriage, these Muslims advocate the espousal of values, which they see as typically Islamic within the family. In particular they stress the need for modesty and respect between husband and wife and for obedience and respect between parent and child. [Sorabji 1988: 335]

Sorabji found that in the wake of the war Islamic revivalist movement was not political in nature, but rather an individual quest for reinstatement of moral values rooted in religious doctrine. On the other hand, Bougarel argues that reislamization has been part of the political agenda of the Muslim political leadership since their formation in the eighties. However, whatever their agenda may have been, Bougarel contends that real life reislamization attempts failed on an individual level (Bougarel 2003), i.e., most Muslims did not become more devout or pious.

the process of politicization of the Muslim ethnic identities is sometimes quite obvious (change of national name). A possible process of reislamization of these same identities is more difficult to perceive. In fact, the situations vary considerably with the populations. There is no reislamization of the Gipsy identity, for the segmentary logics of this ethnic community prevent any common reference to Islam. Conversely, the Bosnian Muslim community inevitably tends to stress its belonging to Islam as the main distinctive factor toward Serbian and Croatian communities, and the leaders of the SDA¹² openly support the reislamization of the Muslim/Bosniak identity. [Bougarel 2003: 9]

While I value Bougarel's findings, I argue that while the institutional-level reislamization processes may not have had large-scale successes, the process of reislamization is nonetheless transpiring. The sheer growing numbers of pious Muslims and particularly

¹² SDA-Stranka Demokratske Akcije-Party for Social Democracy is a Muslim majority party representing the interests of Bosnia's Muslim population formed in 1990 at the cusp of the war.

among my informants offers evidence that while institutions-level reislamization have not had direct successes, they nevertheless are present in the lives of my informants. My pious informants cannot escape the rhetoric supported by the Islamic Community and SDA, it is present in sermons and talks at the mosques and organizations they attend. Reislamization projects penetrates people's individual lives no matter how they feel about the Islamic Community or the notion of European Muslim. This dissertation provides examples of the different causes and effects of reislamization on an individual level. I have recorded, and later identified, the process of reislamization in the lives of individual Muslim women identified as pious Muslims, highlighting reislamization processes both inside and outside the realm of institutions.

According to my informants, reislamization refers to *povratak Islamu*, which directly translates as "return to Islam." General consensus among devout and observant Muslims defines reislamization as *povratak Islamu* -- the adoption of proper Islamic rites and duties in daily life, most notably the 5 pillars of Islam. The Islamic Community and foreign religious organizations are partially responsible for wanting to reislamicize the non-practicing Muslim population. However, in my research I observed that the concept of reislamization did not follow the path that was envisioned by these institutions. Reislamization in the lives of my informants was a much more individual process in which they made their own decisions about what was proper way to live Islam. Although many of them sought and got help at different religious institutions, they ultimately made a decision on how to live Islam. Therefore, this dissertation takes a look at reislamization processes at an individual level, and particularly as it is played out in the lives of women. I refer to this process as the

development of Islamic personhood, a fluid and long-term process on which many young (and few older) women have embarked. I will show that the negligible success of the institutions-level reislamization is primarily the result of the lack of confidence by individuals in either of the two institutions (*Islamska Zajednica* and Muslim nationalist parties). It also has to do with the genuine impact that Islam (as a set of rules and practices) has in helping individuals deal with challenges of daily life, particularly in a post-socialist and post-war context.

Finally, Karčić notes that “the war played an important factor in reviving Islam in Bosnia” (Karčić 2010a: 524). Thus, trauma left by the war plays a significant role in the narratives of conversion of pious Muslim women who try to live their lives as pious Muslims. The post-socialist and post-war context of Bosnia coupled with the assurances of safety and respect promised by Islamic doctrine are essential in helping us understand the growing Islamic movement. Living in a social order permeated by corruption and unethical behavior is a good motivator for women to seek solace in faith. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that there are a growing number of Muslim women who live their lives as pious Muslims in a secularized social order. The best way to understand the growing reislamization movement, it is necessary to focus on the process of reislamization itself, or in this case the process of conversion.

PROCESS OF CONVERSION

Reislamization’s success cannot be understood without a focus on the ways in which individuals adopt a lifestyle that is a normal part of religious revitalization. This is where scholarship on the process of conversion is particularly helpful. In following Sorabji’s

findings that Islamic revivalism in Bosnia was an individual act, rather than part of a political movement, narratives of conversion provide an insight into what motivates and inspires reislamization on a personal level. Unquestionably, taking a closer look at the act of spiritual conversion or transformation can be taken as a guidepost for understanding the flowering of Islam among post-war Bosnian women. Conversion scholarship suggests that conversion is a continued and practiced experience of people, and is not a single event often characterized as “a wayward journey.” Rather it is “a flash of light” (McKanan 2006) and a “quest for human belonging” (Austin-Broos 2003). Additionally, it is not merely a passage and change in how one lives, but a transformation from one state of being to another. Austin-Broos discerns that:

Conversion is a form of passage, a “turning from and to” that is neither syncretism nor absolute breach. Some have seen conversion as diffuse, yet others have sought to contain it in a particular event. With its roots in trait analysis, syncretism fits well with ideas of cultural flow, with the cosmopolitan and the hybrid. These are notions that evoke the image of bricoleurs, experimenters and iconoclasts involved in cultural pastiche. Conversion is a cultural passage more robust than this. Possibly experimental at first, it becomes a deliberate change with definite direction and shape. [Austin-Broos 2003: 1-2]

Not all spiritual journeys are conversions from one religious tradition to another, or from atheism to theism, but they can also be revitalizations of previous religious belonging and “a type of passage that negotiates a place in the world” (Coleman 2003: 2). Conversion as passage is also “a quest to be at home in a world experienced as turbulent or constraining or, in some particular way, as wanting in value” (Coleman 2003: 2). In addition to it being a process rather than just a single event, conversion also plays a far more significant role in the life on an individual, including “not just adopting a set of ideas but also

converting to and from an embodied worldview and identity” (Sachs Norris 2003:171).

Finally, the outcomes of religious conversion are:

First, although a convert experiences conversion as a reorientation to a new religious belief system, the conversion occurs primarily because it corresponds with the convert’s preexisting ideas or feelings about truth or meaning. Second, unless they are converting to a different branch of their old tradition, converts usually exhibit one of two ways of relating to the laws and rituals of their adopted religion: zealous adherence or selective performance. Third, since the worldview of the converts exists not only as abstract ideas but also as embodied reality, practicing the adopted religion requires not only the gradual assimilation of the meaning of terms and concepts based in the language and symbols of another culture, but also the performance of ritual postures and gestures requiring retaining of deep-seated somatic responses. [Sachs Norris 2003:171]

Sachs Norris also observes that “Like our everyday experience, religious emotions and worship experiences are learned through association and enculturation” (2003: 178).

Hence, religious institutions and other already converted people play a significant role in the conversion process. The process and outcomes of religious conversion are best understood by the motivations and processes that give rise to it. Thus, literature on religious conversions and "revitalization" suggests that people turn to religion for a number of reasons, including: a) life crises, b) traumatic experiences and large-scale social changes, and c) religious revitalizations (Long and Hadden 1983; Pelkmans 2009; Rambo 1993; Rambo 2003; Sachs Norris 2003; Stromberg 1993) all of which are present in my case studies.

Narratives of conversion or transformation are an important part of studying any religious group. The transformation narratives give a special insight into the motivations behind the conversion. Transformations are never simple, nor are they undergone with ignorance of people’s life experiences. Interestingly, these transformations are

accompanied by “life crises” that through narratives can reveal contention over cultural definitions (Ginsburg 1989). These life crises are often associated with significant life changes such as marriage, passage from childhood into adulthood, and at times trauma. Susan Kwilecki remarks, “that religious experiences may play an “important role” in “adjusting to bereavement”” (Kwilecki 2004: 480). For a population that had experienced significant loss of life and persecution, conversion is not a surprising outcome as a way of healing. I, too, have found that among my informants “religious experiences are preceded by personal suffering and followed by dramatic relief (Kwilecki 2004: 480). Life crisis is only one of the motivations behind religious conversion. As Maria Mendoza suggests, “People’s motivation reaches a peak of relevance during the initial commitment, and it may change as the converts acquire a new mystic language and reconstruct their personal life stories” (Mendoza 2003: 199). Muslim women of Bosnia narrate their spiritual journeys with the same passion and fervor as do all converts regardless of their religious doctrine.

CONCLUSION

Summarizing scholarship that informs my dissertation project helps the reader understand the way in which I came to the final conclusions about what constitutes being a Muslim woman, and the ways in which women can have agency, or alternatively whether they are simply being complacent. First, Muslim and Islamic feminists have argued and written for decades, yet, little has changed in how some Western scholars conceptualizes Islam and Muslim women. In this dissertation I take a two-part approach to challenging what constitutes agency, empowerment, autonomy and control over one’s own life. This duality is in part a result of the difficulty in understanding how women challenge one type of

patriarchy (in this case secular communist period patriarchy) and replacing it with another kind of patriarchy rooted in Islam. This duality is best exemplified in my pious informants' acceptance of their role as women as exemplified in their need to conform to certain non-sexual behavior and appearance because of men's reputed "innate" sexual desires. Through this conformity, pious Muslim women engage a level of autonomy and agency in controlling their lives that they otherwise felt that they didn't have. Second, the impact of post-war and post-socialist reorganization of the civil and government sector is undeniable. Despite all the advances made by the civil sector, it nevertheless remains feminized, and to a degree continues to contribute to women's continuous exclusion from the top level decision making process. Third, reislamization is underway in Bosnia, and many women are becoming an important part of the movement. One way in which Islam has come to occupy such a prominent place in individual women's lives has been the large socio-economic and political changes. Specifically in Eastern Europe, the end of socialism brought about a new social order, or rather disorder, where Islam serves as a moral compass, protection and comfort to many. Lastly, women's experiences are dependent upon individual experiences accessed through the discussion of the process of spiritual conversion. Conversion is an important way in understanding the actual process of reislamization and its growing success.

Finally, my background and experience clearly played an important part not only in the types of questions I ask, but the kind of data I was able to collect and later analyze. The work of an anthropologist can at times be difficult, but for a halfie anthropologist the set of problems encountered is vastly different. Halfies face not only methodological and

representation issues, but can feel personally responsible for the impact and outcome of their research findings. This has certainly been true for me. The process of fieldwork, and later analysis, has been fraught with numerous ethical dilemmas that at times included questions about how my family members still living in Bosnia would be perceived and treated once my findings were made public. The responsibility of presenting my analysis is therefore affected by my responsibilities as a Bosnian Muslim. I am not just an objective observer, but a voice that can either enhance or undermine the public image of the group as a whole. Publishing material that could potentially damage, or influence how Bosnian Muslims are viewed is a burden I carry nearly every day. This is without a doubt one of the most difficult space a social scientist can occupy. However at the end of the day having an opportunity to present my findings nevertheless outweighs most of my misgivings.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY AND FIELDWORK

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I introduce my primary fieldsites, including a detailed description of Sarajevo and Zenica, the cities where the majority of my data collection occurred. I also describe the non-governmental organizations where I worked and interacted. Next, I focus on methodological strategies and data analysis I employed to answer proposed questions. The purpose of this short chapter is to demonstrate the tools and techniques utilized to help me identify what distinguishes a pious from a conventional Muslim woman.

A stranger visiting Bosnia will find herself in one of Europe's most heterogeneous landscapes, characterized by rolling hills, fields, and dry, rocky mountains. The majority of my research was conducted in Sarajevo and Zenica, and the conclusions I make in this dissertation are limited to these two cities. Encircled by five heavily forested mountains and a number of hills, Sarajevo sits in the valley with a mild continental climate characterized by snowy winters and hot and humid summers. The city's most striking feature is its architecture, representing Bosnia's rich and diverse history. Presently home to over 300,000 residents, Sarajevo hosted all three world monotheistic religions over the centuries. As a result, the city became a haven of religious diversity on the surface, but where one religion was dominant and others were restricted at different historical periods, including religiously segregated neighborhoods (Bougarel, et al. 2007). Sarajevo is described by the political and religious leadership, as well as by foreign scholars and journalists, as a place of religious harmony, diversity, however, Sarajevo has also seen extensive conflicts and ethnic division (Bougarel, et al. 2007; Donia 2006; Imamović 1998; Merdjanova and

Brodeur 2009; Robinson and Pobrić 2006). After its recent unfortunate history of having been a battleground, Sarajevo's residents are once again rebuilding their city. One cannot help but notice the city's striking architectural features: the minarets, church steeples, and the old town with its Ottoman-style wooden structures (see photos in Appendix VIII).

I chose Sarajevo as my primary fieldsite because of its centrality (both historically and currently), and its history as the center of Bosnia's Islam. Sarajevo's ethno-religious profile shifted dramatically after the war (see Table 3.1). Over 50 percent of its post-war population is new (see Table 3.1); that is, the current population is the result of rural-urban migrations. This fact alone has dramatically altered Sarajevo's culture and has brought in many different ideas, beliefs, and practices. Given that Bosnia's overall demographic composition drastically altered since the war, I believed a study in Sarajevo was critically important precisely because of its newly mixed population. Moreover, a comprehensive ethnographic study of what it means to be a Muslim hadn't been done in Sarajevo since Cornelia Sorabji's 1989 dissertation. The combination of a massive exodus of displaced Muslims during the war, a post-war rural-to-urban migration, and the out-migration of Serbs and Croats fundamentally altered the city's population demographics. Working in Sarajevo presented the largest possible sample of participants from all over Bosnia, a feature that would be hard to replicate by focusing on one small setting. Table 3.1 shows the demographic changes to Sarajevo's landscape, aside from the loss of its Muslim inhabitants, the majority of Serbs and Croats left permanently and now live either in other Serb and Croat-dominated parts of Bosnia, in Serbia, Croatia, or in other countries.

TABLE 3.1¹: SARAJEVO AND ZENICA DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**SARAJEVO**

Year	Muslim	%	Serb	%	Croat	%	Other	%	Yugoslav	%	Other	%
1991	250,484	50.7	133,695	27.1	34,568	7.0	18,737	3.8	55,499	11.3	492,983	100
2002	319,245	79.6	44,865	11.2	26,890	6.7	10,118	2.5	n/a	n/a	401,118	100

Source: Fran Markowitz (2007) from the Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine 2003a, *Kanton Sarajevo u Brojkama 2003*, Federalni Zavod za Statistike, Sarajevo 2003, "Nacionalna Structura Stanovništva," p. 10.

ZENICA

Year	Muslim	%	Serb	%	Croat	%	Other	%	Yugoslav	%	Other	%
1991	80,377	55.2	22,592	15.2	22,651	15.6	4,306	2.9	15,651	10.75	145,577	100
2010	101,684	85.0	10,168	8.0	6,355	5.0	2,542	2.0	n/a	n/a	127,105	100

Unofficial data suggests that Zenica population in 2010 was 85% Muslim, 8% Serb and 5% Croat with 2% other. I have based the above table of numbers on that assessment. The data for nationalities for Zenica was unavailable from the Federal Statistics Bureau.

During the war the majority of Serbs and Croats left for a number of reasons including, war, fear for their own lives, and because they wanted to be in areas that were Serb and Croat dominated. Many Sarajevo-born inhabitants now often talk about the small numbers of native Sarajevans and the large number of newcomers. Prior to the war, Sarajevo was the capital of Bosnia's Islam and its Muslim community. This means that the majority of Sarajevo's population before the war was Muslim. However, during the war

¹ The statistics used here are a compilation of data from the Federal Office of Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2010 and the United Nations Demographic Statistics Yearbook 2008. As you can see the most detailed data is from 1991, which is the year of the last full census of Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the 1991 census there were five options for ethnic and/or national identity. Due to the volatile status of Bosnia's political situation and the Republika Srpska aspirations for cession from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the last census did not include ethnic and/or national identity as an option. It has been argued that the reason for the exclusion of the ethnic/national identification was to prevent identification of ethnically cleansed and homogenous areas in Republika Srpska. If the numbers were published it would indicate an overwhelming majority of Republika Srpska as having ethnic Serb makeup. This in turn would allow for a move towards a referendum that could potentially grant Republika Srpska full independence and recognition as an independent nation state.

many of city's Muslims were killed or left. Hence, the number of pre-war Sarajevans (of all religions) still living in the city is most likely less than half of what it was before the war.

Since the end of the war, the role of Sarajevo as a center for Muslims increased as the country divided into two new political and ethnically homogenous entities: Republika Srpska (Serbian Republic) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Muslim-Croat Federation). The two entities were established in December 1995 by the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in Dayton, Ohio by then presidents of Bosnia (Alija Izetbegović), Serbia (Slobodan Milošević) and Croatia (Franjo Tuđman). The borders were established on front-lines that were current at the time. The results of the peace agreement left Sarajevo, once a mixing place of the three main ethno-religious communities, overwhelmingly Muslim. As a consequence, Sarajevo is an important place to study of Islam and Muslims given the recent demographic shifts and its home to the Islamic Community (Islamska Zajednica), the official representative institution of Bosnia's Muslims.

The city of Zenica is located approximately 70 kilometers, or 43 miles, north of Sarajevo (see map in Appendix II). Situated on the river Bosnia and surrounded by hills and mountains, much like Sarajevo, Zenica was once an important industrial center. Steel mills, in particular, still help Zenica retain some of the economic and political power it enjoyed before the war. In part, this is due to the fact that the factories and mills were minimally destroyed during the war and more recently bought out by foreign companies as part of the post-war reconstruction (albeit at only 10% of its pre-war production). Though there are fewer employees now than prior to the war, with the mills had a 25,000 work force. With a present population of about 130,000, Zenica experienced a similar demographic shift as

Sarajevo. Once home to many ethnic groups, Zenica's current inhabitants are predominantly Muslim, a group that comprises more than 85 percent of the population (see Table 3.1). During the war, and for some time following the end of the war, Zenica became a media focus point as it was home to several well-known mujahidins² and other Islamic *fundamentalists*. However, those were stories left over from the war, and majority of the so-called fundamentalists are in greater numbers in Sarajevo than Zenica. Most of the women I talked to were conventional and not pious, and I did not interview anyone of the Wahhabi convictions. Furthermore, Zenica gained notoriety as a majority-Muslim city where Islamic 'revitalization' was more prominent than in other regions of Bosnia. It was in Zenica in the early 2000s that stories of Wahhabis' paying women to wear the hijab were reported in local newspapers such as Avaz and Oslobođenje. Despite these events, majority of Zenica's Muslims are of conventional orientation and majority of my informants from Zenica were also conventional.

RESEARCH SITES

MEDICA ZENICA

Medica Zenica is a women-centered non-governmental organization located in Zenica. Founded in 1993 as one of the first organizations to address the needs of war-affected women and their children, it is widely considered one of the most important war-time and post-war women's NGOs in Bosnia. At the start of the war, and with the first knowledge of what would be many thousands of reported rapes (as deliberate tactics intended to terrorize and demoralize the opposition), Medica offered shelter and support for survivors.

² Muslim mercenaries who believe they are fighting for God (Allah). They are found throughout the Muslim world and in countries with large Muslim minorities that experience conflict.

At the time, it was the only center to do so. Started by a German doctor with international funding, Medica provided a safe place and space and psychological counseling for women who had been war-related sexual targets. Medica Zenica has been studied by a number of scholars, including Elissa Helms (2003), Sabiha Husić (2008), Rachel Eisenstat (2006), and a number of others (Cockburn, et al. 2001; Eisenstat 2006; Frljak, et al. 1997; Helms 2003; Husić 2008). Its work is widely known throughout Bosnia and the academic community. In my study, I focus on the ways in which Medica provided an empowering space for individual women, in addition to providing a safe haven to rape and domestic violence victims. Due to a decline in funding and after about 2005, a shift away from the repercussions of war trauma, Medica developed other services and programs that include women and girls exposed to any sort of violence, trauma, and discrimination. The following is a direct excerpt taken from Medica's website in about 2008, describing its services and projects:

Medica Zenica offers a client-based, holistic approach to women and girls traumatized and victims of violence (including war rape and all other forms of sexualized and gender-based violence) and lobbies at the local, regional and national levels for an improved status of women and girls. Until 2007 Medica was staffed by around forty (professionals and paraprofessionals, employed and volunteers), experts in different fields, organized in departments that are autonomous in the framework of Medica's Charter. In addition, Medica was fully funded for those positions by foreign agencies. They expanded their operations to include an information library in the center of Zenica. Both centers were staffed and operated in full capacity until 2007. [Medica Zenica 2012]

At the time of my arrival to work at Medica in 2008, none of the primary staff had been paid in more than six months. This was due in part to the decline in funding. By this time, Medica was operating on a very basic level, including the shelter, Infoteka, and counseling services. Through its activities, Medica was able to secure limited funds from

the city government to keep the shelter open. Other services, such as the mobile medical clinic and majority of other programming, had suffered. All of the staff I worked with expressed their special attachment to Medica despite the lack of compensation for their work. During one-on-one interviews, I discovered that this attachment was related to the fact that the majority of the staff had at one point been clients at the clinic or had utilized Medica's services in one way or another. Prior to my two-week stay at the organization, I made 5 separate trips to the organization to meet and talk with staff/organizers, totaling over 50 hours of participant observation and over 10 hours of recorded interviews and discussions. I conducted twelve interviews at Medica Zenica during my two-week stay at the organization. During this time, I lived, worked and shadowed staff 24 hours a day. That meant I ate all of my meals, and spent all of my time, with the members, patients, and all those connected to the organization. I shared my day-to-day experiences with the women of Medica, and I became not only attached to them, but to the mission and work of the organization. It was the suggestion of the director of Medica that I should stay and live at the organization, which now served as a domestic violence shelter for battered women and their children. During my time there, only one woman with an infant was taking shelter at the organization. We became close. In addition, I spent numerous hours speaking and interacting with the staff, both paid and volunteer. I participated in group discussions and staff meetings, as well as any and all operations that went on during my stay. I repaid them by proofreading and copy-editing several of their grant applications and grant reports. Nearly a year after my formal fieldwork ended I volunteered my time on several occasions.

NAHLA

The second site of my fieldwork was Nahla, a faith-based women's organization in Sarajevo established in 2001 by a group of young pious Muslim women in order to provide a space where pious women could feel safe and accepted. The name of the organization translates as 'bee' from Arabic, and the work I observed, and as one several popular magazines wrote, very much lived up to their name.³ Their mission has been expanded to include free expression of personal religious beliefs and practices, as well as educational and professional development. Many of the women I interviewed at Nahla felt they were not allowed opportunities to develop these avenues of their personal life within the general educational and religious systems. Moreover, many of them said Nahla was the only organization that operated with a clear goal in mind, that of educating women, while helping them develop their knowledge and practice of Islam. Nahla had little affiliation with the more radical forms of Islam coming from Saudi Arabia, and, if anything, was intended to counter the influence of more radical forms of Islam (i.e., Salafism).

Nahla was established as a place and space where Muslim women of all degrees of practice could learn, socialize, broaden, and enrich their knowledge, as well as acquire skills needed to succeed professionally and actively participate in social life. At the time of my arrival, they had a list of 1,000 members, some of whom were more active than others. Membership soared when the new center, a three-story building with a dozen facilities,

³ Bees are known to be hardworking and busy insects. Islamic tradition recognizes bees as noble insects that provide sustenance in form of honey for human consumption and are therefore worthy of special recognition. To be compared to a bee is a sign of respect and honor.

opened in September 2007. I was present for the grand opening of the new center and was there when the donors from Kuwait spoke at the opening ceremony. The event was by invitation only and almost 100 women, both members and community activists, attended (see photo in Appendix VIII). The Kuwaiti donors (all men) spoke about their vision for the center as a space for women to feel safe and where they can learn more about Islam. Arguably, the Kuwaiti donor's influence is significant, especially in how Nahla operates as an organization. With the funds covering the cost of a new center, it was easy for the local leadership to establish a fully functioning organization through nominal membership fees, which pay for maintenance and staff salaries. At the time of my departure in August 2008, Nahla had over a thousand women who used their facilities and/or attended classes. Even though Nahla was funded by Kuwaiti⁴ donors, the model and structure of the organization is rather unique to Bosnia.

To my knowledge a similar center did not exist in former Yugoslavia, or the whole of Balkans. Undeniably Kuwaiti donation played a significant role in the original set-up and the mission of the organization. While the women who teach and attend classes are more pious in nature than typical Bosnian women, there are a significant number of women who come to the organization only for women-based services (such as all women fitness classes and all women hair-salon) that are unavailable in other institutions rather than for religious reasons. Kuwaiti influence is undeniably present in the design and construction of

⁴ According to CIA World Factbook Kuwait is a majority Muslim country with 85% population being Muslim, 30% Shi'ia and 70% Sunni. Islam is the state religion and that Shari'a (Islamic law) is a main source of legislation. Kuwaiti Muslims are very much like other Shari'a law countries with stricter observation of religious law and doctrine in all facets of daily life. There is some presence of Salafi (Wahhabi) Islam, but they are not as widespread as they are in other Muslim-majority countries (Agency 2005).

religiously-based courses. However, since the majority of the organization's teachers were educated at one of Bosnia's madrassas and the Islamic Faculty (Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo), I posit that the interpretation of Islam they preach and teach is more home-grown than foreign-based. The style and technique used in classes of Islam and Qur'an closely resemble classes I observed at the quintessentially Bosnian madrassas and a few local mosques. On the other hand I did find that many of the teachers/instructors also received post-secondary degrees outside Bosnia, namely Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries. This, without a doubt, played a part in the design and daily operations of Nahla, however when reflecting on the specific influence of donors on the daily operations, it is clear that there is not one specific source of influence, but rather an array. This array of influence comes from more conservative Muslim countries (like Kuwait). Furthermore, it also must be noted that the organization has very close ties to the Islamic Community. Thus, their activities are inextricably tied to the political processes of the Muslim nationalist parties. Thus, Nahla's focus on religion and faith is not apolitical, but has a clearly Islamic feminist undertone exemplified in the focus on teaching women about their rights in Islam (i.e., the focus on understanding the text and reference to women), as well as how to be a proper Muslim woman.

During my time at Nahla, I participated in the majority of their professional and socio-cultural activities, including the aforementioned ten-month School of Islam and the three-month School of Qur'an where I learned to write and read some Arabic. The latter facilitated my fundamental understanding of the School of Islam. To compensate the center for allowing me to conduct my research, I volunteered my English-teaching skills.

Twice a week, I taught both conversational and basic English to over fifty students at Nahla over the course of the school year (10 months). The primary aim of my class was to allow women to practice their language skills, a necessity in Bosnia's current job market. Many of the students were intrigued by my research project and also participated in my study. Three⁵ of my interviews about religious belief and practice were conducted with students from my class at Nahla.

METHODOLOGY

A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches defines this research project. Methodologies drawn from oral and socio-cultural history and historical geography inform my discussion of Muslim women's lives. Keeping in mind my research questions, the research design utilized a number of standard ethnographic methods that included in-depth and open-ended interviews, surveys, focus groups, participant observation, and textual analysis. The open-ended and in-depth interviews were designed to learn about a woman's background, her experiences with organizations, and her personal beliefs and faith. Hence, women were the primary unit of examination in my study. The formal interviews were carried out with women exclusively, though I held over a dozen informal interviews with men as well. I utilized a number of different techniques in order to solicit interviews, including: a) women I met at the organizations, both members and staff; b) women I was introduced to through informants that I met at the organizations; and, c) American and European ex-patriot contacts who had significant social and community contacts that could further my study. The method I used to enter the field was much the way many

⁵ Their names are Zineta, Fata and Adila.

anthropologists are taught; by employing established contacts in order to acquire broader connections. Finally, participant observation was one of the most productive aspects of this project, both in terms of getting the information and insight necessary for completion of this project. I participated in a number of social and religious activities including classes, Islamic talks and performances, seminars, receptions, and activities at the organizations, and other religious institutions.

During this period I met many women who directly and indirectly contributed to my project. I conducted 50 total one-on-one in depth interviews. Those whose names are included in the charts in Appendix III constitute the primary sources of data for this dissertation. Their experiences, stories, and opinions make possible the analysis of Islam I present. I have split my direct informants into four primary groups depending on their affiliation and religious orientation, including: a) 6 conventional Muslim women with no NGO affiliation; b) 10 conventional women with NGO affiliation; c) 14 pious women with no NGO affiliation; and finally, d) 20 pious women with NGO affiliation. In addition, I have indicated those women who participated in the small faith based network, where I gathered a great deal of data (see Appendix III). Thus, I have four summary charts that include women's basic demographic information, their religious practices and affiliation with an organization, how we came into contact and other pertinent information. I want to note that the women I interviewed are largely Bosnia's working class and nearly two-thirds of them had some or completed their university education. I did not have much access to and experiences with working class women, and those that I did encounter I met at NGOs

(primarily Medica Zenica), which is a limited pool and largely made up of women belonging to *moja generacija*.

Many of my informants wanted to help me and offered not only to be interviewed, but gave me names and introductions to people from whose experience this project could benefit. Many of the women who identified as pious and lived their lives in accordance with Islamic principles as outlined by the holy texts (Qur'an and Haddiths) were interested in providing me with a larger sample from which to gather data for my dissertation. Primarily though, I found pious Muslim women at Nahla. I extended invitations for interviews to women I met at Nahla and was often introduced to their friends and colleagues who wished to contribute to the project. For example, at the start of my fieldwork I met Fuada through my ex-pat connection Kristen. Fuada was good friends with Belkisa and Badema. They were students at the university together and still kept in regular contact. In September 2007 Fuada invited me to dinner during the month of Ramazan. We met in old town Sarajevo to eat together after sunset for the breaking of the fast, and there I was introduced to Badema, Belkisa and several other women who later on constituted the small faith-based group. To my knowledge the group membership remains the same today, however, with less frequent meetings. Belkisa and Badema began to meet with women whose intention was to live their life as pious Muslims in piety and as what they believed constituted *prave Muslimanke*. Out of their need to further their support network the small faith-based group was born that fall and I was invited to join and participate. During the next year the women of the small faith-based group became my primary informants. Mina, Belkisa, Fatima, Nihada, Merisa, Nermina and Fuada were the core of this group and much of the data I

describe in this dissertation is derived from interviews and interactions with these individuals. Finally, I found the conventional Muslim women mostly through Medica Zenica and a few of my ex-patriot colleagues who were acquainted with a number of Muslim women. This method helped me extend my interviews to conventional Muslims in Sarajevo and identify younger women who live and practice traditional Bosnian Islam.

I conducted 11 intensive semi-structured interviews at Medica Zenica and 16 at Nahla. There were fewer interviews at Medica Zenica both because it is considerably smaller than Nahla, and because I did not spend as much time at Medica Zenica. Furthermore, while Nahla has a large membership base and can serve hundreds of women a week based on the variety of programming they offer, Medica Zenica is a service-based organization with fewer activists. Additionally, I found there was a significant difference in the participants' age in each organization, with Medica Zenica appealing primarily to a generation of older women who lived and worked in the pre-war period, experienced the war as teenagers or adults, and whose primary purpose was to promote the rights of Bosnian women, regardless of their religious orientation. Medica Zenica is a public policy outreach organization with numerous campaigns and political demands. Conversely, members of Nahla were much younger women, and their primary motivations for joining were often associated with personal problems resulting from coming of age in a peaceful, but chaotic, political economy that offered few social or economic opportunities. They were looking for a stable influence in a critical time of life-transition from childhood into adulthood, and discovered that Islam made an important contribution to their adult identity formation and inauguration as active social agents in the new social order. Furthermore,

with its message focused on living a life as a pious Muslim and returning to the daily use of the Islamic moral code, Nahla's activities were focused on the development of individuals, rather than the society as a whole, though their public activities have significantly altered since the end of my fieldwork. In this way, there was a dichotomy between individual needs and collective needs. The socialist state of course was supposed to meet the needs of *society* or rather the collective, without having to focus on the individual. The new market-capitalist mode, however, is centered on individuals, their capabilities, their successes and failures. If an individual doesn't make it in this system than it is considered to be the individual's fault. If you do make it, however, it is because of your merit. This is in part why present day Bosnia struggles to make the transition between two very different systems. The collective vs. individual needs are a large issue, and it is partially responsible for the success of faith-based organizations and Islamic revitalization. In this new individually-oriented, market-based Bosnia religion has come to replace the social networks that that the socialist state used to provide.

The structure of the in-depth interviews first began by surveying the demographic characteristics of my informants including sex, place of birth, current residence, relocation, marital status, education and professional status, socio-economic conditions, and family background (including parents' and siblings' religious beliefs and practices). As mentioned earlier, the questions and issues I asked in the interview centered around two main themes, including women's reasons for joining an organization and the role of the organization in their daily life, and finally their personal beliefs and practices in relation to Islam. The questions about the organizations focused on when, where, and how they joined the

organizations, their experiences with the organizations, and the impact the organizations had in their daily lives. Finally, the discussion centered around women's personal beliefs and practices, including questions on faith, religious rituals and practices, their knowledge of religious texts, understanding of Islam, and the role it played in their day to day life. Though much of the data centers on organizations, little of it is analyzed in this dissertation. This is primarily due to my gradual shift away from the original research topic. I do, however, utilize some of these data in Chapter 5 when I discuss the importance of non-governmental organizations in women's daily lives.

In addition to my extensive role as a participant observer, I conducted one focus group session on two different occasions with women who were part of the close-knit faith-based group of women that I belonged to during my time in the field. The second part of the focus group was done the following day and was attended by majority of the women who were present during the first meeting. I discuss the results and findings of the focus group in Chapter 9. I organized the focus group following a meeting with Sanja, a sociology PhD student who was interested in some aspects of Muslim women's lives in post-war Bosnia. Sanja was also a Bosnian Muslim herself, but had not yet spent much time in the field and needed connections to begin collecting some interviews. I offered to introduce her to my faith-based network of women. I called my primary informants (Badema and Belkisa) who were part of the group and we organized a meeting at Bey's mosque the following weekend. In order to make the conversation more interesting and perspectives as

varied, Mina and Belkisa invited two additional women⁶ who were not usually part of our group. These women who participated in the focus group provided a good source of information regarding Islamic revitalization and lifestyle. The focus group questions centered on the present state of Islam in Bosnia, the duties of a “good” Muslim woman, how they lived Islam, new Islamic practices and their lives as pious Muslim women. The focus group yielded interesting information and exemplified the group dynamics of young *prave Muslimanke* whose primary shared interest was their quintessentially Bosnian Muslim faith and practice.

Furthermore, I attended the School of Islam and School of Qur'an at Nahla. The School of Islam was a systematic educational program lasting ten months and specialized in helping women understand the basic tenets and duties of being pious Muslims. At the School of Qur'an, which lasted three months, I was introduced to reading and writing Qur'anic Arabic. In addition, I analyzed the 2007/2008 volumes of two magazines, *Zehra* (a women's Islamic magazine) and *Preporod* (the official newspaper of the Islamic Community). In addition, I attended more than two-dozen public events and lectures on Islam led by *hodžas*⁷ and other religious leaders.

As a result, after a few months of interviewing women and participating/observing their lives, I began to understand that there are two ways in which women can be Muslim: conventionally and piously. I defined these categories during the course of my fieldwork and I constructed them on basis of what women told me they believe, the actions they take

⁶ The two women are not included in my informant chart as I had only met them on two occasions and did not complete in-depth interviews with them. Their names are Nazila and Amra.

⁷ *Hodža*, also known as Imams, are Bosnia's religious leaders usually in charge of a local Mosque. They are often educated at one of Bosnia's madrasas or at a University in one of the Islamic countries.

in their daily lives, and the behavior I observed. Later, when I looked more closely at the interviews, I found that the consciously pious women had stories of transformation that contrasted sharply with those of conventional Muslim women. I identified these categories through initial analysis of interviews and data.

Both groups consider themselves to be Muslims, and both believe and practice what they consider to be Islamic belief and custom. It is important to note that pious Muslim women share similarities with the conventional Muslim women, including being born as Muslim, paying dues to the Islamic Community, and giving alms to the poor. However, pious Muslim women make a specific point about not observing *tevhid* and *mevlud* as they consider these rituals to be outdated and inaccurate. Recall these rituals have long been part of the way traditional Islam was practiced in socialist Yugoslavia. The commonalities illuminate that these two groups of women are not discrete, but rather share many beliefs and practices. The overlap lies in their belief in God and the Prophet; their differences are observable in religious practice and choice of lifestyle. While conventional Muslim women's lives are dominated by secular values and beliefs rooted in *tradicija*, the lives of *prave Muslimanke* are defined by Islam. Thus, I demonstrate that religious practice is the biggest indicator of whether a Muslim woman is living a conventional or consciously pious Muslim life.

In sum, during 14 months of extended fieldwork (June 2007-August 2008), I recorded 50 official in-depth interviews with women and accumulated more than 20 hours of recorded public talks and presentations, which have since been transcribed and coded for this dissertation. I also conducted more than a dozen informal interviews with various

members of the organizations and the women I met through my networks at the organizations. I also conducted two focus groups, but the second one I did not record or analyze in the dissertation. One such side project consisted of eight women and their experiences with the process of putting on the *mahrma* (hijab), the results of which I shared at a conference in Bremen, Germany.

CONCLUSION

My connection with my informants has not yet ended as many of the young women who participated in my study and I are still in contact. During my last visit to Bosnia, between December 2009 and January 2010, I found that a number of changes had occurred in what was once my fieldsite. Most notably the city and the ethnographic landscape where I conducted the majority of my work changed to now include commercial places that were considered *halal* (or religiously acceptable). As we sat over coffee in a newly built BBI center built by funds from Islamic Development Bank, Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank, Dubai Islamic Bank and Bosna Bank International, Belkisa commented that Sarajevo was finally becoming Islam-friendly. Ironically, much of our conversation was about this new business and shopping center because there was much controversy about the space. Built in place of a former mall named Sarajka (translated to Sarajevan-female tense), the new center did not serve alcohol. For pious women like Belkisa, the center was a space that did not interfere with her efforts to live life as a pious Muslim and in pursuit of piety. It was in the place of old Sarajka that two opposing viewpoints and practices were meeting once again, merging and learning to co-exist. BBI was also an important place for my conventional informants. Although few of them expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of places to have a drink, many of them

agreed that there were plenty of other places serving alcohol within walking distance.

However, their opinions also reflected a sense of the knowledge that they had little power in changing or influencing business practices. Nevertheless, BBI, despite using an Islamic business model, was able to satisfy the needs of both my conventional and pious informants. In this way, the BBI center serves a perfect metaphor for the changing nature of Bosnia's economic, social, cultural, and most importantly religious landscape since the end of the war. BBI became a space where the Christian west came face-to-face with the Islamic east for the purpose of helping promote market-economy and replace the old communism, and what my pious informants referred to as the time without consciousness.

CHAPTER IV: BOSNIA'S MUSLIMS IN MODERN ERA (1878-1992)

INTRODUCTION

The 1991 war in Bosnia left over 100,000 people dead and over half a million more displaced, with Bosnian Muslims making up the majority of casualties and refugees. The years following the end of the war gave rise to a new Bosnian Muslim identity defined by the experiences of genocide and post-communist Islamic revitalization. Unlike the communist state, the new democratic government allowed for free expression of religious belief and practice. Many of the new practices are simply strengthening of pre-war religious practice and belief, while others are a result of foreign influences from countries such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Kuwait, and the rest of the Muslim world. In the nearly two decades since the dissolution of Yugoslavia, being a Muslim (and particularly a Muslim woman) has changed.

Using gender as the primary category of analysis, this chapter helps provide an historical background that contextualizes the circumstances and experiences of Bosnian Muslim women's lives in the early part of the twenty-first century. The women discussed in this thesis either directly experienced the socialist period, or encountered it second-hand through the experiences of their mothers and/or grandmothers, and arguably their fathers and grandfathers. The legacy of the communist period is therefore undeniable and the following chapter will help provide some answers in how my informants understand themselves as Muslims and as women.

While Islam preceded the Ottoman Empire¹ in Bosnia, it was not until the Ottoman conquest of the region that it became a widespread religious practice. The predominate Sunni Islam of the Ottoman state was adopted by many inhabitants of what is now Bosnia. These inhabitants, including Catholics, Orthodox and Bogumils², converted during the Ottoman conquest and adapted Islam to meet the challenges of the changing socio-economic and political landscape. *"Being Muslim the Bosnian Way"* (Bringa 1995) evolved out specific socio-cultural and historical circumstances and in this chapter I will discuss the historical course of Muslim identity formation and what it means to be a Muslim woman in present day Bosnia. Therefore, this chapter is an historical analysis of ethno-religious identity development among the Muslims of Bosnia in the modern period between 1878 and 1992. First, I look at the early period of identity development among all three of Bosnia's ethno-religious groups, with particular attention to Muslim identity. Between 1878 and 1941 a number of historical events occurred that had a significant impact on Muslim identity formation. These include: 1) the emergence of Balkan nation-states and national identities; 2) the placement of Bosnia under administrative control of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; 3) the breakout of World War I; and finally, 4) the gradual development of a Bosnian entity within twentieth century Yugoslavia. Second, I examine the Muslim experience and the struggle to be recognized as a constitutionally recognized *narod* (nation)

¹ Florian Bieber argues that Islam in Southeastern Europe arrived as early as tenth century. Bieber argues that these early Balkan Muslims were members of Asiatic tribes that settled in what is now northwest Bosnia (Bieber 2000: 2).

² Bogumilism was a dualist sect, similar to the neo-Manichean communities of the Bulgarian Bogumils and the related heretical sectaries of the West (Patarins, Catharists). It was a blend of Catholic Church organization and heretical doctrine (Banac 1984; Fine 1994). It is also important to note that Bosnia experienced significantly higher level (percentage per capita) of religious conversion than any other Ottoman province in the Balkans.

during the first period of socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1964). Third, I draw attention to a number of political and historical events between 1964 and 1992 (culminating in the wars of Yugoslav dissolution), with a specific focus on how both the Yugoslav state and Muslims themselves defined their identity. Finally, I discuss the role and position of women in socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1992) with emphasis on social, cultural, and economic experiences that were essential in the development of Muslim women's identities.

ISLAM IN BOSNIA

Islam is one of the key features of the administrative and geo-political structures that became the precursor to the way in which Europeans would view Southeastern Europe and the kind of relationship that would arise as a result³. Islam was introduced into Europe via three routes: the Iberian Peninsula, the island of Sicily, and the Balkan region. Muslim Moors occupied portions of Spain for over seven hundred years before they were expelled by the Catholic Bourbons in 1492, and Sicily was briefly in the hands of the Arabs between (965-1061). Ottoman Turks conquered the Balkans in the fourteenth century. The invasion set off a process of religious conversion which created a sizable Muslim population in the Balkans that remains to this today.

Over the course of the Ottoman Empire's five hundred year control and rule over the Balkans, four major groups of Muslims emerged which eventually came to be identified as ethnically distinct: and the Slavic speaking Muslims of Bulgaria, Bosnia and the Sandžak; Muslim Roma; and the non-Slavic speaking Ottoman Turks; and Albanians. The Ottomans conquered Bosnia in 1463 and asserted their control over the entire region by 1465. Prior to

³ Explained by Maria Todorova in *Imagining the Balkans* (2009).

Ottoman control, Bosnia was primarily a sleepy outpost of the Catholic and Christian Orthodox Church, including the Bogumil sect. Largely voluntary, conversions to Islam followed in the wake of Ottoman rule with the highest number of conversions burgeoning from the Bogumil communities.

Numerous theories surround the overwhelming Bogumil conversions including: a) similarity in the belief system (both were monotheistic religions); b) political advantages resulting from conversion; and, finally c) Bogumil's marginal position in Bosnia and its tenuous relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. However, as Donia and Fine conclude, the conversions were not en masse, but rather gradual. More importantly, attention should be drawn to the fact that many Catholics and Orthodox converted to Islam as well (Donia and Fine 1994: 12). Cornelia Sorabji writes,

Islam gained adherents, the Bosnian Church lost them, Catholicism and Orthodoxy both gained and lost. In short, conversions occurred in almost all directions. Even within a single family, one son might adopt Islam while a second retained the old faith. Contemporary Muslims are not then the pure descendants either of Orthodox or of Catholicism (or of Bogomilism). They are descendants of Bosnians of various religious persuasions. Much less are they ethnic members of a Serb or Croat nation. [Donia and Fine 1993: 4]

Finally, Donia and Fine claim that Bosnia's notable change in religious confession was because Bosnians were never very good Christians (1994: 17). Furthermore, while Serbia and Croatia always had well-organized state churches and monasteries, Bosnia had

three rival organizations, all of which were weak. No church in Bosnia or Herzegovina had ever had a strong territorial organization, and all three were very short of priests... Few Christians were deeply attached to any Christian church or religious community, whether through belief or through a sense of community. [Donia and Fine 1994: 18]

Scholars portray the Ottomanization⁴ of Bosnia as a gradual process, one characterized by conversion and migrations from other regions of the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, the number of Muslim households increased between the Ottomans' entrance in the mid-fifteenth century and their retreat in late eighteenth century. According to Catholic Visitation Reports recorded between 1624 and 1809, the Muslim population had finally become the majority population in the region by the start of the nineteenth century (Donia and Fine 1994: 18).

Much of Bosnia's early history remains contested, especially the history of its inhabitants conversion and life of non-Muslims under the Ottoman state. Undeniably, however, the introduction of Islam and the large number of Bogumils explains some of the reasons as to why conversion to Islam happened at a higher pace than it did in other Ottoman provinces. Though many of the above statements remain highly debated among scholars, what is generally agreed upon is that Bosnia's experience with Islam and Ottomanization was essential in the shaping of the political and economic experiences of the country as a whole.

MUSLIM IDENTITY 1878-1945: EMERGING NATION-STATES AND NATIONALITIES

The end of nineteenth century saw the beginning of nation and state-building which were not without its problems. Nation-building was a process by which cultural institutions (religious and secular) and state institutions (schools, public memorials, army and others) acculturated citizens and subjects to ideas surrounding specific sets of characteristics and shared commonalities defining a specific unifying identity (History 2004). Gender identities

⁴ Ottomanization is the bringing of Ottoman cultural, religious, economic and political structure to the Balkan region in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

did not escape Bosnia's nation-building project; in fact the very nature of national identity was male-oriented (and patriarchal) and thus depended upon highly gendered bodies (particularly its women) (Mertus 1999: 186). On the other hand, state-building focused on urbanization and modernization, especially in the areas of public health, education and national infrastructure with the construction of roads and railroads. In the case of Bosnia, only few aspects of state-building were successful, namely the abolition of serfdom, introduction of private property, and a cash economy (Frucht 2005). In comparison to their neighbors to the west, however, Bosnia was slow to modernize (and therefore did not follow the same process of state and nation-building) until after the Second World War.

Identity during this period was fluid, changing, and as with all identity formation processes, dependent on the geo-political tides. In the years immediately after the Austro-Hungarians assumed administrative control over Bosnia, the idea of nationhood was not nearly as developed in the Balkans (and Bosnia) as it was in other parts of Europe. At this time most people living in the region "understood themselves as divided along family and religious, as opposed to national, lines" (Sorabji 1993: 3). In the Balkans, Christians went from being identified by their religious affiliation, to include geographic, territorial, historical, and linguistic similarities as essential parts of their identity. Growing dissent against foreign rule and the desire for self-determination fueled the movement of Christians towards national liberation. Furthermore, attempts to define others (non-Christians, including Muslims, Turks, Pomaks, Jews and Roma) as part of their group became essential to nation-building. Thus, in the case of the post-Ottoman Balkans, the emergent nationalist movements of the Serbs, Croats, and Bulgarians claimed that their Muslim neighbors and

more importantly that their lands were part of their own national groups. As a result, political movements and parties in both Croatia and Serbia claimed that Muslims were Serbs and Croats of Muslim faith. Florian Bieber argues that:

The decline of the Empire, however, presented Muslims from Bihać to Crete with three options: one, they could withdraw further southeast to the shrinking borders of the Ottoman Empire (eventually to Anatolia); two, they could assimilate into the new Christian nation states by adopting Christianity; or, three, they could form their own nations, by establishing their own nation states. The last of these options is a continuing process that has still not been completed at the end of the twentieth century. Most Muslims of Southeastern Europe continue to live as minorities in Christian states or as citizens of fragile states with Muslim majorities. [Sorabji 2000: 25]

During the first three centuries of Ottoman occupation and control, Balkan Muslim identity reflected their status as part of the Ottoman ruling classes, as followers of Sunni Islam, and as subjects of a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic empire. These groups represent pre-modern identities; that is, they were predecessors to the arrival of the nationalism and the nation and state building activities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With the development of both cultural and political nationalism in the nineteenth century Europe, Christian Balkan peoples utilized nationalism to both define themselves not only vis-à-vis the Ottoman state and its Muslim elites but also between themselves.

Discussions surrounding a Muslim identity in a national sense did not emerge until after 1878 when Serbia and Montenegro received their independence from the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria became an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the religiously heterogeneous province of Bosnia came under the control of Austria-Hungary and would be annexed by the latter in 1908.

With the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano and later the Congress of Berlin⁵, Bosnia was awarded to Austria and it became an Austrian colony (McCarthy 1994: 80). With the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sandžak, which remains part of Serbia to this day, but was once part of the Bosnian vilayet (administrative unit under the Ottomans) were put under the administration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire⁶. Under Austrian rule Bosnia began its integration into the dual monarchy's economic and political system, remnants of which remain to the present day. This transformation worsened the situation of Bosnian Muslims as their socio-economic and political status diminished. Urban demographics changed from being predominantly Muslim to including Bosnia's non-Muslims and peoples from other regions of the Hapsburg monarchy. In addition, the educational system was drastically reformed to include European models and the official national language was changed to Serbo-Croatian (Karčić 1999).

Under Ottoman rule, Muslims represented the majority of landowners and free peasants⁷ in the region, thereby forcing their Christian neighbors into indebted servitude (Banac 1994; Karčić 1999). Banac argues that with the arrival of Austrians in 1878, Bosnia

⁵ Congress of Berlin brought together the European Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire's leadership for a meeting in the summer of 1878 in order to decide the fate and reorganize the countries of the Balkan region.

⁶ Hugh Poulton states that "although theoretically still subjects of the Ottoman Sultan, the Serbo-Croat-speaking Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandžak experienced a transfer from the control of the multi-ethnic and multi-dimensional Ottoman Empire to the similarly multi-ethnic and multi-dimensional Habsburg monarchy." [1997: 50]

⁷ The customary tenants or sharecroppers were mostly Christians: the Orthodox (Serbs) and the Catholics (Croats). According to the 1910 census in Bosnia there were 10,463 free peasants, 79,677 customary tenants, 31,416 tenants who also owned their own land. Muslim constituted 91.15% of the landowners, 55.65% of the free peasants and 4.58% of tenants who also owned their land (Karčić 1999: 88-89).

had roughly six to seven thousand beys⁸ and agas⁹ that ruled majority Serb Orthodox and some Catholic kmet(s)¹⁰ (Banac 1984). In addition to land-ownership advantages, Muslims paid fewer taxes and were generally treated better than non-Muslims. Therefore it is not surprising that when the Ottoman Empire began its retreat from the Balkans, its Muslim subjects followed. No longer enjoying the status afforded them by their religious affiliation, Balkan Muslims lost their political and socio-economic dominance. The Muslim population went from owning lands, ruling the Christian peasants, paying fewer taxes, and enjoying political and economic domination to simply being one of the many subjected groups within the Habsburg monarchy.

Austrian administration of the region meant the placement of loyal bureaucrats from Vienna in administrative positions, thus excluding former Ottoman officials. Also as a result of the Orthodox Christian peasant uprising (1875) and the change in leadership, Muslims left Bosnia. By the beginning of the 1880s, Muslims were a demographic minority. The causes for their diminished numbers and presence within Balkan economic and political institutions are numerous including death or emigration to Muslim-majority countries like Turkey (McCarthy 1994). Subsequent waves of Muslim emigration occurred following the 1881 compulsory conscription of all subjects by the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Pinson 1994). According to Mark Pinson (1994) the changes instituted by the Austro-Hungarian

⁸ Simply translated as 'lord', Bey was a title given to subordinate military and administrative officers, such as a district administrator and lower-level minor military governors, beys were responsible for administrating beyluks (province or protectorate).

⁹ Aga is a title for a civil or military officer, or often part of such title, was placed after the name of certain military functionaries in the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁰ Kmets were poor peasants who during feudalist period worked the land owned by agas or beys. They were placed under servitude with high tax regulations. Many kmets were so poor they could never pay for the land they worked but continued to pay taxes in order to use it.

leadership, such as the crack-down on a local Muslim political movement in 1901 and annexing Bosnia in 1908, contributed to decreased Muslim presence in local government. Yet, the Muslim community in Bosnia survived and adjusted to a life under Habsburg political institutions and a Christian majority (Banac 1994).

With the geo-political changes in Bosnia and throughout the Balkans, state and nation-building became important sites of contestation among the Balkan peoples. Individuals and communities wove into their nation building activities and discourses claims of geographic cohesion and cultural, linguistic and religious commonalities (Hoare 2006; Iveković 2002; Sorabji 1993). Emergence of nation-states throughout Europe and the conditions of Habsburg after 1878 posed a distinct problem for Bosnian Muslims since their identity remained tied to being members of religion rather than a nation. As Donia and Fine point out, religion as the identity boundary in the Balkans had given way to given way to the acquisition of ethnic labels. They write,

Bosnians were certainly conscious of being members of distinct communities defined by religion. Then in nineteenth century, Orthodox and Catholic Bosnians gradually and unevenly, under the impact of ideas exported by their neighbors in Serbia and Croatia, began acquiring the ethnic labels “Serb” and “Croat” respectively. Thus, many Bosnian Christians had acquired an ethnic consciousness to further define their distinctiveness by the end of Ottoman period. In some cases, and increasingly in the 1870s, this ethnic awareness was transforming itself into a nationalism similar to that being expressed at the time by Croats across the Sava or by Serbs across the Drina. As they spread, these new nationalist identities, for those who had acquired them, played a part, particularly in the 1870s, in movements of liberation from the Ottomans. [Donia and Fine 1994: 10]

As with most of Europe, nationalist movements had an expressed focus on the building of a homogenous nation-state. However, their desires for homogeneity clashed with the reality of the European continent: centuries of migration, settlement, and displacement. The

European continent was heterogeneous in its socio-cultural profile; the Balkan region in particular was but one example of the intermixing of ethnic and religious groups. What made the Balkan region different from the rest of the continent was the existence of Islam. Islam as a religion and its cultural, historical, and intellectual traditions would come to be rejected as European and coded as “foreign” and threatening.

Despite the existence of nationalist movements and emergent states and their attendant rhetoric of belonging and exclusion, Balkan and Bosnian Muslims were slow to embrace an identity based upon ethnicity. There had never been a need for the development of a strong Bosniak national movement or identity because Bosnian Muslims enjoyed political and economic privileges under the Ottomans. Nonetheless, the Ottoman period did in fact give birth to the idea of a cultural identity among all the ethnic groups within Bosnia, even its Muslim population. Ivan Lovrenović argues that,

Islam and Orthodox and Catholic Christianity shaped the spiritual life of a population with close ethnic origins and a common language; a picture that in complex interaction with other historical factors—social, political, and cultural—had by the nineteenth century produced the national identities of Bosniak-Muslims, Serbs and Croats. [Lovrenović 2001: 108]

By 1918 international conditions changed throughout Europe. The subject nationalities of the large multi-ethnic empires—Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman—had declared their independence from their respective empires in the last weeks of the First World War and the treaties negotiated at the Paris Peace Conference (1919) recognized many of the new states. Some of which, like the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes established on December 1, 1918, did not wait for the peace conference. The creation of new states in Central and Southeastern Europe and the devastation wrought by the war destabilized

borders, social and economic relationships, and geo-politics. Fears arose over which national groups would reject the new status quo. This is seen in the case of the new south Slavic Kingdom, for example, the rise of violence against Bosnia's Muslims was wide-spread because Bosnia Serbs believed that Muslims were loyal to the Habsburg government. Around 270 villages were pillaged in 1918. To counter anti-Muslim sentiment, Bosnian Muslims organized and gave birth to Yugoslav Muslim Organization (YMO)¹¹ led by Mehmed Spaho.

WORLD WAR I

Even though much of the Balkans was engulfed by the wars of 1912 and 1913, little of the conflict actually reached Bosnia. Prior to World War I, the region witnessed the rise of anti-Habsburg sentiment among Serbs and Muslims, which was precipitated in part by the preferential treatment of Croats. Overall, political instability increased towards the end of the Balkan wars. The rise of nationalist organizations was a response to Habsburg control of local government institutions, army conscription of teenagers, and, finally, fake political trials in which local citizens were accused of and tried for crimes they did not commit (Histories 2003). Furthermore, rural peasants, who were already struggling to make ends meet, were forced to give their crops and herds to feed Habsburg troops (Histories 2003). The enforcement of these Habsburg policies upon peasants and rural inhabitants resulted in rebellions, property seizures, and demands for land reform. Thus, Bosnia on the eve of the First World War was rife with nationalist organizations plotting and planning to attack

¹¹ The YMO represented Bosnia's urban professionals, but it sought common ground with all classes to defend against anti-Muslim policies and actions, such as systematically replacing Muslims with Serbs in regional and local Bosnian government. The YMO was a specifically Bosnian party and did not organize in Muslim areas outside of Bosnia.

Habsburg officialdom whenever possible. The intersection of interests among a group of Serbian military officers (the Black Hand) and the Young Bosnians, a revolutionary group of young Serbian and Muslims, resulted in the hapless but successful assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914 in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo. World War I immediately reached Bosnia's and Serbia's borders; and over the course of its four years, the war inflicted massive casualties, particularly among the Serb population.

INTERWAR PERIOD (1918-1941)

The end of the war meant that Bosnia was incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (known as Kingdom of Yugoslavia after 1929) (Gibney and Handsen 2005). Incorporation into the new Kingdom was successful due to promises of economic reform, as well as political and religious autonomy for Bosnia's Muslim population. However, a number of events would occur in the interwar period that relegated Muslims to the status of second class citizens with little voice or power. First, after being incorporated into the Kingdom, Bosnia remained neglected and ignored by the leadership in Belgrade¹². Many have argued that the monarchy did not consider the large Muslim population as a constituent part of south Slavs peoples (Hoare 2006; Karčić 1999). In addition to the fight for control of Bosnia by the Serb dominated political elites, the events that unfolded during the interwar period were a result of the dire socio-economic situation (Hoare 2006). With much of the population working in agriculture, in combination with an exponential population growth,

¹² Hoare writes that "in the first half of the 1920s, Bosnia-Herzegovina received only one-seventeenth of the credit provided by the National Bank of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. In 1923 Bosnia-Herzegovina received approximately 80,136,000 dinars of credit from the National Bank while Croatia received 423,739,000 and Slovenia 185, 893,000. Slovenia therefore received well over twice as much credit as Bosnia-Herzegovina, though its population was one half and its territory one third the size (Hoare 2006: 44).

peasants' livelihoods became difficult as their plots became further divided in order to accommodate increased family size. On top of this, peasant farmers continued to share a disproportionate tax burden. In the 1920s, land reform policies resulted in the redistribution of Muslim owned lands to other non-Muslim ethnic groups. The land reform¹³ meant that Muslim landlords were allowed a maximum of 50 hectares. Moreover, their movement into unoccupied land was also limited by the nationalization of the majority of Bosnia's forests as state property. This situation left many Muslims in absolute poverty. Exacerbating the problem further, Bosnian Serbs forcibly seized land and attacked Muslim landowners. In addition to land seizure, there were a number of attacks on Muslim sacred objects (Histories 2003). Events surrounding the land reform—which remained unresolved until 1941—were thus one of the primary reasons for continued animosity between Serbs and Muslims.

During negotiations for the Kingdom's first constitution (Vidovdan constitution), Muslim leadership opposed centralization, and supported federalism of the government because the former deliberately excluded the Muslim population from any decision making at the state level through local representation at the nation's capital. Muslim leadership requested Muslim religious autonomy, control over Islamic educational institutions, sharia courts, and landlord compensation, which eventually led to the signing of the Vidovdan agreement. Despite these promises, Serb leadership failed to allot any positions of political power to Muslims, causing a deep fracture and fragmentation in Muslim leadership. In

¹³ The demographic growth rate of Yugoslavia in the interwar period was among the highest in Europe while the growth rate in Bosnia-Herzegovina was among the highest of any Yugoslav province. The Bosnian population was also predominantly agricultural: in 1931 84.45 per cent lived in the countryside and 15.55 per cent in the towns (Hoare 2006).

1929, the King abolished the Vidovdan agreement when he established sole rule as the country's monarch¹⁴; subsequently, this political move ended territorial integrity and Muslim religious autonomy¹⁵ (Fruchts 2005: 1). The situation remained tense and problematic until the breakout of the Second World War.

With the growing ethnic problems throughout the Kingdom, King Aleksandar (r. 1921-1934) suspended the constitution in 1929, ruled by edict, and decided to divide the country into nine administrative banovine (counties) which were to cut across ethnic and historical lines and named after rivers and regions. What once was Bosnia and Herzegovina was split among four of the new units (Vrbaska, Drinska, Primorska, and Zetska). This reorganization disadvantaged Muslims since each of the new units gave Serbs and Croats a demographic and political advantage over Muslims. Any chance for Muslim autonomy which they were promised in the 1920 elections¹⁶ disappeared under royal dictatorship. Furthermore, the King banned Yugoslav Muslim Organization—the main political party of Bosnia's Muslims—and moved the reis-ul-ulema from Sarajevo to Belgrade, thereby decentralizing Muslim leadership (Gibney and Hansen 2005).

¹⁴ The 1921 constitution placed state power with the parliament, the courts, and the Serbian King Alexander. The king held legislative and executive powers, but the judiciary was independent. Alexander confirmed and issued every law, appointed all state officials, and served as supreme commander of the military. Instead of using national or historic criteria to determine administrative units, the constitution divided the kingdom into thirty-three districts (oblasti) (Frucht 2005: 2).

¹⁵ In 1929 Bosnia-Herzegovina was partitioned into four provinces where Muslims became an even greater minority and by 1939 a new partition left 13 counties under Croatian rule and 38 with territories planned for Serbian control (Sorabji 1993).

¹⁶ The 1920 election results split between unitary parties and federalists, with the YMO receiving twenty-four seats. In order to achieve a unitary constitution, the Serbian parties set aside their differences and extended minor concessions to the YMO, the Agrarians, the Slovene's People's Party (SLS), and the Croatian Union (HZ) in exchange for their support (Frucht 2005: 1).

WORLD WAR II (1941-1945)

At the beginning of the Second World War, Marko Hoare argues, Yugoslavia¹⁷ was engulfed in the national question. With the onset of WWII, much of the Balkans was in a desperate economic position and increased ethnic tensions. By 1941, Hitler occupied all of the Balkan states either through alliances or conquest. With Allied victories in Russia and North Africa, the gaze of conquest fell upon the Balkans in 1943 (Pavlowitch 1999: 321). The best example of a unified front and resistance to Hitler came from the Yugoslav Partisan movement, led by Josip Broz Tito¹⁸. Formed in July 1941, immediately after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, the communist-led partisan movement embraced the idea of “Brotherhood and Unity” and attempted to unite Yugoslavia’s ethnic groups in order to push out Yugoslavia’s occupiers. However, other movements, like the Croatian Ustaša movement and the Serbian resistance movement complicated Partisan attempts at “Brotherhood and Unity” as each movement vied for political and military advantage in central Bosnia and for post-war power. In the early period of the Second World War, Bosnia-Herzegovina was partitioned, the lion’s share allocated to the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). Independent Croatia led by the Fascist Ustaša party was deeply committed to promotion of Catholic Croat interests and considered Bosnia’s Muslims as simply Croats of Islamic faith.

According to Banac, Croats wooed “the Muslims with a show of respect for their

¹⁷ Yugoslavia was not alone; the national question dominated all of Europe, starting with the French Revolution and continuing with the rise of dictators like Mussolini and Hitler (Hoare 2006).

¹⁸ Josip Broz Tito (born in 1892 in Croatia) was the president of Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia from 1945 until his death in 1980. He was the secretary-general of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (1939-1980) and the commander of the Partisans (anti-fascist army) from 1941 to 1945. Tito is credited as chiefly responsible for the formation of socialist Yugoslavia.

religion, symbols, and décor” (Banac 1994: 141). Their success in seducing Muslims Croats with flattery was not simply a result of a show of respect for the Islamic faith. Rather, it was primarily a result of mistreatment Muslims experienced at the hands of Serbs in the early years after the Ottomans left. Therefore, some Muslims supported Ustaša policies and actions targeted at removing Serbs from the Independent State of Croatia (including the annexed regions of Bosnia). These policies were threefold: 1) conversion of Serbs to Catholicism; 2) expulsion; and 3) internment. These policies resulted in the displacement and deaths of many Serbs and led Bosnian Serbs to retaliate and to support both the Četnik movement and the partisan movement. The Second World War in Bosnia morphed into a bitter civil war among national and political groups.

The issue of national belonging and nationality dominated European politics for over two hundred years before it played itself out in intra-ethnic conflict of World War II Yugoslavia. The ensuing fascist incursion into Bosnia and Yugoslavia was characterized by the execution of communists, gypsies, and Serb nationalists. Muslims had an ambiguous standing during WWII and they fought on all sides of the conflict. World War II was as much about anti-fascist as it was about inter-ethnic fighting. Arguably more people were killed at the hands of other ethnic groups than outside armies. The rogue state of independent Croatia, led by ultranationalist Ante Pavelić, massacred Serbs, Jews, communists, and anyone else that did not fit their idea of a pure Croat race (History 2004). Many Muslims were exempt from this rule as they were considered Croats of Muslim faith¹⁹. This in turn

¹⁹ Officially, the Ustaša espoused an ideology that proclaimed Croatia one nation of two faiths—Catholicism and Islam. In the most general sense, this ideology drew from a strain of Croatian nationalist thought that believed Muslims were Croats who had converted to Islam during the Ottoman period. Pavelić promised

spelled out atrocities against Muslims on the hands of Četniks²⁰, with thousands of Muslims killed throughout Bosnia. The formation of Četniks, or Serb nationalist guerilla forces, during WWII period was a reaction to the executions and persecution of Serbs. Yet in Bosnia, where their message of Serb unity and protection was most salient, Tito's partisan forces took hold and built a heterogeneous army of Serbs, Croats and Muslims that eventually ousted the Germans. However, partisans' victory was not without problems and many battles occurred between the intra-ethnic partisans and the Četniks. Many atrocities were committed on both sides of the ethnic divide and many Muslims, Croats and Serbs died during the war.

The partisan's message of unity and common enemy was somewhat successful, but the intra-ethnic animosity remained and while suppressed in the post-World War II period, national identity movements remained alive and present²¹. Nonetheless, Tito's mistrust of Muslim motives for joining the Croat-Nazi collaboration is arguably one of the primary

Muslim Croats substantial autonomy over social and religious matters and appointed some Muslims to top positions in his regime. In Sarajevo, he catered to his core constituencies, appointing a Muslim mayor and a Catholic deputy mayor, as well as Muslim and Catholic Ustaša deputies to oversee the city's transition (Grebler Balić 2009: 120-121).

²⁰ Hoare writes that, "An ordinary Croat or Muslim militiamen and Home Guards on the one hand and actual Ustašas on the other, the effect of their rhetoric was to incite Serb-nationalist hatred of Muslims and Croats generally. The Četnik movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in so far as it was a movement, was constructed via the unification of local anti-Communist band throughout the country behind a single leadership, a process that began in September 1941 and was never more than superficially completed. The ideological force uniting the members of these bands at the mass level was hostility to the Muslims or 'Turks': although the latter were less likely than Bosnian Croats to support the Ustašas, they were the object of greater hatred. This was owing to the tradition of conflict between Serb peasants and Muslim landowners, the political struggle between the Serb and Muslim political parties of the interwar years, and the simple fact that the Croats were less numerous and not so intermingled with the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina" (2006: 97).

²¹ Frucht argues that Tito's success among Muslims can "be attributed to the Partisan's populist appeal, Allied Military aid, and Partisan military success. The Partisan promise of national brotherhood and unity' appealed to those in all national groups who were opposed to the ethnically motivated Četnik and Ustaša violence. The Partisan's willingness to resist the NDH and occupation forces eventually won them substantial support, both from the Allied Command and from anticommunist leaders in the Croatian Peasant Party (CPP) and the YMO (2005: 3).

reasons why Yugoslav Muslims were not recognized as a separate nationality. Muslim alliances were questioned for a long time after the Second World War ended, and Tito was unsure that Muslims would join his attempts in creating brotherhood and unity among the South Slavs. The intra-ethnic conflict between Muslims, Croats and Serbs in the interwar and World War II period would prove seminal in the burgeoning national movements of 1980s, which resulted in genocide and the partitioning of Yugoslavia.

POST WORLD WAR II (1945-1964)

Communist Yugoslavia was declared in 1941 but came to fruition in 1945. The new state was led by a charismatic and authoritative anti-fascist fighter and leader Josip Broz Tito. Child of an inter-ethnic marriage, Tito was a strong proponent of South Slavic unity. The new Yugoslavia was a state made up of six autonomous republics, each with their own historical, cultural, and religious minorities. In Bosnia, Serbs came to represent the most numerous national group since Muslims were considered a special ethnic group and not a nation, which effectively positioned Muslims as second class citizens of the Yugoslav state (Frucht 2005: 7). The interwar period saw an increase in nationalist ideologies leading to severe divisions between ethnic groups, particularly in Bosnia, where mistrust of Serbs by its Croat and Muslim populations and vice-versa loomed large at the end of the Second World War. During the war, efforts by the communists in uniting the population against the fascist invasion produced a policy of intra-ethnic tolerance and heterogeneity, even though they were not practiced in day-to-day interactions among members of different ethnic groups (Hoare 2006). For Muslims in particular whose historical association to the Ottomans, and through their participation within the rogue Croatian state, the struggle to

maintain a sense of Muslimness was challenged by the Serb dominated communist party leadership. Despite the focus on South Slav historical and linguistic unity, Tito was unable to completely subdue nationalist ideologies and dreams among the different peoples of communist Yugoslavia.

One way in which Tito tried to unify different ethnic groups was through an increase in the quality of life for all ethnic groups through modernization. Throughout the late nineteenth and well into the late twentieth century, Bosnia, and the rest of the Balkans was slow to adopt the kinds of modernizing projects like those of their neighbors to the west. Bosnia remained largely rural until the early 1960s. However, following the Second World War, urban areas saw a major influx in the development and building of factories to accommodate the needs of a growing population. The focus on modernization and industrialization sped up the process of modernization, and parts of Yugoslavia emerged as some of the most modernized and prosperous of the Balkan region. However, focus on urbanization as a way of accommodating the growing post-war population gave rise to an increased social division between rural and urban communities. Urban areas received greater resources while rural populations struggled to survive in the years following the war. In Bosnia, this created further tension between Serbs and Muslims, as Muslims made up majority of the urban population (Greble Balić 2009).

Being a Muslim was difficult in the years after WWII because the communist leadership viewed Islam as a backward Asiatic religion and attacked the Islamic community—including interfering with how Muslims dressed, what they ate and the rituals they performed at home (Frucht 2005: 8). The disdain for Islam was best demonstrated in

the prohibition of the veil for Muslim women, forcing Muslim men to eat pork, and requiring communist officials not to circumcise their sons (Frucht 2005: 8). Religious expression was looked upon as anti-nationalist and anti-state. Islam in particular was seen as a threat, Francine Friedman explains:

During the post-World War II persecution of religion in Yugoslavia, Islam fared as badly as, if not worse than, other religions in many ways, although its practice was not forbidden. The Yugoslav state had taken over the education, religious taxation, and judicial functions heretofore reserved for the Islamic community leaders. Mosques and other religious intuitions, as well as schools for teaching Islam and the Koran, were often closed or converted to other purposes, and children could not openly be taught their religion. The training of Muslim teachers was circumscribed, as was the publication of Islamic books...The Islamic religion did not regain any form of self-regulation until the passage of the 1954 law on the freedom of religion. Muslim practices, such as women wearing veils, were outlawed. [Friedman 1996: 150]

The closing of madrassas in the years after the war as the primary educational institutions for Muslims was a severe blow to the development and continuation of Islamic life and religious practice in Bosnia. Furthermore, the closing of many mosques was detrimental to the goal of providing a gathering space for the Muslim community. Through these policies, the communists actively took away the Muslim population's ability to form into an ummah (or the community). In effect, taking away religious centers ultimately put a stop to any public gatherings and thereby diminished public expression of religious identity for Yugoslav Muslims. It must be noted that all religions suffered in the early period of communist Yugoslavia because the communist party saw religious leaders as "especially dangerous because they could provide an alternative ideology that might endanger the fragile, post-revolutionary socialist political and economic system" (Spahić-Šiljak 2012: 113).

The result of these policies was overwhelming secularization of the Muslim

population. Communist states adjacent to Yugoslavia worked hard at containing and eradicating any development of Islamic identity among their minorities. This was primarily the result of an anti-Muslim sentiment felt by populations that, until the late nineteenth century, were under the rule of Muslim Ottomans. During the post-World War II period, anti-Muslim sentiments were present within foreign and domestic policies, born out of the residual fear of Islamic fundamentalism associated with Ottoman rule. The Ottoman Empire and Islam were seen as “the religion of the conquering state” and the non-Muslim people saw themselves as “disadvantaged citizens” (Poulton and Taji-Farouki 1997). Therefore, anti-Muslim sentiment was deeply rooted in Balkan people’s consciousness at the time that new socialist and communist states were being imagined. Undoubtedly, the growing pan-Islamic movement in the Middle East at the time was of serious concern to the Yugoslav leadership (Friedman 1996: 281). The communist state was worried that if they did not make Muslims feel as if they belonged within the South Slav state, then they would join pan-Islamic movements that transcended the boundaries of geography, language, and history.

Fearing Serb domination, that during the interwar period spelled many problems for the Muslim population, the Muslims of Yugoslavia came to be some of the most fervent supporters of Tito’s policies. Tito’s policies of inclusion and equality among his forces and the partisans during World War II, was another reason for increased Muslim support. Aware of the problems that led to intra-ethnic conflict during both World Wars, Tito focused on giving political recognition to the different nationalities that now constituted Yugoslavia. In order to avoid conflict, Friedman argues that “Tito recognized the multiple

national identities of the South Slavs and allowed them national self-determination within a uniform political order” (Friedman 1996: 144). Still, while he recognized Serb, Croat, and Slovene nationalities, he did not extend the same identification to the Yugoslav Muslim population. Instead he designated them as an ethnic group (Banac 1994: 144). The CPY officially sanctioned this view in the 1961 census which created the category “Muslim in the ethnic sense.” Friedman argues that while this category was not the same as nationality, it was a step in the right direction, meaning that for the first time since the Ottoman Empire the Muslims were recognized as more than just a faith, but a group with political agenda (Friedman 1996). The census numbers in 1961 reflected the new category when Muslims could choose “Muslim in the ethnic sense” and longer have to choose to declare themselves “Yugoslav” in order to avoid choosing Serbian or Croatian. As a result, those who self-declared as Yugoslav went from 31% in 1953 down to 8% in 1961. The 1961 census also recorded 842,248 Muslims, or 25% of Bosnia’s total population (Friedman 1996: 155).

The change in numbers made it clear that Muslims of Bosnia did not consider themselves Serbs or Croats of Muslim faith; rather they identified themselves as a separate national group. As a result, Yugoslav Muslims could only identify as Serb, Croat, or Yugoslav citizens who happen to be of Muslim faith, but not as a Muslim nationality. Furthermore, both the state and their Serb and Croat neighbors saw Muslims as converts and not a separate national group. This view of Muslims provided Tito further reasoning to deny them a national identity (Bringa 1995).

Their identification as an ethnic group, and not an equal nationality, left many Muslims of Bosnia dissatisfied. Additionally, being forced to choose a national identity (i.e.,

Serb or Croat) contributed to the feeling of mistrust of the government and Yugoslav leadership. Sorabji points out,

Muslims spent long decades stubbornly refusing to be either Serb or Croat and continued to think of themselves as a third, separate and equal group. When the 1961 census finally allowed people to declare themselves as 'Muslim in the ethnic sense', 26 per cent of the Bosnian population immediately chose to do so. When the 1971 census upgraded 'Muslim' to a national category, 40 per cent chose this option. In 1991, almost 2 million Bosnians were convinced that they formed part of a Muslim nation which shared the republic with members of Bosnia's Serb and Croat nations. [Sorabji 1993: 6]

Throughout the 1960s, political momentum continued toward the Bosnian Muslims eventually nationality²² status, i.e. the same status as Serbs and Croats. In the Bosnian constitution they become a separate community in 1963, distinct from Serbs and Croats. "In 1964, the Fourth Bosnian Party Congress declared explicitly that Moslems had the rights of self-determination." During the first period of communist Yugoslavia there were six recognized nationalities (*Jugoslovenski narodi*) including Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Muslims, each with a nation home based in one of the republics and with a constitutional right to equal political representation. During this period Muslims had a nationality status and they could choose from various official categories. In the population census of 1948 there was the option of "Muslims of undeclared nationality" in addition to Serb and Croat. However, in 1953 those who did not want to declare

²² Sorabji provides a nice definition for this term, stating: "It is difficult to provide a good translation to the terms *narod* and *narodnost* since no clear criteria seem to distinguish the nationalities designated by the two terms. In general it is the case that a *narod* is a group the majority of whose members live within the borders of Yugoslavia whilst a large percentage of the members of a *narodnost* live outside the country (thus, most Turks live in Turkey and most Hungarians in Hungary). This equation is not, however, universally applicable: many Macedonians live in Bulgaria and Greece. The state's ascription of *narod* or *narodnost* status to different nationalities seems to be based on political and diplomatic consideration rather than those of pure logic." (Sorabji 1989: 13)

themselves as Serbs or Croats had the option of “Yugoslavs of undeclared nationality”. In 1961 Bosnian Muslims could declare themselves as “Muslims in the ethnic sense” (i.e. as *narodnost*) and finally in 1971 census they could declare as “Muslim” nationality (i.e. *narod*).

Arguably recognition of Yugoslav Muslims as a nationality was also a result of Tito’s foreign policy. Responding to the shifting powers in the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin, Tito, along with Nasser of Egypt and Nehru of India, united with a number of leaders in Asia and Africa. Independent of Soviet economic and political domination and coupled with former colonial countries, such as Egypt and India, the leaders formed the nonaligned movement. The nonaligned movement consisted of twenty-five countries that made it their mission to fight Western colonialism and imperialism. Most of these twenty-five Asian and African member countries had majority Muslim populations. In order to develop stronger ties with these regions, Tito elevated Bosnian Muslims to the status of *narod* to solidify relations with the Muslim world. Additionally, as Tito was looking for various coalitions in the late 1960s, the communist leadership in Bosnia was rewarded with the ethnic designation. These changes led to the first conference of Non-Aligned Nations to convene in Belgrade in 1961. However, many Serbs and Croats never quite accepted the Muslims as a separate nationality. Bringa states,

Serbs and Croats would insist that the Bosnian Muslims were really something else, i.e. ethnically either Serbs or Croats respectively (or at best either “Serbs- or “Croats of the Islamic faith”). These claims were part of wider Serbian and Croatian hegemonic aspirations in Bosnia-Herzegovina: making the Bosnian Muslims into Serbs or Croats would strengthen one of the two contestants considerably. [Bringa 1993: 86]

The first period of post-World War II was a period during which Muslims were in an

ambiguous and marginalized position. Recognition of Muslims as a *narod* was a long process, one that took nearly 20 years. For Tito the dangers of recognizing Muslims as one of the *Jugoslovenski narodi* meant was a turning point in Bosnia's history of the development of Muslim national identity. Being Muslim during the first twenty years after the war was a challenge. However, Tito had to allow Muslims a voice in order to counter the growing nationalist sentiment of Serbs and Croats. In addition to local benefits, recognition of Muslims had tangible international advantages, like the Non-Aligned Movement. Either way, Muslims became a nationality in 1964 thereby giving rise to a new period in the history of the development of Muslim national identity.

MUSLIMS IN TITO'S YUGOSLAVIA (1964-1992)

Following the recognition of Bosnia's Muslims in 1961 as "Muslims in the ethnic sense" (i.e. as *narodnost*) and ten years later as a *narod*, and Tito's appointment of Džemal Bjedić as the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia in 1971, an Islamic renaissance began (Banac 1994: 145). In addition to a growing number of Muslims who identified as members of Muslim *narod* in the census of 1971, during the 1970s and 80s Yugoslavia and Bosnia saw a number of religious structures (mosques and religious centers) built and reconstructed. This was followed by secular toleration of public piety and pilgrimages as demonstrated by an increased number of organized pilgrimages to Mecca (Banac 1994: 145). The growing Muslim nationalist movement was in part a backlash to re-emergent Serb nationalism which perceived and characterized Islam as a threat in both Bosnia and Kosovo (where Albanians constituted the overwhelming majority). In the 1970s Yugoslavia saw a rise in Serb and Croat nationalism, best exemplified in protests culminating in the "Croatian Spring" of 1971.

Tito responded to the rising 'Croat crisis' by encouraging and supporting Muslim leadership within the communist party, resulting in an increased "percentage [of Muslims] in the League of Communists of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 26 percent in 1969 to at least 30 percent in 1972" (Friedman 1996: 158-9).

These changes were essential to the development of Muslim self-consciousness. As Friedman asserts

...many Bosnian intellectuals believed in their distinctiveness (from Serbs and Croats), [and] they worked to raise the consciousness of the Bosnian Muslim population. The feeling of distinctiveness became an integral part of their feeling of nationhood. [Friedman 1996: 160]

With the adoption of a new constitution in 1974, the country became a de facto confederation and gave individual republics greater autonomy, Bosnia's Muslims began to occupy a status of relatively equal citizenship. Owing to these new changes in the political structure, most notably a policy that high-ranking jobs in the republics were to be filled on the basis of the population's proportion of each recognized nation, Bosnian Muslims gained a new, and significantly improved, status (Friedman 1996: 169).

Given that Bosnian Muslims held demographic plurality, they gained more influence within the political and administrative structures of the republic, and, for the first time since the Ottoman reign Muslims, became politically consequential. Friedman observes,

The aspirations of Bosnian Muslim politicians to increase their power within the republic and those of some Bosnian Muslim nationalists to create a Muslim homeland in Bosnia and Herzegovina were challenged by a third point of view, represented by an activist Muslim clergy buoyed by an unexpected surge of Islamic religious identity among some Bosnian Muslims. This was not supposed to happen in a Communist country, where religion was discouraged, and within a community as notoriously non-devout as the Bosnian Muslims. [Friedman 1996: 162]

These events show that while many Bosnian Muslims were not openly pious or expressive of their religious beliefs, those feelings and associations with their religion did not dissipate as evidenced by the preservation of religious rituals and practice taking place behind closed doors—a topic that is discussed in the remainder of this dissertation.

The 1980s was the last significant period in the development of Muslim consciousness before the breakout of the wars of Yugoslav disintegration in the 1990s. The trials of 1983, in which Alija Izetbegović—the future president of Bosnia-Herzegovina—was sentenced and jailed for spreading nationalist sentiments, mark an important turning point in the development of Bosnian Muslim national identity. Izetbegović was one of the few Bosnian Muslim intellectuals who spoke of the need for Muslims to return to faith and be proud of their Islamic backgrounds. He was the most prominent of the 12 Muslims tried and sentenced (one of which was a woman²³), and many of them ended up in his inner circle once he came to power. For many Muslim intellectuals Muslims needed to be reminded of their religious and national presence and demand the same respect and recognition already granted to Serbs and Croats by the state and the communist party. Additionally, it is around this time that the currently official designation of Bosnian Muslims as Bosniaks [Bošnjak] was adopted by the Islamic Community and SDA (Party for Socio-Democratic Action [SDA²⁴])

²³ Melika Salihbegović was one of the 12 Young Muslims members that was put on trial along with Alija Izetbegović. She was an author and one of Bosnia's top female intellectuals.

²⁴ SDA grew out of pan-Islamist movements of 1970s and its founding members were eight former members of Young Muslims. Their initial mission was to grab all of Yugoslav Muslims and was very instrumental in the formation of Muslim nationalism. At the start of Yugoslav disintegration SDA was also very closely aligned with Serb and Croat nationalist parties against the civic parties that grew out of former League of Communists (Bougarel 1999).

or Muslims of Bosnia interest party founded in May of 1990)²⁵. Izetbegović's seminal work The Islamic Declaration examines worldwide decay of Islamic values and traditions around the world. While his manifesto said nothing of Bosnian Muslims, the communist party felt that the book was promoting Islamic fundamentalism within Yugoslavia. The imprisonment of politically active people like Izetbegović is evidence of the fear of growing Muslim national identity. In the 1980s Croat nationalist leaders, such as Franjo Tuđman, as well as some leading Serbs were serving time or were under house arrest for nationalist sentiments.

Accompanying the trials of Muslim intellectuals, the ordinary lives of Bosnia's Muslims began transforming significantly. Many of my informants reference the 1980s as a formative time in their lives, particularly as it relates to the daily practice and expression of Islam. In 1980s, an increasing number of Muslims began openly pronouncing that they were Muslim; many openly expressed that they voted for Muslim-specific candidates in local and national elections. The number of men and women attending Hajj increased dramatically for Muslims of Yugoslavia, indicating that the climate for religious expression was more favorable. For many of my informants beyond the age of *moja generacija*, the 1980s presented a time of prosperity, best exemplified in the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo. The economy appeared to be taking an upturn²⁶ and people were confident that

²⁵ The trial was in 1983 but the term Bošnjak (and drop the term Muslim) wasn't adopted until 1993. At first Izetbegović and his allies opposed the proposal because they believed it to be too secularist, put forth by Adil Zulfikarpašić (the main representative of Muslim secular politicians) and the more secular wing of the SDA who split off from the party because of this, only to see the SDA embrace the Bošnjak label soon after. Pan-Islamic leadership like Izetbegovic were very successful in involving ulemas in politics in the early 1990s but were not so successful with Muslim secular intelligentsia (Bougarel 1999).

²⁶ However, Michel Chossudovsky in 1996 argued that "Following the initial phase of macro-economic reform in 1980, industrial growth plummeted to 2.8 percent in the 1980-87 period, plunging to zero in 1987-88 and to

the next decade would bring greater prosperity. Many mosques hosted more members than in the previous decades and people began openly observing religious holidays. This was also a time when Muslims felt confident to express their Muslim identities, so much so that Islamic rituals started being televised.

In the seventies and early eighties BiH saw the development of religious hierarchies and institutions. Not only were they growing in power, but religious institutions came to represent the interests and views of their constituents. Thus, the Islamic Religious Community (*Islamska Vjerska Zajednica*²⁷ later changed to the Islamic Community) began to “hold a position within Bosnia and Herzegovina analogous to that of the Orthodox Church in Serbia and the Catholic Church in Croatia” (Friedman 1996: 163; Rijaset n.d.). Bosnian Islam was focused around one central institution, the Islamic Community. The Islamic Community was gaining influence throughout communist Yugoslavia. At the same time it was the official organization charged with representing the interests of all Yugoslav Muslims. Headquartered in Sarajevo, the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia included about 3,000

-10.6 percent in 1990. The economic reforms reached their climax under the pro-US government of Prime Minister Ante Marković. In the autumn of 1989 just prior to the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the federal Premier had travelled to Washington to meet President George Bush. A “financial aid package” had been promised in exchange for sweeping economic reforms including a new devalued currency, the freeze of wages, a drastic curtailment of government expenditure and the abrogation of the socially owned enterprises under self-management. The “economic therapy” (launched in January 1990) contributed to crippling the federal State system. State revenues which should have gone as transfer payments to the republics and autonomous provinces were instead funneled towards servicing Belgrade’s debt with the Paris and London clubs. The republics were largely left to their own devices thereby exacerbating the process of political fracturing.”

²⁷ The Islamic Community (*Islamska Zajednica*) was established by the Austro-Hungarian authorities in order to accommodate the change from Islam as the state religion during Ottoman Empire. Ulemas and religious leadership are stripped of the role and importance they held during Ottoman control. Muslims in Bosnia, unsatisfied with Austro-Hungarian interference, formed a movement for religious autonomy of Muslims. This movement demanded autonomy and independence of Bosnia’s Muslims in regards to religious authority and education. Thus, in 1910 first reis-u-lemma was elected to enforce Islamic religious and legal dogma and manage the affairs of the Islamic Community was established as an independent institution responsible for well-being of Bosnia’s Muslims (Rijaset n.d.).

religious leaders and 3,000 mosques in the 1980s. Some Yugoslav Muslim officials studied at Islamic institutions abroad. Financial contributions from Islamic countries such as Libya and Saudi Arabia helped fund many of the 800 mosques constructed in Yugoslavia after World War II. In 1985 a "grand mosque" was opened in Zagreb after years of delay. The only Islamic school of theology in Europe was located in Sarajevo and Islamic secondary schools operated in Sarajevo, Skopje, and Priština. A religious school for women, attached to the Islamic secondary school in Sarajevo, had a capacity of sixty. The Islamic Community of Yugoslavia published a variety of newspapers and periodicals. Specifically, Islamic Community was active in helping reassert Bosnian Muslim identity in the eighties and when the war broke out in June 1991 and later in 1992 in Bosnia. The power of the Islamic Community was the strongest in the eighties, mostly in response first to Serbian and then Croatian nationalism.

In 1990, Yugoslavia was a country in deep economic distress and the rising nationalist movements could no longer be contained by the ruling communist party. Following the disintegration of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in January 1990s due to rift among the regional and republican branches of the LCY, Banac notes that Bosnia was forced to join other republics in pursuing political pluralisms and this pluralism resulted in nationalist parties dominating the political discourse²⁸ (Banac 1994: 146). Lampe appends that the collapse of the communist regime started one of the most difficult and systematic transitions this region had ever seen (2006). He argues that the most difficult transition occurred in 1991, when the federal state disintegrated into individual nation-states which

²⁸ There were other parties, but they did not attract the same diversity of voters.

had not existed in before. In an attempt to bring their respective irredenta into their newly configured states, the Serbian and Croatian leadership pursued two strategies: territorial expansion and “ethnic cleansing”. The latter strategy used nationalist ideology to incite ethnic rivalry that ended in one of the bloodiest ethnic conflicts of this region. In BiH, this meant the mass expulsions of Muslims from territories deemed “Croatian” or “Serbian.”²⁹ Both Croats and Serbs wished to ensure permanent ethnic domination, a move which promised a long-lasting presence of nationalism within the region (Mazower 2000).

With the break-out of the Yugoslav wars for independence each of the newly formed nation-states, like Bosnia, reformed its Islamic Community to specifically address regionally-specific issues. Therefore, today we see separate and distinct Islamic communities within Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia. Today, the aim of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ICBH) is that all of its members should live in conformity with Islamic guidelines. Their official mission is

....to protect the authenticity of the Islamic norms and assure their interpretation and application. The ICBH is taking care of the religious rights of Muslims and provides necessary conditions for its members so that they may perform their Islamic religious obligations. The ICBH also organizes and supports activities which improve social and financial living conditions of Muslims. [Rijaset n.d.]

The Islamic Community played an important role in the development of Muslim national identity since its inception. Yet, it was really in the 1980s that it exercised a substantial amount of power in regards to development of Muslim national identity. With its political actions, the Islamic Community would impact Muslim national identity in the 1990s and

²⁹ The Serbian leader, Slobodan Milosevic, pursued this policy first in the eastern regions of the republic of Croatia and then later in Kosovo (1999).

beyond.

Islamic practice during the war was limited since the majority of people, both Muslim and non-Muslim, were concerned about basic day-to-day survival. More people did start going to their local mosques but primarily because humanitarian aid (sent from Muslim countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia) was provided. For some Muslims, going to the mosque was an act of basic survival rather than spiritual fulfillment. A number of my informants' accounts indicate that many people did begin attending daily prayers in hopes of getting a larger portion of the aid or even a permanent job in order to provide for their family. During the war some people began entering mosques because, for the first time since the Ottomans left, it was an accepted and encouraged behavior by religious and Muslim political leadership. The Muslim political and religious leadership began encouraging the Muslim population to return to the faith of their forefathers and to start going to their places of worship. To encourage reislamization efforts, the Islamic Community reopened 5 additional madrassas in 1992 that had been closed during the communist period. Money was allocated to run *mektebs* (religious education schools), mosques, and the shrines of saints, as well as introduction of religious education [*vjeronauka*] in primary schools.

WOMEN IN YUGOSLAVIA 1941-1992

An important part of what makes present-day Bosnian Muslim women's identities was their experience of socialist Yugoslavia. Women's positions, and particularly Muslim women, were drastically changed during socialist period directly as a result of the communist party policies. The official communist policy focused on increasing women's participation in the workforce, literacy, access to higher education, access to abortion, maternity leave, and

divorce. As a result of these policies, the experiences of women under communism were overwhelmingly positive. Muslim women, however, faced some lag behind other Christian and Catholic women because of the traditional Muslim homes and observance of religious duty which, at the time, seemed incompatible with these modernization projects. Family structure was just one of the spaces that were dominated by patriarchal values, others that fell prey to male-centered orientation were cultural norms, peasant life and culture just to name a few. Muslim homes were just as patriarchal as Serb and Croat homes, but Muslim women and girls were kept (in greater numbers) from enjoying benefits like schooling and equal inheritance, and this was particularly more striking in rural areas.

As a result of these policies, the experiences of women under communism were overwhelmingly positive. Muslim women, however, faced some lag behind other women in socialist Yugoslavia. Modernization came late to the rural communities of BiH due to their isolation, maintenance of older communal and village bonds, and the reluctance of some Muslim families, especially those in the hinterlands, to allow their girls from enjoying benefits like schooling and equal inheritance. The discrepancy between the rural and urban areas was not only true for BiH but for Kosovo as well.

Family structure was changed for all Yugoslav women during the communist period. Arguably one of the primary causes that contributed to Yugoslav women's historical pattern of lower status prior to the communist period was the patriarchal nature of the family unit and society. The traditional South Slav (and Balkan) family was proba-patriarchial structure without basic preconditions for the establishment of a nuclear family like the one in western Europe. This structure of the family was father-centered and with strong division

along gender lines. Despite the advances by the communist party, the women's position at home changed little and women were expected to complete all of their domestic duties in addition to their educational and professional pursuits. Women remained primarily associated with duties of a mother, educator of the family, and finally, as a maintainer and protector of the family (Spahić-Šiljak 2012). In rural areas in particular Simić argues that women exercised a degree of control over extended family, but this concept was based on the idea of *zadruga* (not so common among Muslims), which included parents, grandparents and siblings all living under the same roof (Simić2001). Spahić-Šiljak argues that Muslim women in Bosnia were defined "in relation to family and to a male, being a part of someone, somebody rather than an individual of her own. Although younger women live single and economically independent lives, traditional divisions of gender roles, and their definitions in BiH and Kosovo, still resonate in their minds and they still define themselves in relation to family or a man" (Spahić-Šiljak 2012: 131).

While major advances were made towards civil and political emancipation, women's position was still problematic as women continued to face the double burden of the home and workplace, Muslim women faced what could be termed a 'triple' burden (work, household duties, and child rearing). The double and triple burden (child rearing) is well documented across industrial societies; it is not only in communist states. My informants note that it was indeed their mothers who were in charge of teaching them about Islam and different traditions. However, this was not always the case, but among my informants it was the case most of the time. In communist Yugoslavia, Muslim women faced a different set of 'emancipatory' practices, most notably 'deveiling'. Deveiling was an important

example of how women contribute to the nationalistic projects and is expected in most ethnic/nationalistic and even western political regimes. When the communist party made the veil illegal in 1948, Muslim women entered a new world and expectations previously unavailable to them. Violeta Achkoska writes that

...through legislation, political propaganda, and occasionally more vigorous administrative pressure and penalties, the authorities endeavored to overcome the existing conditions for Muslim women. [Achkoska 2004: 183]

Deveiling was promoted to combat what communist party considered to be backward Muslim practices (once against reaffirming the Party's stance regarding Islam as a foreign Asiatic religion). Achkoska argues that the communist party used propaganda to characterize Muslim women's position as subordinate and claimed that Muslim men and Islam subjugated women by forcing them to wear the veil, trade and abduct women, take on multiple wives and by shutting female children in the house after the age of ten (2004: 183). Furthermore, the communist party believed that it was saving Muslim women from being sexually abused by their husbands and from being sold to other men like cattle (Achkoska 2004: 183).

Women's presence in all forms of public life began in the interwar period, but really took hold under the new communist leadership. Communist Yugoslavia embraced socialist principles aimed not only at erasing class inequalities and disparity but also aimed at giving women legal, social, and political equality. In a matter of just a few decades, throngs of women in former Yugoslavia went from working on family plots to pursuing education and better paid jobs in urban settings that were now booming with new industries. By the early 1960s, the regions of Yugoslavia were rapidly industrializing and modernizing as evidence by

the decrease of the rural population which had been at 75% in 1945 had decreased to 40% in the 1960s and less than 20% by the 1980s. Prior to 1945, opportunities for women, as well as men, to move to urban, industrial areas were rare and depended on ethnicity. With access to education, and jobs that needed semi-skilled labor, many young women began to emigrate to urban areas (Jovanović and Naumović 2004; Lobodzinska 1995).

Between 1947 and 1981, the number of students in secondary and postsecondary schools throughout Yugoslavia rose more than six-fold. By 1984, more than 90 percent of the pupils who completed primary school continued their education at the secondary level. With little education in rural areas and increasingly greater access in urban areas, the new communist system sought to establish a systemized primary education. By 1958, there were major and radical reforms that created an eight-year obligatory education for children between the ages of seven to fifteen years old. With some changes in the core curricula, a slow and gradual process of increased education access resulted in a nearly 100% completion rate for primary education in the early 1980s³⁰ (Dizdar 1996). Government officials hoped that increasing the average education level would help increase productivity and development of the country.

In early communist Yugoslavia, Bosnia experienced a boom in post-secondary education, and women were at the forefront of the increase in higher education. In order to bring the mostly peasant men and women into the modern age, Yugoslavia had to

³⁰ Dizdar further writes that “Even the countries with strong economic potentials could not bear such an expansion of the education system. In the Eighties, the funds available decreased dramatically. The percentage of education in GDP dropped from 5.6% in 1975 (as compared to 5.4% in the whole of Yugoslavia) to 3.3% in 1989. The primary education suffered even more serious blows - its percentage in GDP was around 1.85% in 1990. The investments in education also declined” (1996).

provide them with general and technical culture (Delalić 1979). In the aftermath of WWII and the establishment of socialist Yugoslavia the communist party's trade unions helped develop Workers' Universities that provided general, economic and vocational education (Delalić 1979). Education was free of charge at all levels, including post-secondary education. Students were granted such benefits as Paid Educational Leaves by their employers as well as the common practice of part-time enrollment that allowed many working women to get their degrees at the universities (Bron-Wojciechowska 1989). Enrollment of women in secondary level institutions was 43.4% in 1970, while higher level institutions saw 46.9% (Jancar 1978: 16). A majority of women populated the fields in humanities, natural science and pedagogy, medicine and economics, while technology and engineering were dominated by men (Jancar 1978: 17). Finally, in the 1970s the majority of vocational schools were dominated by women and women were heavily represented in the "caring professions" such as healthcare and teaching. However, men often dominated the upper ranks in these professions as well. Jancar refers to this phenomenon as feminization of job categories which was common and women were relegated to female-centered fields, but the fact remains that during the communist period more women in Yugoslavia graduated from 2 and 4 year post-secondary institutions than they did in United States or other European countries. It must be noted that under communism women of Yugoslavia still earned only about 65-75% of what men were earning in the same profession. Arguably this was because women tended to occupy the lower positions in the profession and industrial labor was valued and paid accordingly, a field that was overwhelmingly dominated by men.

Finally, it is important to point out that during the communist period Yugoslavia illiteracy rates for women decreased from 24.3% in 1971 to 11.9% in 1990 (Lobodzinska 1995: 223). Muslim parents however remained suspicious of education for women, and many rural areas had no schools at all. In the late 1930s, about 40 percent of the population over ten years of age was illiterate. For women rates tended to double in rural Bosnia. Rising literacy rates during the communist period were accompanied by an increase in women's attendance of higher education institutions where numbers rose from 22.8% enrollment in pre-World War II period to 45.9% in 1985 (Lobodzinska 1995: 223).

The drastic changes in Yugoslav women's education was followed by a complete transformation of the workforce. As a result of communist policies and access to workforce, women accounted for 38 percent of Yugoslavia's nonagricultural labor force in 1987, up from 26 percent thirty years earlier. The participation of women in the Yugoslav work force varied dramatically and in Bosnia. In Slovenia, women made up 43.9 percent of the work force; in Kosovo, 20 percent. In 1989 Yugoslav women worked primarily in three fields: cultural and social welfare (56.3 percent of the persons employed in the field), public services and public administration (42 percent), and trade and catering (41.8 percent). Almost all Yugoslavia's elementary school teachers were women (Lobodzinska 1995). Clearly the workforce remained split along gender lines, yet that didn't change the fact that women went from having limited participation in the public, to having completely dominated specific fields and areas.

During the socialist period, Muslim women were caught between the customs and norms of family and community and the demands of the new socialist order. This conflict

between family, community and the state shaped Muslim women's experiences even after they took off their veils and went to schools with boys and other non-Muslims. Rural women were particularly in a difficult position as Islamic tradition remained strong. Muslim women in the communist period were 'incorporated' into the new and modern Yugoslavia that saw religion as a threat to progress and development. The Party organized cultural, educational and ideological initiatives through performances, cinema and lectures with an aim to help bring Muslim women into the public sphere (Achkoska 2004). Party officials believed that Muslim women had to be saved and freed from the shackles of the restrictive religion of Islam, but mainly they had to be pulled out from under the control of Muslim men. Although the Communist Party sought to limit the influence of religion and its institutions, its efforts were often focused on Islam. This is best exemplified by the following: the closing of madrassas, the ban on the veil, abolition of Shar'ia courts and Sufi Tekkes (or dervish lodges) (Spahić-Šiljak 2012). The state also characterized Muslim men as predatory, primitive, and in need of education and culture in order to enter the new age of modernity (Achkoska 2004). Therefore, to combat the continued presence of Islam in people's day-to-day life, educational institutions promoted a move away from tradition and religion. No woman, or a man, could fulfill their religious duty of prayer when they would spend majority of day at work and/or school. Fikret Karčić, a well-known Bosnian Islamic intellectual notes,

...after the abolition of the shari'a courts of justice [in 1947], the essence of certain institutions and principles of the shari'a continue to exist in the form of the moral and religious principles and practices of the Yugoslav citizens of Islamic faith. [Bougarel 2007:102]

Despite the anti-religious, and more specifically anti-Muslim rhetoric and practices that

ensued in the post-World War II period, both Muslim and non-Muslim women gained recognition as important contributors to the socialist enterprise and were slowly integrated into all state institutions of communist Yugoslavia. Barbara Lobodzinska writes that former Yugoslav socialist policy concerning women's roles:

...was phrased in terms similar to those in other Eastern Bloc countries. Special care for family and children, allowances for families, protection of working mothers and free access to education were legally guaranteed.
[Lobodzinska 1995: 219]

The problems at home, including the burden of housework and children, were further exacerbated at work. Women faced sexism and discrimination in the workplace that usually translated into lower wages and lower level positions. Nonetheless, as women became part of the labor-force and Yugoslavs experienced greater mobility, the traditional extended family structure was replaced by nuclear family units consisting of husband, wife and children. However, these new rights and opportunities did not translate into higher or equal status for women. For example, despite their strong participation in the work force, women continued to be assigned lower-paid and lower-level jobs, with the greatest male-female gap found "between managers, professionals, and skilled blue-collar workers" (Lobodzinska 1995: 224). Sexism and discrimination was also mirrored in the Communist Party where women were relegated to lower-ranked Party positions. All the same, however meager their positions, women's political and civic participation gained in significance during the communist period.

FEMINISM IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

The arrival of official feminist movement, or commitment to equality for women by the socialist state in Yugoslavia was similar to that of other socialist countries. It must be noted

that feminist perspectives and ideas were present in official women's organizations such as the Anti-fascist Front of Women (Anti Fašistički Front Žena or AFŽ) which included a few educated women communists, and many uneducated peasant women. These women were very active during the Second World War and had several million members (greater than the communist party itself). The AFŽ was a first official organization that focused on giving women a voice and presence in the state. Women in communist countries received equal political, social, and civil rights immediately after 1945. Yet, it was the feminization of job categories and education that was to a degree responsible for women having little access to high-status decision making jobs (Jancar 1978: 19). Jancar found that in the communist period women "effectively penetrated areas traditionally identified as male" (1978: 3), but when they a "feminization" the economic sector occurred. In addition, entrance into the work place meant the double/triple burden and marginalization of women in local, republican and federal politics.

This transformation, while presenting women with new opportunities also placed a double burden on them. Women's were now charged with the responsibility of being good workers and good mothers/wives/daughters. Corrin (1992) points out that despite Marxist theory's claim that erasing class differences would solve gender inequality, socialist states (including Yugoslavia) were ultimately unsuccessful in dealing with cultural understanding of gender and male/female roles. The *de juris* political and legal changes produced by socialism were not always accompanied by societal and cultural adjustments. In the case of women, socialism did not consider the psychological costs becoming part of the proletariat would have for women, and the kind of heavy burden being a public and private worker

would place on them (Corrin 1992: 13).

In the 1970s women began to openly criticize the party and the state about continued patriarchal practices most notably the dualism between the public and private. These new feminists saw women's responsibilities in the private sphere as the reason for women's exclusion and marginalization from the public sphere. In 1980s Yugoslav feminists started to employ concrete steps to combat women's situation by setting up shelters and hotlines for victims of domestic violence.

During communist period, a new socialist woman was being formed during this time who:

....was a combination of the modest, self-sacrificing worker, the mother and the political activist. She participates in meetings of the People's Front and in voluntary mass labour until late in the evening, but continues to show her femininity (taking care of the wounded soldiers, the war-orphans, and her own children). Such a woman has an ascetic appearance, since there are "higher aims" facing her than merely taking care of her own face and body. [Achkoska 2004: 184]

Particularly, through use of alternative culture and networks of initiatives the Yugoslav feminists challenged the self-managed socialism to pay attention to women and include them within decision-making (Benderly 1995). With the rise of nationalist parties in the 1980s, ideas of women's emancipation, was incompatible with the nationalist agenda and ideas of gender roles.

When Yugoslavia broke up, the policies of nationalist and state groups sometimes placed women symbolically and physically in the center. Images of women were used to entice ethnic strife, and during the war to promote nationalist agendas (Helms 2007; Ballinger and Ghodsee 2011). In Bosnia, Elissa Helms observes that since the end of the

war:

...there has been a move by local nationalists to return to “traditional” forms of ethno-national culture, especially to religion and patriarchal family roles. For Muslims, called “Bosniacs” since the early years of the war, this has meant increasing emphasis on Islam and “Eastern values,” combined with campaigns to strengthen this group’s identity as a nation. As in the rest of what had been Yugoslavia, women were assigned active roles as reproducers of the nation and nurturers of culture, but passive roles as citizens, (potential) victims to be protected by the nation’s men. [Helms 2003: 3]

In addition to the use of women to further nationalist agendas, women of Yugoslavia’s bodies were sexed and gendered by the state itself. According to Julie Mostov,

...gender and, in particular, proper gender roles become boundaries of the nation in the nationalist discourse of would be ethnocrats in former Yugoslavia. Women’s bodies actually become boundaries of the nation (Mostov 1995a), for not only are they symbols of the fecundity of the nation and vessels for the nation’s reproduction, but also they serve as territorial markers. [2000: 90]

This is of course largely the case of many national states historically and even today.

Women’s bodies and reproductive capabilities once again came to occupy the center of the nationalist rhetoric in the mid to late 1980s, especially among Serbian elites (Bracewell 2000). During the wars of Yugoslav secession, women’s bodies were never safe in former Yugoslavia, whether at work or home, as some nationalists encouraged andocentric and sexist views of women as inferior and as vessels for the reproduction of the nation-state. Instituting women’s inferiority, allowed the Yugoslav states and to establish their male subjects as “protectors” of Yugoslav women and by extension protectors of the nation. It became the male subjects’ responsibility to safeguard women’s bodies, for a violation of the female body was a violation of the nation and its masculine power. Mostov further explains that,

...the need to protect women inevitably comes to include, as well, the need to monitor women's actions. As mothers, women are reproducers of the nation. In this role, women are heroines and symbols of virtue, fertility, strength and continuity. Conversely, women who refuse to have children or who have children with members of other nations become potential enemies of the nation, traitors to it, collaborators in its death. Women also remain vulnerable to invasion and defilement: as symbols of the nation and potential mothers, they could become objects of the ethnic/national Other's desire and vessels for his offspring. [Mostov 2000: 91]

This example rings most true in light of events that occurred during 1991-1995 conflict. The mass rapes of Muslim women by Serb soldiers support some of Mostov's points about the gendering of nationalism in former Yugoslav states. As Todd Salzman observes in relation to rape camps during the war in Bosnia, rape camps were not just random acts, but were rather

...an assault against the female gender, violating her body and its reproductive capabilities as a "weapon of war." Serbian political and military leaders systematically planned and strategically executed this policy of ethnic cleansing or genocide with the support of the Serbian and Bosnian Serb armies and paramilitary groups to create a "Greater Serbia": a religiously, culturally, and linguistically homogenous Serbian nation. [Salzman 1998: 349]

Salzman's analysis of the rape during the war is just one of the perspectives discussed in regards to this topic. His conclusion that the nature of the rapes was part of the "RAM Plan" (or the plan to create a great Serbia) has been contested by anti-nationalist feminist scholars such as Slavenka Drakulić, Dubravka Žarkov, Julie Mostov and others. Rape camps and violations of women, the majority of them Muslim, were to a degree systematic and were thus part of nation-building project. As a result, women's current position in Bosnia is directly shaped by their experiences in former Yugoslavia and its disintegration. Therefore, my discussion of what it means to be a Muslim woman in present-day Bosnia in following

chapters is influenced by women's experiences in all these different areas, and particularly the war.

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the historical development of national identity among the Muslims of Bosnia starting with the departure of the Ottoman Empire. This chapter demonstrates that century of political struggle for self-identification, recognition and territorial identification remained undefined at the onset of the wars of Yugoslav dissolution. Muslims of Bosnia share a common cultural, ethnic and, at times, religious experience with their Serb and Croat neighbors, which to a degree contributed to the state of in which they found themselves at the onset of the war. The combination of Islam as a set of beliefs and practices and the different historical events has placed Bosnian Muslims in a precarious state for a long time.

In 1991 Yugoslavia's economic opportunities were declining, including massive inflation and scores of unemployed (even those with university degrees). The contradictions of centralized economy and power in Belgrade became even more striking as the rest of Eastern Europe saw the end of socialism. Furthermore, being a Bosnian Muslim at the end of 1995 although contentious was stronger and clearer than ever prior to this time. In Muslim dominated government and areas (such as Sarajevo and Zenica which are the sites of my research) it was clear what it meant to be a Muslim or Bosniak. At this time most Bosnian Muslims understood their religion only as part of cultural tradition rather than as a significant part of their daily life. However, Islam was a religion of their ancestors, a faith with which they identified, but which rarely involved observation of duty as

prescribed by the holy texts and books. Many Muslims had intermarried, which further complicated any further association with Islam as a set of beliefs and practices. Being a Bosnian Muslim at the end of the war was defined by a number of significant events. First, the experiences that came out of two world Wars pinned the different ethnic communities against each other during territorial reconfiguration. The change from traditional to modern communal values during the modern period altered the position of women permanently. Since 1878 women's position changed from being solely defined as mothers and wives and mostly confined to the domestic sphere, to being a significant part of the workforce and institutions of higher education.

Finally, this chapter points to historical conditions and their effect on women, and more specifically Muslim women. Gaining access to education and the workforce during the communist period challenged concepts of what constituted traditional roles for men and women. Muslim identity was no longer dependent on pre-communist principles and beliefs about women in Islam, but rather had come to incorporate socialist inspired political, social and economic changes that altered women's position in the home and public. Yet, despite access to education, workforce, and ability to choose whom they would marry or divorce, did not necessarily mean that Muslim women did not continue to live in patriarchal households. Thus, in less than half a century, Muslim women's position has significantly altered to incorporate participation (though significantly lesser than those of men) in the public sphere (including the workforce and politics) and redefined gender roles and relations.

CHAPTER V: ROLE AND FUNCTION OF NGOs AND SMALL FAITH-BASED NETWORKS

INTRODUCTION

In post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, NGOs have emerged as an important way in which women, and men, deal with the changing economic, political, and religious system. This chapter, therefore, examines different roles NGOs and small faith-based networks play in women's lives, and the degree to which they impact the development of Muslim women's identities. The main purpose of this chapter is to analyze the ways in which women organize (whether formal or informal) and the degree to which organizations help influence how they position themselves (and narrate their identities), their position as women and as Muslims. In addition to a large number of international and domestic NGOs, the majority with non-religious objectives, there has also been a significant emergence of organizations with faith-based missions, including different denominations of Islam and Christianity, as well as other religious traditions. After the communist state collapsed, the newly democratic and post-war Bosnian state has not been able to fill in the hole in social services left behind. Various NGOs have become the primary locations where disenfranchised citizens can receive economic, social, and most importantly for the purposes of this work, religious support. For women this has been particularly important, as their position has significantly altered to reflect less political and economic participation, as well as representation. As social and civil spaces play a large part in formation of an individual's religious identity, it follows that the growing civil sector, including of course Islamic religious organizations, plays a significant role in this transformation.

This dissertation project was originally concerned with the significance and importance of NGOs in helping women combat social, political, and economic marginalization in post-war Bosnia. However, during my research I took my research in a different direction. Nonetheless I wanted to talk about the impact of NGOs in my informants' lives because such a large percentage of them participated in NGO activities and this is where I found them. I wanted to find out what these organizations do for women, and the impact they have not only on their identities as women, but as Muslim women. The small faith-based group I also discuss must be addressed within this chapter because it provided a different example of how women find and create support. In my research I found that NGOs offer both conventional and pious Muslim women different tools and strategies that can be utilized to advance their positions in the public and private sphere. In addition, NGOs focus on finding different avenues in which to promote and help women better themselves, as well as regain solid ground in new social, economic, and political areas of the society. Second, I discuss what I have called a small faith-based network, a group of women organized around the pursuit of a life of Islamic piety. During my fieldwork, the small faith-based network to which I belonged was comprised of seven core members trying to live as conscious Muslims. This faith-based network demonstrates non-institutional ways in which some women find protection and support in their day-to-day life, and work towards empowering themselves. This faith-based network addressed the needs of its members, which were not being met in the public or the private areas of their lives. Therefore, analysis of the network adds to an understanding of one of the alternative ways Muslim women organize.

In this chapter I assess the importance of institutions in how women perceive themselves and their position in Bosnia's society, both as women and as Muslims. It is significant to note that while some of these women position themselves against the institution of Bosnia's Islam (most notably the Islamic Community), as in the case of my informants. However, while they position themselves against the Islamic Community, they are also closely tied to the Islamic Community in how they understand their own Muslim identity and Muslimness. Muslim identity for both pious and conventional women is dependent on the Islamic Community and other official institutions of faith (such as local mosques, tekkes¹, madrassas, mektebs and faith-based NGOs). Although they are influenced by the Islamic Community, many conventional and pious Muslim women consciously, and unconsciously, place themselves in opposition to the politicized interpretations and promotion of European Muslim by the leadership of Islamic Community, the first because they believe that it is too extreme, while the latter because they believe it is too mild. In any case, these women do not exist in a vacuum, but are influenced, and have the ability to influence, the existing religious institutional structures. As believers, all Muslim women have the ability, through their practices and belief, to change, alter and influence what it means to be a Bosnian Muslim, and its institutional representation, the Islamic Community.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

NGOs in Bosnia today generally focus on the following topics: 1) trauma rehabilitation, 2) post-war material reconstruction (rebuilding of destroyed industry such as factories and

¹ Space where Sufi followers gather together.

social and cultural infrastructure including roads, hospitals, and schools), 3) women's rights and empowerment, 4) children's support and development, 5) environment, and 6) intra-ethnic reconciliation. This is by no means an exhaustive list of all the different types of NGOs that presently operate in Bosnia, rather, it is a list of the most common. Faith-based NGOs,² such as Nahla, on the other hand, also include additional foci including 1) religious rights, 2) rebuilding and development of religious monuments, and 3) religious education. Specificity of mission by different religious organizations is also dependent on the religious community they represent; thus, in the case of Nahla, the organization's mission is the advancement and promotion of Sunni Islam. Furthermore, with the influx of non-Bosnian religious traditions (such as Mormonism, Hare Krishna, Shi'ism, Seventh Day Adventist and others), there are a number of religious organizations whose sole mission is promotion and recruitment to those faiths. I do not know exactly how many such organizations were present in Bosnia in 2011, but based on my conversations with other scholars operating and working on Bosnia, I would estimate a few dozen.³

As the previous paragraph highlights, in the post-war period, NGOs have replaced a long-standing tradition of social networks and groups. A person's social connections can

² The international Muslim and Orthodox Christian communities, of course, have long traditions of social assistance. Although they may have less experience operating through formally constituted NGOs than their Western Christian counterparts, they have other assets those counterparts lack. The greatest of these is their presence and immense credibility in communities of their faith, as well as strong negotiating positions with local authorities who share their faith. Islamic Relief Worldwide and International Orthodox Christian Charities are among the international faith-based NGOs active in Bosnia and Herzegovina. [Leban 2003]

³ Mojca Leban writes that: Many religious-oriented NGOs are working to overcome inherent divisions and other barriers to reconciliation. These organizations are among the more than 600 international NGOs active in Bosnia and Herzegovina (as of the end of the 1990s). Some of these organizations are explicitly religious--i.e., they provide religious services. Other organizations, which are generally motivated by religious values but do not perform religious services, may be termed "faith-based." Faith-based NGOs engage in a range of activities, including promoting interfaith dialogue, providing immediate humanitarian aid, and fostering long-term reconstruction and sustainable development. [Leban 2003]

determine what type of school one attends, and later what kind of job one secures. During the communist period one's neighbors were often more important than family, as they replaced kin-ties broken by rural-urban migration. When resources and funds were scarce during the communist system, social networks, colleagues and neighbors became integral in helping people meet basic needs. Building one's house required an extensive network of family and friends who volunteered their time and labor, and at times financial resources as well (Bringa 1995). This type of bond would not be possible without a strong attention to kin and community-based networks. For the women I worked with, in particular, who since the war have seen their economic and political status in Bosnia's society diminished, NGOs and faith-based networks have become even more important as many of them have become sole providers for the family, and are often at a disadvantage when competing with men for work opportunities. I have identified two different themes that characterize some of the experiences of women who join formal organizations, including: a) economic empowerment and knowledge, and b) safety and support. But one constant remains, and that is, that these organizations provide a space where women can find someone to talk to at the very least, and where they feel like they belong.

As I discuss in Chapter 3, I conducted majority of my fieldwork at Medica Zenica in the city of Zenica, and Nahla located in Sarajevo. At the time of my fieldwork Medica was operating, but on a very basic level including women's shelter, Infoteka, and counseling services. Through their activities Medica was able to secure limited funds from the local government in order to keep the shelter afloat, however, the running of the house was costly and challenging, but made possible by an incredibly dedicated and resourceful staff.

Their most important resource, therapy--both group and individual—remained available and they continued to provide group therapy once a week. In addition, one of Medica's projects was economic empowerment through job training and courses. Some of the courses offered included sewing courses for women who needed an additional set of skills in order to find jobs, and provide for themselves and their families. Another primary resources remaining in operation was Infoteka, a library and resource center located in center of Zenica. In addition to serving as a resource, Infoteka also regularly published pamphlets and reports regarding women's rights at home and work. Other services, such as the mobile medical clinic and majority of other programming, had been shut down because of a lack of funding. Despite their lack of paychecks⁴, all the staff I interviewed expressed their special attachment to Medica and willingness to help continue its work. Through one-on-one interviews, and participant observation, I discovered that this attachment was related to the fact that some of the staff had at one point been patients of the clinic or had utilized Medica's services in one way or another. The stories I collected at Medica spoke not only to these women's experiences and expertise in being able to address the issues of trauma and gender-based violence, but also to their passion and dedication to the mission of helping women of Bosnia more broadly. The majority of the staff at Medica identified as conventional Muslims, however, and their clients came from all three ethno-religious traditions (with both rural and urban background). Equally, Nahla was an organization where Muslim women (but where non-Muslim women interested in Islam) could learn, socialize, broaden, and enrich their knowledge. As a faith-based organization, Nahla

⁴ Despite being unpaid for a period of time many of the women were either supported by their husbands, parents or other family members.

focused on Muslim women⁵ and giving them a chance to acquire different skills needed to succeed professionally, as well as actively participate in Bosnia's economic, political and social life. The services provided by Nahla included counseling services (primarily for married couples), religious classes such as School of Islam and School of Qur'an, fitness and exercise classes, business classes, professional development classes, and foreign language classes. Ultimately, both conventional and pious Muslim women benefited from services provided by their respective NGOs.

An important point must be addressed here, and that is the importance of the feminist and Islamic feminist perspectives that guided the mission of each of the two NGOs where I conducted my research. Medica Zenica had a very specific feminist oriented mission rooted in western Feminist tradition and was a self-declared feminist women's NGO, described here by Elissa Helms as:

...is one of a very few women's organizations in Bosnia which describes itself as a feminist project. This terminology was introduced by the German feminists who started the project and wrote its first documents. However, the Bosnian women who helped to found Medica in Zenica and who now run it alone as a local organization have kept this feminist identity, having been compelled by the Germans' stance to examine their own attitudes toward their identities as women and the meanings of feminism. [Helms 2003: 171]

Furthermore, Helms points out that the donor's idea of feminism dominated Medica's work and although the donor never explicitly defined what kind of feminism they wanted to uphold it was very much influenced by the western liberal feminist theory and practice (Helms 2003).

⁵ During my time at Nahla all the members and staff were self-identified as Muslim.

Medica's focus on addressing the needs of all women and the problems associated with social and political inequality can be thus contrasted with Nahla's mission on educating and equalizing women within Islam rather than the society as a whole. Both Medica and Nahla's programming was thus a byproduct of their feminist and Islamic feminist (and non-feminist) perspectives and the following discussion will get at some of the reasons as to why Medica focused primarily on domestic violence while Nahla's programming included focus on marriage classes.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

With nearly half the population unemployed at the time of the fieldwork, many of my informants were seeking alternative sources for professional and social support. With the help of women-centered organizations such as Medica and Nahla, women gained access to professional training that was often free or available for a nominal fee. In some cases they had a chance to learn a new trade. Professional development of women was achieved by offering classes such as computer literacy and foreign languages. The majority of the women I interviewed (40 out of 50) had some university level education and training, suggesting that post-secondary educational background was not enough to secure a job. In particular, women of the older generation (born before 1975), had an especially difficult time, since during the communist period they got used to being able to secure a good job with just a high school diploma. Within the new market-economy, however, a high school degree was no longer enough to secure a position. Many women earned their living as temporary workers or *na crnom* (gray economy) i.e., illegally at privately-owned businesses (*kod privatnika*), which was a highly insecure form of income as the employer could choose

not to pay workers; further people were employed without any social benefits such as medical insurance or pension. Two of my informants (Selma and Mersija) occasionally worked as housekeepers for wealthier women, jobs that were irregular and offered no benefits beyond cash in hand after they completed their work. Additionally, as many women became primary providers due to loss of their husbands, fathers and sons during the war, temporary employment didn't allow for the financial security they enjoyed in the pre-war period. Therefore, NGOs were unquestionably important because they allowed my informants a space where they could feel like they were accepted and valued. In this way, NGOs provided my informants with a sense of belonging and usefulness they did not otherwise feel. For many women of the older generation (those who worked in the communist system) having a job and being a participating member of the workforce was an important way in which they understood themselves and who they were.

Both Nahla and Medica Zenica provided women with vocational and professional training that attempted to enable women's economic empowerment and survival. At Nahla, women were coming for a wide range of courses that helped them gain skills needed in a new economic system. The most common way for a woman, or a man, to get a job in Bosnia was, and remains through a personal network or a connection usually secured by cash bribe or other tangible goods, and only occasionally by one's merits and skills. Many young women who did not have social connections or the skills that could ensure entry-level employment were left without the ability to support themselves. Furthermore, with the changes in hiring practices and skills required to work in the new economy, many older women were excluded from the workforce due to their lack of technical knowledge. Nahla

addressed these problems by providing women with courses in computer and internet literacy, public presentations (such as use of powerpoint), and other western business practices. Through these courses, which provided *certificates of completion*, Nahla attempted to provide its members with leverage in the job market. This was Nahla's attempt to alleviate the discrepancy between men and women in hiring practices by giving women the skills they need to compete. However, unofficial look at local news papers where positions are advertized indicates that many positions did not always favor men and also reveals lower paid and lower status jobs specifically aimed at women.

In addition to professional development, Nahla initiated a number of different courses that dealt with the personal needs of contemporary women in Bosnia, including parenting courses, marriage courses, creative and art courses, as well as physical well-being (as exemplified by numerous fitness courses). As Devla pointed out after one of our School of Islam classes:

I never have to leave Nahla, everything I need is right here under one roof.

For Devla that meant being able to take foreign language classes and having an opportunity to add skills to those provided by her college degree. On the other hand, for Adila, Nahla was a space where she could add to her resume as she was searching for a job. Already in her late thirties, Adila was struggling to find a job despite having a college degree. This is why she came to Nahla, to gain additional skills that would aid her in her job search. When asked about her current employment status, Adila responded:

No, I am looking. That's why I'm here learning how to use computers. I started a month ago and it will go through the end of the summer. I also need to take some language classes.

For single and unemployed Adila, knowing a foreign language was particularly important as many professional positions required knowledge of at least one foreign language. However, it was not uncommon for many of my informants to speak two foreign languages. For Adila learning English was the skill that could help her secure a position. In this way Nahla provided Adila with the competitive edge, as well as a sense of agency and empowerment.

Coming to a women-centered religious organization like Nahla also gave Adila a chance to learn about Islam and reconnect with her religious background. Many of my informants expressed the desire to at least know something about the religion for which they were persecuted. For many young informants of *moja generacija* (born between 1975 and 1990) it became important to find faith as they faced mass unemployment, official corruption, and what they deem as the "immoral behavior" practiced by many young people (e.g., dancing in a sexually seductive manner, drinking alcohol, and most notably pre-marital intercourse). The injustice veiled women experienced in class as visibly pious Muslims (at the University and in high school) or at work, and in social situations, led many of them to seek "greater meaning" in their lives. This meaning came through the avoidance of situations in which young people "drink, smoke, and have sex". Avoidance of these situations was in part due to their upbringing. While many of these young women may not have grown up in religious households, the traditions of female chastity and women's

traditional household and childcare duties were still an important expectation, particularly within *tradicionalna Muslimanska kuća*.⁶

Twenty-year old student Ajla claimed that Nahla was essential in helping her make the spiritual journey towards living in Islam [*živjeti u Islamu*]. She claimed that classes at Nahla gave her the knowledge of her rights as a woman in Islam, and more particularly as a Muslim woman.

I got knowledge that I can take further. I am always learning something new. Not only in terms of religion, but also about life. I think the school of Islam is not only about religious life, but also about worldly life, about here and now.

Clearly, for women who attended Nahla it was about more than just gaining skills in a competitive new market, but also finding a space where they could do so without feeling judged for not already possessing such skills. For many women who were over 30, computer use was a relatively new practice, and a large number of women in their early to mid-30s attended computer literacy classes at Nahla. Through Nahla, many of the women who felt disempowered by the new competitive market economy where technology and knowledge of foreign language (most commonly English) have found women centers like Nahla essential in developing a more competitive edge.

In particular, many of the religiously oriented women, especially those that wore the hijab, have experienced discrimination and lack of opportunity outside of the walls of Nahla. With the help of staff and instructors at Nahla, many gained skills that have helped them succeed professionally. In addition, the networks established at Nahla, in several instances helped women locate jobs and thus establish economic independence. As Nahla's

⁶ Traditional Muslim home.

programming expanded and their membership grew, several of my acquaintances became employed at the center. One such informant, Belkisa, went on to work as a legal consultant for Nahla, where she remains to the present day.

At Medica Zenica only few classes were offered to help women develop professional skills. One such class was the sewing and seamstress courses. The staff and leadership at Medica Zenica felt that sewing was a transferable and teachable skill that would be precisely the type of professional knowledge that would help empower women economically. Thus, dozens of young women have gone through its seamstress program that secured them basic, but income producing positions, both in private and public sector. Medica's report for 2010 indicates it trains women in:

hairstyling, tailoring/sewing, and upholstering. The training cycle lasts for 6 months of practical work. Upon finished training the trainees take a final exam and upon passing the exam they receive a certificate from the Employment office of Zenica about the skill acquired. The certificate is validated and recorded in the person's work card. [Medica Zenica 2012]

This kind of training has been completed by 777 women and girls since Medica opened its doors in 1993. In 2010 alone 22 women were trained at Medica and 45 in rural communities outside Zenica. Medica's focus on economic empowerment, particularly the trades, made it a pioneer among Bosnia's NGOs in providing women with sustainable and transferable skills beyond the center. Medica's success in economic empowerment was an example of a successful technique used by hundreds of NGOs around the world.

These are only few of the ways in which women centered organizations help women empower themselves socially and economically. However, only few of the women I interviewed actually found employment as the job market is still limited and it is hard to

earn a steady living of the skills they gain at these types of trainings. Gaining skills that help them develop professionally has made these women active agents in the building of Bosnia's civil society. However, what was as important was that these NGOs provided women with a sense of self-worth and value. Without these organizations many of my informants felt like they did not have a purpose. Thus, participation in these organizations gave my informants a sense of worth essential in helping them feel empowered to tackle the struggles at home and in their search for economic stability. Women I interviewed have been empowered by the support networks gained at these organizations (and presumably at others that were not investigated in this study). Through their work in courts of law (Hajra and Biba), at human rights commissions (Hajra, Jasmina and Biba), and local government many of my informants became active agents in bringing change to the political sphere of Bosnia's society. Undeniably, the services and projects provided by these non-governmental organizations were empowering because they placed women at the center of their mission, a goal that has been missing from governmental, municipal and city officials' goals. Finally, if agency means "autonomy of action, responsibility and self-definition" (Torab 1996: 238) then the women at Nahla and Medica had agency in their own lives. Medica and Nahla demonstrate how agency can be cultivated and different ways in which women can be empowered as well as empower themselves.

SAFETY AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

While economic independence was an important way in which NGOs empowered women, the emotional and physical support and safety these organizations provided was just as essential. Providing a safe space ensured that women had a voice. Adila told me that she

returned time and time again to Nahla because she felt physically and emotionally safe. Nahla and the women she met there became her family. For Adila, Nahla was a place where she put down her roots. Most importantly, at Nahla, for the first time she thought she could address the questions related to her spirituality. Adila needed a community, and Nahla filled in the holes that she felt were present in all aspects of her life. Joining Nahla gave her a sense of belonging and strength that she otherwise missed, meaning that she felt empowered. Elma, another informant, humorously declared that she wanted to live at Nahla. The sense of comfort and home was so strong that Elma was at ease, like she finally belonged somewhere. Most importantly, Nahla was a place where Elma believed she met people whose character she didn't need to question. This sense of being surrounded by people who shared the same ideas and ideologies was essential in helping many of my informants feel comfortable in a place and why so many returned to NGOs on regular basis. For most pious Muslim women I interviewed, their home, workplace and school did not offer the kind of comfort they found at Nahla, a point I further analyze in Chapter 9. Outside the walls of Nahla my informants said they were misunderstood, judged, without a voice and support.

Just as Nahla provided a feeling of safety and support, so did Medica Zenica. For victims of violence, a safe house was arguably the most significant way in which women could feel protected and secure following physical and emotional abuse. According to Ismeta, Medica provided a safe place for women who otherwise had nowhere else to go. Hasiba, staff at Medica Zenica, explained to me the importance of the center in women's lives:

Hasiba: Beaten...like little they were bugs (insects), without a voice. During the war Medica was seen as a place “where the raped ones went,” you know. However, it wasn’t just about raped women, it was about other forms of violence, exile, loss. Also there were women here because of domestic violence. There were also parents.

Author: Parents?

Hasiba: Yes, we had women who came to us because of the violence they suffered at the hands of their children.

Interviewer: Their children?

Hasiba: Yes. It is usually about elderly persons. A few years ago I remember we had a grandmother whose son was beating her.

As this account from Hasiba illustrates, forms of violence and the types of support needed by women was as varied as the women who came through the doors of Medica. As a center specifically focused on rehabilitation of victims of violence, Medica served a wide range of women, providing them with psychological and material support. Bosnian women are still largely dominated by men and women who embrace patriarchal values. A slap on the face, administered by a man, is widely regarded as a way of teaching a woman a lesson, and was rarely seen by either men or women as abuse. Domestic violence victims were often told to just go home and deal with the abuse; they were told that what is happening to them was not ‘really’ violence or abuse, but simply the way of life or rather “how marriage worked.” Marijana, a domestic violence activist from Sarajevo told me that:

When you mention the issues of violence... we have situations where we’ve gone to schools, did workshops in mixed groups of boys and girls and when you ask if a slap on the face is violence the answer is “It is not.” There are a lot of women, grown up women, who say “I have never been violated” but they *have* been slapped around.

Because of the general sense that women should ‘deal with’ husbands who are abusive and ‘live with it,’ Medica was undeniably important in educating the society about recognizing domestic violence and the importance of protecting women. Medica not only provided

women a refuge and with a sense of physical safety, but also gave psychological support by providing therapy and counseling. Support and safety are two recurrent themes that permeate the stories of my informants who have joined one or the other of the two NGOs I observed. Medica, according to Biba, was a safe space. Biba (born in 1971 and employed at Medica) exclaims:

I came to Zenica as a refugee in 1993. I was able to work through my trauma here. I wasn't even aware of many of them. In our society we know little about trauma and the long long-term effects of trauma on an individual. Medica helped me to get strong, and work through my trauma. It also allowed me to help others and educate myself.

Nahla provided Ajla with a space away from the world where she felt unsafe⁷. She described her day-to-day life outside Nahla as:

The streets are filled with everything, mostly negative things. And all of that has a strong impact on a person...a negative impact on the person. And if we allow ourselves to follow that path we will not get very far. On that path the end result is a hospital or a house for curing drug addictions.

Ajla's view of the world outside Islam and Nahla exemplified how pious Muslim women felt and why they searched for safety of the walls of women centered organizations. Nahla and Medica offered safety and protection from a world where drugs, violence, discrimination, and immorality were accepted and rarely challenged.

As demonstrated here, both organizations provided women with a feeling of protection, safety and support, while at the same time they could advance their skills and knowledge. These organizations did precisely what they set out to do, and that is to

⁷ In my interviews I did not ascertain that any of my informants were currently experiencing domestic violence (like majority of the patients at Medica). However, one of their primary therapy sessions and counseling services were focused on marriage. In this way, since Bosnia experiences high rates of domestic violence, it may be that Nahla does indeed serve victims of domestic violence. Furthermore, it must be noted that Sarajevo has a number of NGOs specifically focused on domestic violence.

protect, serve, and empower women of Bosnia. Whether they did so through therapy, safe space, or education, both of these organizations helped women gain a stronger sense of the self and control over their lives.

FAITH-BASED NETWORK

Since religion was subdued during socialist Yugoslavia, public displays of religious belief and practice, such as the wearing of the veil and attendance at religious services, were regarded by the state as expressions of nationalism and therefore were defined as anti-state behavior (Doubt 2005). Apprehension about the public display of belief and practice, in addition to ethnic cleansing, has permeated the social consciousness, and therefore identity, of Bosnia's Muslims. Consequently, many devout women (and presumably men) are reluctant to display, speak about or discuss religion publicly. One way in which women have been able to get around this was through small faith-based networks. These networks were organized by young women looking to live their lives as pious Muslims, or as *prave Muslimanke*. The small faith-based network to which I belonged was first organized in September 2007, and still exists but in a smaller capacity. As I described in Chapter 2 this particular network was started by long-time friends Badema and Belkisa. In the summer of 2007 they both decided to commit their lives to Islam and were actively seeking support in their quest for piety. The women who eventually came to make up the core of the group were all inter-connected, either through the university or high school. Though the group size varied from week to week, the heart of the group included seven women: Belkisa, Badema, Mina, Fatima, Hanka, Nihada and Sabira. The network met only in places members deemed moral and where they felt like-minded people would surround them.

Therefore, we would meet in tea and coffee houses, at Nahla, *mesdžids*⁸, in mosques, at public lectures, and in parks. As I will further discuss in Chapter 8, my pious informants, who included all the members of this network, inhabited only those spaces they considered *halal* (moral) and therefore not threatening to their quest for piety. Within this setting, religious discussions were considered appropriate and could be conducted freely.

Many of the women I interviewed and several that belonged to my network had other networks of women similar to the faith-based network to which I belonged. These include Fatima, Badema, Devla, Amina, Nihada, Almasa and Vahida. All described a process that involved their change into a life of piety that required having the support of other women who were experiencing spiritual transformation. Forming faith-based networks provided these women with support and safety that they could not find at home, workplace, or other networks.

During my time in the field this faith-based network met once a week, totaling more than thirty meetings over the course of the year. Our group had the following characteristics: there were a) seven to fifteen members; b) who shared religious belief and practice; c) who shared interests as they relate to furthering their own religious knowledge; d) who offered social and moral support to all members; and finally, f) had already had a personal connection to at least one member of the group (needed in order to be invited). I derived these characteristics from interviews and observations of group's members. Furthermore, these commonalities were important because they separated the women in this group from the rest of my informants. Women's membership in this group was

⁸ Refers to a space where a Muslim can observe daily prayer, they are basically mosques but without the minaret.

predicated on living a life a conscious Muslim, avoiding temptation and sin as defined by Islam, and finally, pursuing piety.

I found that for the women I interacted with, the faith-based networks played an important role in helping them create ties that extended beyond the private sphere.

Entrance into the public sphere, with explicit and public displays of religious belief and practice, had been difficult in the years since 2001 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

According to my pious informants, in their experience, publicly pious Muslim women have been excluded in higher numbers from politics and economics. The reasons for their exclusion are numerous, however many of my informants argue that their lack of presence was caused by prejudice and stereotyping, and general dislike of public displays of religious belief, especially Islam. Badema, a self-identified pious Muslim who was single at the time, told me of an experience during a job interview for a paralegal (paraphrased from fieldnotes):

I was sitting right there in the room and there were several women and men that were waiting to be interviewed. We were all dressed normal and one woman was in there wearing a hijab. Others waiting for an interview would make snide comments at her, or under their breath. When it came time for her to come in the interviewer looked at her with disgust. She was in the interview room for a very short period of time (compared to the rest of those who interviewed). Needless to say she did not get that job. I felt so sorry for her because I doubt that she would ever get a job wearing the hijab (at least not with the government or the city).

We don't actually know that this woman was denied the job because of the hijab. She may have been completely unqualified for the job, something the interviewer may have discovered. However, this is unlikely the case because receiving a job interview in present-day Bosnia is a daunting and difficult task that is often based on equally qualified

candidates. Therefore it is hard to believe that woman wearing the hijab was unqualified for the position, and that more likely that once she walked in wearing the hijab she was judged and excluded without being given a fair chance. Whether or not we assume here that the employer dismissed her because of the hijab, the attitude of the other applicants was unmistakable. These stereotypes often described pious Muslim women as uneducated and backwards. Therefore, creation of small-faith based networks became an essential and a necessary part of these women's lives. Further discussed in Chapter 8, Islamic religious practice, especially those that can be observed by others (e.g., fasting, prayer, modest clothing or hijab) were often met with prejudice and negative behavior by other Muslims and non-Muslims. Small faith-based networks served a variety of purposes for each individual member including support and a safe space where they could discuss issues they encountered and seek their peers' advice. Moreover, small faith-based networks provided women with a moral community rooted in religious doctrine. Through their network these women could reach out to other women who shared their beliefs, practices, and experiences. Finally, I argue that the formation of religiously based small faith-based networks allowed women a sense of empowerment against the dominant secular values they felt threatened by. The following discussion demonstrates how small faith-based networks helped women build agency and gain empowerment in a world where they are typically excluded, invisible, and simply without voice⁹.

While in Sarajevo, I met regularly with the women of a small-faith based network usually once a week. However, in this discussion I will focus on three specific meetings that

⁹ During my research I only became aware of small faith-based networks for women, but I imagine that religious Muslim men organize similar groupings and/or networks.

took place between September 2007 and August 2008. Subjects of discussions at these meetings will help examine the way the group built a common morality through use of narratives and cautionary tales, as well as how women talked about issues that concern them, namely marriage and dating.

BUILDING A COHESIVE MORAL CODE

On a cold March evening following an evening prayer at the Bey's Mosque our group met at Morića Han¹⁰ for coffee and hot chocolate. This was our regular meeting place and time and included the earlier named core group of seven women. On this particular evening, despite the cold, we sat in the outside courtyard, why I do not recall. Dressed in layers of coats and woolen accessories, we huddled together at a corner table.

I was well positioned to hear everyone and listened as the conversations unfolded. The group started with just Mina, Belkisa, Badema and myself, but we were joined by four other women over the next couple of hours. Some wore headscarves [*mahrāma*], others did not, and all were either attending University or already had their college degree and were employed. The conversation was engaging and the several women said they felt comfortable expressing their opinions without being judged negatively. Their emphasis on the ability to speak their minds was in part caused by what they said was the lack of accepted spaces and conversations where their opinions deeply rooted in Islamic theology would be seen as valid. Although we all wore headscarves during the evening prayers, only Mina kept her scarf on after the prayer at the mosque because she wore it permanently, while the other women in the group had not made that commitment. Whether or not they

¹⁰ Religiously themed coffee/tea shop in the heart of old town Sarajevo. Further discussed in Chapter 8.

wore a headscarf, the majority of the women in the group felt as if their faith and commitment to a conscious Muslim life was challenged on daily basis.

Mina revealed that she had been thinking of different ways for us (as a group) to draw more young people into a life of Islam. Although we had never before discussed this topic, the entire group quickly became engaged. Some suggested classes, meeting places, and innovative ways of mentoring and educating youth about the benefits of a life of piety. Belkisa suggested that the language of condescension in which young people were spoken to by most adults had to change. Mina agreed and added that the majority of religious leaders (aside from Bugari¹¹) had a difficult time speaking to young adults because of the hierarchical nature of families, and even more so to teenagers. All agreed that teenagers in particular were a difficult group to access as their daily lives were filled with un-Islamic behaviors and values. Badema suggested that we take it upon ourselves to create a safe space/place for teenagers where they could come and talk about problems without feeling judged. Mina agreed and spoke of the need for young people to be listened to, rather than be punished and judged.¹² Ultimately, the women all agreed that teenagers needed a better moral compass, and Bosnia was not a place where morality and integrity were emphasized as much as they needed to be.

I later asked Mina, who was 24 years old at the time, why she picked the topic of drawing youth into Islam. She answered that the lack of morality she observed in everyday life was her primary motivation for wanting to do something about it. She also told me that

¹¹ Famous Bosnian imam (see description in footnote on page 308).

¹² This particular conversation was not recorded, but has been paraphrased from my fieldnotes.

there were fewer young people who were religious or who even knew anything about Islam. She felt it was important to create a network in which young people felt safe and not judged for a lack of knowledge about religious faith and practice. After all, they did not learn about how to be a Muslim at home, and they were certainly not going to learn it on the streets.

No immediate action came from this discussion, but Mina, Belkisa and Badema became more involved with their respective NGOs and they tried to recruit younger women to join them. Mina in particular worked hard to recruit more women to Kewser (a Muslim woman's organization) and she was successful in getting few of her acquaintances and family members to join her at the organization and at local mosques and *mesdžids*. Badema and Belkisa brought dozens of women they met at different events and organizations to talks by Hafiz Bugari, to talks at mosques and to Nahla.

Another way in which women help build a cohesive moral space was through telling and retelling of stories that focused on Islam, a life of piety, and living one's life as a good Muslim. In almost every meeting women told stories about the behavior of other pious women, or sometimes instances of deceit and false representation. They were trying to draw out moral lessons, learn from and impart their own experiences with other women in an environment that was safe and accepting.

Anthropological scholarship has shown that storytelling and narratives are often used to explain life experiences (Carbine 2010; Phillips 2005). In her discussion of the use of narrative as a tool in relaying traumatic experiences of African-American women following Hurricane Katrina, Carbine observed that, "From a theological viewpoint, narratives,

especially from marginalized groups, carry potentially disruptive and constructive functions, namely to challenge and perhaps begin to change inadequate dominant and dominating visions of the common good” (Carbine 2010: 381). In a similar fashion, women in my faith-based network challenged what was considered good and appropriate in contemporary Bosnia. Moreover, small faith-based network support Carbine’s conclusion that narratives help marginalized groups reclaim public engagement, and make personal connections, both individual and communal (Carbine 2010). Most importantly, however, Carbine uses Hannah Ardent’s words in exclaiming that “the narrative or storytelling connects private and public spheres of life” (Carbine 2010: 384) and provides an adhesive that sustains the common life of these women. For my informants, storytelling allowed them to anticipate and deal with problematic and unexpected situations in their daily lives. As the following discussion demonstrates, small faith-based networks allowed women to connect their personal wishes and wants with other women, thereby combining the private and public spheres of life.

Another important meeting took place on a day in August of 2008. As usual, the women and I met at Morića Han to enjoy the summer sun filling the streets of Sarajevo. Often our meetings focused on religious texts, including the Qur’an and the Haddiths. In addition, we often discussed Islamic-related websites that many of the women monitored as they pertained to living a life of a conscious Muslim. Many of the women spent much time researching and reading about proper Islamic behavior, and they would often recount what they had learned recently that helped them be more pious. On one occasion Nihada, a woman in her mid-20s, brought up a story she had recently read on a Bosnian website for young Muslims in pursuit of piety. The story was about a man in his 20s who had married a

pious Muslim woman (or so he thought) after both had completed their education at the Faculty of Islamic Studies. The man found out (or thought he found out) that the woman was not a virgin during their first night together, but because he was in love, he forgave her. Things seem to be going well until he realized that his apparently pious and veiled wife was seen walking around town with other men. When her infidelity was confirmed, the only option available for the man was divorce¹³.

This story was important because it characterized the typical discussion during our meetings. Every week a different topic of discussion was presented in the hope of drawing out a lesson that could be applied in day-to-day life. The moral of the story above was that one couldn't judge a person by their appearance, but more important that anyone can be deceitful. In the opinion of my informants, the woman was not a good Muslim and, moreover, she was a liar for tricking the young man into marrying her (or perhaps was faced with temptation she could not resist). Mina was very vocal that night about the shame that this woman's behavior brought upon all other pious Muslim women. Specifically, Mina said that the story of infidelity and false appearances was devastating for her as it brought further challenges to the group's own legitimacy as devout Muslim women. Mina, Belkisa and Badema all explained that this story made them worried about how pious men would perceive them. They worried that their own sexual purity would be questioned by men in general or their own prospective partners because of the un-pious behavior of this woman.

However, the most important concern that women drew from the story was to always be on their best behavior, always in pursuit of piety, and always living up to the

¹³ Although divorce is accepted in Islam, it is not a general practice among Muslims of Bosnia. However, all of my pious informants felt that the divorce should be avoided.

duties and expectations of, what they defined, as a good Muslim. In particular, they decided that women wearing headscarves had a special responsibility to behave and represent Islam in accordance with duty.¹⁴ Badema also reacted to the story by relating a similar instance involving people she knew. Young women gasped as they listened to another story of betrayal involving (what appeared to people) a pious Muslim woman. The discussions of how pious Muslim women *should* behave often returned to the importance of appearances. Ironically, and against what Islamic feminist thought, indeed what all feminist thought suggests, these women's focus on control of their own sexuality was a continued example of the way in which women make patriarchal bargains. This means that pious Muslim women replaced one set of rules about female sexuality (the secular values) with strict Islamic rules. In either case, women's sexuality was controlled and in a highly contentious state. For women in this group sexuality was a woman's rather than a man's responsibility, meaning that sexuality and duty of a pious Muslim woman was her burden alone, and they all believed they had to do their best in addressing their responsibilities. These women's experiences were an example of agency that did not resist, but rather upheld patriarchal structure (Mahmood 2005).

However, there were also benefits to living a life as a pious Muslim woman. For many women pious appearance, and particularly the wearing the hijab, provided them with a sense of protection and autonomy (Mahmood 2005; Mernissi 1998). Having recently put on the hijab, Devla said that,

¹⁴ The issues associated with responsibilities of pious Muslim women and the pressures to act in a certain way are further discussed in Chapter 6 when pious Muslim women's daily practice is discussed.

[women with a headscarf] were not burdened with those things as unveiled women. Starting with fashion, to please the society in how they dress, in a pressure to follow trends. One the year one thing is modern, the next another. It is exhausting¹⁵.

Mina recalled reactions against her since she began wearing the hijab. While her reasons for veiling were strictly “to please Allah,” she was not free of influence by her family, friends, and colleagues. Mina’s decision was deeply personal, and she took years to make the final decision. Because of the burden she felt to represent Islam properly (as *pokrivena Muslimanka* [covered Muslim woman]), she resisted for a long time, finally coming to terms with struggles she would have to face for the rest of her life. Mina recalls,

I was afraid... how was I going to get a job, I was afraid of what others would say. An architect, I was always ambitious, I wanted to do many things in my life and I was afraid that the headscarf would prevent me from that. With the current situation in the world in particular. Everyone looks at you with prejudice. Headscarf to them means uneducated, unfortunately. Then I realized that I cannot go through life afraid, that I needed to feel as a complete person. The headscarf made me a complete person.

Despite the day-to-day discrimination she was sure she would face later on, Mina said she was empowered by her decision to wear the hijab. It involved a struggle that required her to literally wear her choice on her body. Mina used her faith-based network as a support system in which she exercised her voice and simultaneously reinforced her decision to veil. It was the small faith-based networks to which she belonged that helped her make the final decision to live her life as a *pobožna* or *prava Muslimanka*. Despite negative comments and diminished opportunities (such as inability to find a job and being passed over for

¹⁵ There is quite a bit of variety in what is termed Islamic clothing or fashion. My pious informants referred to Turkish and Arab style dress. Turkish dress usually was colorful and involved flowing, soft and at times very light fabric, while Arab style clothing was black, made from basic cotton and very loose fitting (similar to the robes worn by women in Saudi Arabia).

scholarship opportunities at the University), Mina transformed her deeply personal faith and practice into a public and political statement, and she committed herself to help other women make the same transition. By promoting and maintaining the control over her body and sexuality, Mina gained a sense of the self and in this way gained agency.

This discussion demonstrates some ways in which small faith-based networks helped a few young women deal with their struggles. Furthermore, building a network of like-minded women provided each of them with actual models of how to live as a conscious Muslim. Finally, the telling and retelling stories they heard or read was an important part of building a community by providing a moral compass for all members. Undoubtedly, this was one of the most important benefits of the network because many of the women had a difficult time explaining their beliefs and practice to those closest to them, their family.

MARRIAGE AND DATING

During one of my last meetings in August of 2008, I met the group at Bey's Mosque for an afternoon prayer. Following the prayer, which was attended by six core members of the group, we sat in the courtyard of the mosque discussing that most likely of topics among young single women, marriage. As the majority of the women were single, the topic was important for all of us; it was forum in which we could discuss the intricate details of married life and ask questions of each, the answers to which could not be found in religious texts. For the women in the group, marriage was about more than just being a mother and a wife, but marriage was also about being a good Muslim woman. Consistently my pious informants shared that to be a proper Muslim was to be a good mother and a wife. Their

Islamic personhood was defined by their relationship to men, but more importantly to observing women's duties as prescribed by Islam. Belkisa stated that,

part of being a good Muslim woman involves being a good wife and a mother.

Marriage, according to the Qur'an, was an indispensable part of Islam as a set of beliefs and practices. For Devla, who joined us for a short period of time that evening, marriage was a way to release the burden she felt when she was single. She elaborated.

A married woman is ahead [of a single woman]. They are not burdened by those things that burden women who are not married...such as what she looks like and what she's wearing. I think many people have a romantic ideal of what marriage will be like, something fantastic, beautiful. Nobody thinks about how much work it is. Many women go into marriage with a wrong assumption to look for someone that will take their breath away, someone they will fall in love with. Fall in love and go blind. To me, being in love equals being blind. But when people start to really take a look they see other person's issues, and they start coming up with all the things they don't like about the other person. This is where Islam is ahead in terms of marriage. Different things are important. There is no being blind before marriage. It's about the relationship. The couple must work on the relationship.

All the members of our network often talked about the ways in which female bodies were sexualized, they mentioned billboards with sexually explicit images of women, and seeing young couples publicly express their affection and attraction. Often, my informants talked about the pressure for young women to have sex before marriage. The expectations of young women were to please their boyfriends in any way they could. Each woman in the group had a friend, a cousin, or colleague that experienced pressures of non-marital intimacy. From our interactions and interviews I was confident that all of the women in the group, except for one, were virgins and planned to remain as such until marriage. Marriage, for women who wanted to avoid these pressures, was an answer to the lack of respect for

women by young men. Many of my informants expressed that it was impossible to escape the pressures to behave as the young men expected them. My informants said that many young women could no longer keep their boyfriends without having to please them in a sexual manner. For the women in this group, Islam was a solution to these pressures, and this was their ticket out of falling prey to men's sexual needs. Belkisa commented,

...modern society saw women as bodies to be objectified, and there was no more respect for the important work women do.

This particular comment exemplified Belkisa's dissatisfaction with what she deemed "immoral dating practices including pre-marital sex". Belkisa, like many group members, believed that non-marital sex lead to men exploiting women. Women I interviewed commonly discussed men's sexual needs, but on several occasions they mentioned that women have them as well, but that women were better at controlling them. Marriage, as a contract, was the only way in which a woman could control her sexuality and her future. Guarding their sexuality was important for two reasons: Islam deems non-marital sex a sin, and sex was one of the primary ways in which "men used women." Nihada said that young women,

...had to follow these norms that were put forth by the society. On television they are constantly bombarded with images of half-naked women...and yet they tell *me* I am primitive, that I am not modern.

Constrained by Bosnia's cultural beliefs and practices, these women perceive that the only way to gain respect from men, as well as respect themselves, was to observe this rule in

everyday life¹⁶. The only way a young woman could meet a man to marry would be through dating. Dating was the only solution for pious Muslim women since Bosnia had few arranged marriages, a rather common practice in other Muslim countries throughout the world. One way in which women were able to both date and remain true to Islamic life was by engaging in Sharia Dating. This practice combined dating in a western sense with Islamic law that restricts intimacy between a man and a woman before marriage. I further discuss the importance of Sharia dating in Chapter 8 when I focus on different strategies pious Muslim women employ in their quest to live a fully coherent Muslim life.

Understanding marriage as a protective union in a world that has been hyper-sexualized through media (and exposure to western gender relationships and values) was one of the ways in which members of the group empowered themselves. Islamic duty allowed these women a way out of one type of patriarchal structure into another. In effect, these women swapped the hyper-sexualized western gender roles for Islamic gender roles that completely restricted women's sexuality. Nevertheless, these young women felt that they were freed by Islam. In this way, they were empowered, but no more or less than their conventional Muslim counterparts. Their choice to stay virgins and save sex for marriage was validated through Islam. Without a doubt, pious young women saw sex as a risk; a bargain that left them without security. Pre-marital sex for non-pious women was also a concern, however, contraception was easily available, and there were few children born out of wedlock. In any case, among both my pious and conventional informants, birth control

¹⁶ Being that all the women involved in the small faith-based group were virgins, we never discussed intimacy or sexuality, as it would be an embarrassing topic of discussion for unmarried women trying to live their lives as conscious Muslims.

was rarely discussed aside from several women commenting on their mother's generation having used abortion in high numbers. My pious informants agreed that abortion was wrong according to Allah's law. For the women in my faith-based network, control of their sexuality was a form of liberation from the social and cultural norm that saw non-marital sex as a part of women's equality and emancipation. Ironically, for pious Muslim women sexual freedom was the opposite of what they wanted, and one of the primary reasons they sought a life of piety. In contrast to the western feminist liberal focus on women's sexuality both in and outside marriage, pious Muslim women felt themselves empowered through control of their bodies (prayer, fast and modest clothing) and sexuality (marriage).

CONCLUSION

This chapter attempts to clarify different ways in which women seek and provide support to each other. For my informants, the NGOs they associated with provided women with two primary sources of support. First, Nahla and Medica Zenica helped women attain professional skills necessary in helping them compete in the new market economy. Second, they provided women with emotional and personal support usually unavailable at school, work, home or in other social aspects of their lives. For women at Medica, this generally centered on helping women deal with the effects of violence and war and training them in new professions and trades. On the other hand, at Nahla many women received support and help with questions centered on meaning of life and purpose. Undoubtedly, both organizations had specific goals and missions, while Medica focused on providing help women who were disempowered by violence and economic downturn, Nahla was focused on providing a more religiously rooted support and development. Through their activities,

workshops, meetings and classes, both organizations played an important part of my informants identities as Bosnians, women and as Muslims.

Similarly, small faith-based networks seemed to provide some women with a sense of security, peace, knowledge, economic capital and a web of connections essential in ensuring skills and connections. Small faith-based networks therefore became a space where pious Muslim women created and revealed identities that they felt were not accepted or understood by non-pious companions and family members. For women seeking to live their lives as conscious Muslims, having an alternative support network was essential in helping them come to terms with who they were and what they wanted in life. To some degree then, small faith-based networks provided a substitute for family and kin-based networks.

Whether conscious or pious my informants faced a similar set of challenges that prevented them from fully participating in the social, economic and political life in Bosnia. This chapter demonstrates strategies women utilized to combat their subjugation and at least partial exclusion in the new post-war and post-socialist Bosnia. For both conventional and pious Muslim women, NGOs and faith-based networks were, therefore, somewhat helpful in addressing the problems associated with women's position, roles, and duties.

CHAPTER VI: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A BELIEVER AND HAVING FAITH FOR MUSLIM WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine how conventional and pious Muslim women understand and internalize faith [*vjera*] in relation to how they define themselves as Muslims. Islamic tradition and jurisprudence mandates that all Muslims place faith at the center of their daily lives, and actively maintain and nourish its significance through specific daily practices and personal reflection. Accordingly, faith is central to how a follower of Islam understands and lives his or her religion. Although faith is important, it remains a problematic topic of discussion since its meaning and the degree to which it is internalized varies among Muslims of Bosnia, and for the purposes of this case study, women. Conventional and pious Muslim women I interviewed understand faith in two distinct ways. So while conventional Muslim women understood faith to mean holding Allah in their heart, for pious Muslims faith (in addition to holding Allah and the Prophet in their heart) was dependent on the rituals and daily duties they observed.

After a number of interviews at the start of my fieldwork, I realized that asking my informants to define faith, or the importance of faith in their life, produced little discussion that was useful or relevant to my research. As a result, I had to find a creative approach of acquiring information about the role *vjera* plays in the lives of Muslim women. My solution was to ask my informants how they defined and understood what it meant to be a believer [*vjernica*] and non-believer [*nevjernica*].¹ In addition, many of our conversations focused on

¹ *Vjernica* is the female form of believer. I specifically addressed women with this term as it refers to women believers and what this concept means for women rather than men.

what women believed [*vjeruju* plural] or [*vjerovati* (verb to believe or to have faith)]² and the importance of *vjera* in their life. Therefore in this chapter, I begin with a discussion of the role and importance of *vjera* in the lives of Muslims, then I focus on the role and meaning of *vjera* among my informants, first for pious, then for conventional Muslim women.

IMPORTANCE OF FAITH IN ISLAM

The principal place to begin any discussion of faith in the lives of Muslims is to start with an examination of how Islamic religious texts and teachings impart their meaning to followers of Islam. Faith in Islamic text is described as encompassing three dimensions, including: Islam,³ *iman*, and *ihsan*. *Ihsan* requires Muslims to worship Allah as though they actually see Him (Allah), and if they cannot see Him, then Muslims are to know that Allah sees them. Accordingly, *ihsan* requires the kind of faith that is blind, yet always aware that Allah is watching. *Iman*, an Arabic term that usually translates as faith, is often used to refer to the strength of conviction among observant Muslims, and is exclusively used by my pious informants, but not by my conventional informants. John L. Esposito indicates that *iman* in Islam is a,

...belief in the oneness of God, angels, prophets, revealed books and the hereafter. Faith is a matter of free choice in Islam but is also considered a gift from God; no one is to be compelled to believe. [Esposito 2003: 136]

In addition to being a matter of free choice, a Muslim's level of faith is closely related to or dependent upon his or her commitment to practice or action. John Esposito argues that

² Questions asked during interviews included: *Šta vam znači vjera u svakodnevnom životu?* What is the importance of faith/religion in your daily life? *Šta znači biti vjernica/vjernik?* What does it mean to be a believer? *Da li se smatraš vjernicom?* Do you consider yourself a believer?

³ Submission to Allah.

true faith, among Muslims trying to live their lives as conscious Muslims, is manifested through right conduct (meaning adherence to all the prescribed duties and obligations) (Esposito 2003: 136). Therefore, faith in Islam is not simply a matter of belief in almighty Allah, but requires a Muslim to observe a number of duties. Muslims are expected to obey God, Muhammad, and authorities, fulfill their commitments, be truthful, perform ritual prayer, spend their wealth and struggle steadfastly to do the will of God, shun drinking, gambling, and exploitative business practices, and finally, avoid treating people condescendingly (Esposito 2003:136).

Among my informants only those women I have identified as pious understood faith in this way. This was demonstrated when pious women said things like '*hvala dragom Alahu*' (Bosnian) or '*elhamdulillah*' (Arabic), meaning 'thanks to dear Allah,' and commonly used *inshallah* (if God wills it). Emphasis on language that constantly placed Allah in daily conversation indicates that for my pious informants' faith was not something they just had, but was a gift and obligation commanded by the almighty Allah. Furthermore, the use of such language points to the role of language (religious and Arabic terms, and Turkish expressions) in making their politico-religious orientation in the post-war setting. In pre-war Bosnia, Sorabji observed that use of Arabic or Turkish expressions and language helped Sarajevan's she interviewed reaffirm their identities as Muslims. Sorabji writes,

It has been seen that for Muslims the neighborhood is the most important social unit above the level of the nuclear family. This unit is nationally pure in that all or the vast majority of its members are Muslims. At the same time it is the domain in which "Islamic" principles are overtly relied upon and referred to. Through this reliance and through the persistent use of Muslim/Islamic cultural behaviors—Arabic greetings, coffee *fildžani*, etc.—the inhabitants gently, but consistently create and reinforce their own identity. [Sorabji 1989: 233]

On the other hand, language in post-war Bosnia is a necessary aspect of how all people construct and define their identities. Sen argues writes that in post-war Yugoslavia, language has the ability,

...to establish a network of allegiance and commonality within a nation, while also clearly distinguishing 'us' from those that do not fall within the same linguistic realm (therefore, not part of the nation). [Sen 2009: 514]

The majority of women I identified as pious or pious Muslims used the term *iman* to describe and talk about their experiences of Islam as a set of beliefs and duties they believed were essential in their attempts to live a coherent Muslim life. Thus, *iman* was an essential way in which my pious informants come to construct their Islamic personhood and their identity as Muslims. Furthermore, *iman* requires a "belief in the unseen," and one who holds such faith is called a *mu'min* (believer in Arabic). *Iman* is second in order of importance after Islam and refers to one's 'true commitment' to God. The Qur'an states the possibility of holding one or two of the three dimensions of faith:

Do not say 'we have accepted faith'; rather say 'we have accepted Islam,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts (sura 49: verse 14). [Ali 2001]

According to Islamic scholarship, six components constitute *iman*. One haddith recalls a story of the Prophet Muhammad being asked to inform a traveler (Angel Gabriel, in human form) about *iman*, to which the Prophet replied:

['*iman*' is] to have faith in:

1. Allah
2. His [Allah's] angels
3. His [Allah's] books (The five holy books)
4. His [Allah's] messengers
5. The Last Day (The Day of Judgment)

6. Qadr (Fate); The good in it, and the evil in it. [Ali and Muhammad ibn Isma'il 1944]

Esposito adds an important dimension to the definition and understanding of *iman* among Muslims when he states that faith, “suggests security against untruth and misguidance in this world and punishment in the afterlife” (Esposito 2003:136). *Iman* was commonly described as weak or strong by my pious informants, reasserting the importance of *iman* in preventing one from committing *haram*.⁴ Nearly all of my pious informants spoke about the fluidity of *iman* and how its strength was determined by an individual’s willingness to fight and maintain faith at the center of his or her life.

Muslims’ devotion varies in intensity (from low to high) and is closely associated with the strength of their faith. As one of the basic tenets of Islam, proclamation of faith in Allah and the Prophet Muhammad is an essential aspect of being a Muslim. The importance of faith is so deeply rooted in Islam that every prayer begins with this proclamation: *subhanallah, al-hamdulillah, la ilaha illallah, and Allahu akbar* (I declare that Allah is clear of all imperfections, praise and thanks to Allah, no one is God but Allah, and Allah is the Greatest). In this way, Muslims are always reminded of their faith. Official Islamic jurisprudence considers *iman* an important part of living a life as a Muslim and this is demonstrated by a large number of pious informants’ attachment to the term. As I stated earlier, identifying the importance of faith in the lives of my informants was a significant challenge. It was only after a few interviews that I realized the difference in how women defined and understood faith. While pious Muslim women spoke and discussed faith freely, my conventional informants had little understanding or comprehension of the concept. For

⁴ *Haram* are actions forbidden by God (Allah) such as drinking, eating pork, and other forbidden acts.

conventional Muslim women faith was an abstract concept, something they had, but rarely discussed. Conversely, pious Muslim women made a clear distinction between Islamic practice, *iman*, and *vjera*.

Unsurprisingly, *iman* is at the core of discussions of what separates conventional from pious Muslim women. *Iman* represents a special way in which my pious informants related to Islam and how they talked about their belief and conviction to live as conscious Muslims. *Iman* is a true or, what Saktanber (2002) refers to as, a conscious commitment to Allah in their daily lives. *Iman* was a concept that pious Muslims learned in mekteb (Islamic school for children), at the School of Islam, lectures by local imams, or by reading the holy texts. On the other hand, my conventional informants did not use these terms and most of them did not know the basic definition.

My pious Muslim informants talk about *iman* as a living, breathing thing. For them, *iman* changes, moves and adjusts based on how they are feeling and what they are doing. *Iman* grew, or diminished, just like any other feeling these women experienced. For a majority of pious Muslims I interviewed, their lives were defined by their *iman*'s constant variability. According to my pious informants *iman* had always to be considered. It was through *iman* that they remained on the path to Allah and away from committing *haram*.

In addition to having *iman*, a good Muslim must be a proper believer. In the Qur'an, one verse in particular distinguishes between a *mu'min* or a true believer, and a person who is simply born into Islam:

The Arabs of the desert say, "We believe." (tu/minu) Say thou: Ye believe not; but rather say, "We profess Islam;" (aslamna) for the faith (al-'*iman*'u) hath not yet found its way into your hearts. But if ye obey [God] and His

Apostle, he will not allow you to lose any of your actions: for [God] is Indulgent, Merciful. [Qur'an 49: 14]

Islamic scholars argue that the use of the terms "Islam" and "Muslim" for adherents of Islamic faith is a modern innovation (Aslan 2005). However, whether or not Muslim is a modern term, it generally refers to a person who adheres to Islam as a set of beliefs and practices. However, as the above passage clearly demonstrates the holy Islamic texts make a distinction between a Muslim who has fully submitted, and a Muslim who minimally submits but remains part of the Islamic community. *Mu'min* is a Muslim who has given himself or herself to the faith completely, both in belief and practice. Carl Ernst, an Islamic scholar, further clarifies this distinction:

The Arabic term Islam itself was of relatively minor importance in classical theologies based on the Qur'an. If one looks at the works of theologians such as the famous al-Ghazali (d. 1111), the key term of religious identity is not Islam but '*iman*' (faith), and the one who possesses it is the *mu'min* (believer). Faith is one of the major topics of the Qur'an; it is mentioned hundreds of times in the sacred text. In comparison, Islam is a less common term of secondary importance; it only occurs eight times in the Qur'an. Since, however, the term Islam had a derivative meaning relating to the community of those who have submitted to God, it has taken on a new political significance, especially in recent history. [Ernst 2003: 63]

This distinction corresponds to the experiences of conventional and pious Muslim women I interviewed. In the context of my research, a *mum'in* corresponds to the experiences and pursuits of pious Muslim women I identified. The term *mu'min* was used only by a couple of my pious informants and was not a customary part of their vocabulary, which is why I do not use the term but rather pious Muslim.

First, I discuss the experiences of six pious Muslim women, namely Aldina, Nihalda, Belkisa, Badema, Selma and Elma. These women represent the age distribution of my

entire pious Muslim informant sample, including two outliers, one eighteen and the other fifty-four. The other four were in their mid to late twenties and were part of *moja generacija*. Taking all this into account, my discussion here provides a range of experiences regarding faith among women I identify as pious Muslims. Second, I discuss and compare six conventional Muslim women's experiences of faith. These are Ismeta, Fuada, Sabiha, Jasmina Nermina and Hasiba. These twelve women's experiences were representative of the type of Islamic lifestyles lived and practiced by both conventional and pious s.

PIOUS MUSLIM WOMEN INTERVIEWEES

When I asked women who self-identified as pious (and at times *prave vjernice*) how they conceptualized *vjera* and expectations of a *vjernica* their answers closely followed the textual sources and teachings of local imams and *hodžas*. Aldina was 18, single, and a college student. She identified herself as someone who came from *tradicionalna Muslimanska kuća*, with traditional gender roles and family structure; her parents had taught her little about Islam. Belkisa also from a home with traditional gender values and roles she was single, twenty-four, and a graduate of the school of law; I met her through Fuada and she became one of my closest informants during fieldwork. Nihada was twenty-four, single and a lawyer working at the Ministry of Education. We met through Badema, another informant, and interacted often through our attendance at local talks by imams and other Islam-themed events. She came from a pious family. Fifty-four year-old Selma (divorced and having lost a son to suicide), came from a home with strict gender roles in which women were thought to be of lesser value. She was another important contributor to this chapter as she was one of the oldest of my informants. Selma was different from

other women within this group not only because of her age, but because she had lived in Saudi Arabia for a number of years. Elma, on the other hand, was twenty-eight, a college of law graduate that worked in a city municipality office. She was also single and came from *tradicionalna Muslimanska kuća* with parents who observed few Islamic duties and that had a typical family structure. Finally, I profile Badema, a twenty-six year old graduate of the school of law, and a philanthropist. At the time of my research Badema was single but married within a year of when I met her. She also came from a home with typical family structure and gender roles.

I met 18 year-old Aldina at Nahla while attending the School of Islam at Nahla. At the time, she had just begun her studies at the school of medicine. This was an unusual pursuit for a young woman who wore the hijab, since it was commonly understood that veiled women did not practice of medicine. For example, women wearing the hijab were often dismissed by the professors from anatomy courses because Islamic duty prevented them from working on the bodies of men unrelated to them. Despite the difficulties that faced her, Aldina had successfully finished a nursing degree in high school, and was actively pursuing her dream of studying, and later practicing medicine. Quiet in her demeanor, petite in stature and cloaked in colorful fabrics, pattern and styles (often referred to as Turkish style), Aldina said she was committed to Islam as a moral code and way of life. Notwithstanding the fact that she was raised in what she termed a traditional Muslim home or *Bošnjačka kuća*, Aldina claimed that she had “always been in Islam.” As a young teenager she said she could not wait to start high school so that she could finally put on the hijab, an act her parents forbade until then. Aldina claimed that putting on the hijab at such an early

age was made easier by her older sister's choice to veil a few years earlier. Eventually, she told me, her behavior and commitment to Islam convinced her parents that her wish for the hijab was valid and they made peace with her choice.

Trying to live as what she termed *prava Muslimanka* was part of Aldina's experience from an early age it meant that "a person had to stick to all the Islamic rules." This person had to pray five times a day, and she joked, when considering that Allah had originally ordered the Prophet Muhammad to perform fifty daily prayers, Muslims today had to admit they had it pretty easy. Aldina claimed that being *vjernica* and truly having *vjera* also meant the person had to have a clear conscience. A clear conscience was essential to being a good Muslim; however, it was also the most difficult aspiration to achieve according to Aldina. Aldina internalized all six aspects of *iman* and said she was strengthened through the knowledge she gained while reading the Qur'an. She also spent most of her time with a group of women who were also pursuing a life of piety and living as conscious Muslims. In a way Aldina had her own version of a small faith-based network that helped her remain and continue to live her life as a pious Muslim. Aldina defined a believer as a person that abided by the Islamic rules and duties including,

Respecting Allah's orders and Islamic rules. It means praying five times a day, fasting. If possible go to hajj and give zakat⁵. In Islam it is important to stick to some of the basic rules. Staying away from *haram*⁶ and sticking with *halal*.⁷ Not allowing another person to get a headache because of you. So, when you become that person, until you reach that level, you are a good believer while you fulfill Islamic rules and while you try to do towards others

⁵ *Zakat* or alms giving to the poor expected of every Muslim if they have surplus income.

⁶ *Haram* or what is forbidden within Islamic tradition. It often refers to things like alcohol, lying, sin and other things that are not allowed by Allah.

⁷ *Halal*, or what is allow within Islamic tradition.

as you want done unto you. That is that. So, there is no great philosophy [in respect to what was expected]. Every person has inside them a feeling for what is right.

Belkisa's criteria of a believer included an additional set of attributes. Using popular local imam Hafiz Bugari's definition, Belkisa claimed there were five levels of a true *vjernica*. She reminded me that every person had to try to be better, and regardless if they were Muslim or not, one had to have a set of rules and regulations to follow. Belkisa said that a believer meant that,

A person has to try to be a better human being. This isn't just about Islam, but in Islam it requires observing all the main obligations and duties. You must stay away from harm, you must seek *halal*. Try not to hurt other human beings. You are a good believer as long as you follow Islamic duties and while you try to act towards others the way you want them to act towards you. There isn't much philosophy to this, you have this moral technology inside you for what is right. You just have to listen to it.

In claiming there was no great philosophy behind being a *vjernica*, 24 year-old Belkisa indicated that *vjera* and being *vjernica* was simple. Belkisa, who grew up in a secular communist society, was convinced that living a life as *prava vjernica* was difficult, if not impossible. However, through study and by meeting other pious women, she discovered that to be a believer was easy if one followed Allah's rules and prescriptions. Belkisa was also keenly aware that one's faith was not always as strong as it could be. She spoke of her own personal struggle to remain in *vjera*. It was not easy to be a *vjernica*, said Belkisa, because there were many temptations in her daily life that pushed her to commit sin and stray away from Allah's path. Despite these challenges, Belkisa found a way to continuously remind herself to stay on the correct path. She did this, she said, through prayer and

conscious attention to living a life as a good Muslim. Reflecting upon her own *iman*, Belkisa said,

...what rings in my ears, even today, "*iman* varies." It varies, depending on your good or bad actions. So I take a look at myself and ask "am I a good believer?" and then you figure it out "In order to be a good believer, you must do following." When you feel that your *iman* is waning. So you study Qur'an a little, you pray a little more, you get into it a little more, and you feel better already.

For Belkisa, *iman* was something one must nurture, take care of, and focus on. *Iman* for Belkisa was a living, breathing experience, and a feeling that she had to keep an eye on if she was to live as a *prava Muslimanka*.

For Elma, another informant I met at Nahla, being *vjernica* meant a person had to stick to the basic tenets of Islam. It meant saying the Shahhadah, praying, observing the fast, going to hajj (when possible), and giving alms to the poor. It also meant acting in a respectable manner, whether in private or public. Elma had read the Qur'an in Arabic several times, but she read a translated version on daily basis. In order to increase her *iman* and gain *ibadet*⁸ or *sevap*, she also tried to memorize parts of it. Elma said that memorization helped her fulfill an important aspect of *iman*, that is, understand, internalize, and respect the holy text. This contributed to the strength of her *iman*, even when she felt like she was tempted to commit *haram*.

To Elma, *vjernica* also meant that you had to be ready to help others, do something that mattered, and be an exemplary member of the society.

⁸ *Ibadet* can be earned and it usually refers to good favor with Allah. The more good deeds a person did the more likely they were to earn a good standing in the next life.

Vjernica is someone who keeps to the basic duties. We have to fill out a certain set of expectations to be believers. We have to practice. It's up to us. It's how we behave in the society too. It is also a matter of how we pronounce and say the holy text, it's about how we pray, fast, the hajj and how we perform the *kurban* (sacrificial lamb). It's important to be observant of the practical duties. But it is all up to us for it to be done. But it is also about our behavior out in public. What you do in life, who you do it with, how much you are ready to help others and yourself, and being an example to others. So, if you are doing something right, then that means your community will do right as a whole. That is how one person can help others. That for me is *iman*.

Clearly, for Elma, *iman* was not enough; *vjernica* also has to be a good member of the Islamic community. Her definition not only followed the six tenets of *iman*, but was a good example of how pious Muslim women focused on and worked through their own relationship with Islam.

Nihada, who came from a religious home and whose father was educated at the Faculty of Islamic Studies⁹, said that a person had to stick with and observe all of the orders sent by Allah. One could not be a Muslim without adhering to the five pillars of Islam. She attended the local mosque daily. As a child, she went to *mekteb* and her father was a local imam, which meant that Nihada was raised in Islam. While Nihada's background makes her an outlier among pious informants, her experience with faith was similar to many of her peers (as in she experienced a period during which she made a conscious decision to live as a conscious Muslim). Nihada was very active in making sure she lived her life as a *prava Muslimanka*. She spent time at different mosques during the week and attended various lectures. She always searched out new friends who were in Islam like herself; she could say

⁹ An institution of higher education established in 1977 by the Islamic Community. Over the years the Faculty served the needs of the Muslim community and in 1992 added department of theology and pedagogy to its curriculum. A year later a Masters and Doctoral program were established including numerous summer and short-term programs.

with certainty that most of her friends, if not all, were attempting to live their lives as conscious Muslims. When talking about what constituted a believer, Nihada was very specific. To be *vjernica* one had to observe all of Allah's laws saying,

I cannot say that I am a *vjernica*, only Allah knows that, but I think that *prava vjernica* is a person who sticks to Allah's orders. One must pray, fast, and give *zekat*. These are just the basic duties, but the responsibilities are much bigger than that.

This self-awareness and emphasis on duty demonstrated Nihada's familiarity with the obligations of a *prava vjernica*. Although she was not veiled during my fieldwork, many of our discussions revolved around her making this final decision to enter the life of Islam completely. Nihada did not think a believer could be part of, in her words, the secular (and therefore immoral) world and also participate in the Islamic world. One had to dedicate themselves to Islam and to living life as a pious Muslim completely. For Nihada, thus, being a believer was much more than just having *iman*, it was about living that *iman* every hour of every day.

Much like Nihada, Selma (my older informant) further observed that being a believer was not only a way of life, but also an immense responsibility. Selma perceived faith and practice in Islam as a guide (a recipe in her words) for this life, and the eternal one as well. While I give more details of Selma's experiences in a later chapter, here I wanted to provide a glimpse into what it meant for her to be a *vjernica*. Selma, in her fifties, single and childless (having lost her son to suicide), considered faith the only answer to the traumatic events she had experienced in life. *Vjera* was more than just believing in Allah, it was also about truly internalizing all that made life worth living, and that was afterlife (or heaven), stating:

Being a *vjernica* in Islam means a great responsibility for this and the next world. Our life isn't simply about this life. Everything we do in this life is important. We have to think about what we do, how we do it, why we do it and with whom we do it because we do not know what kind of an outcome our behavior will have on our next life. Of course, the life of a believer is not easy these days. We are exposed to different manipulations and fraud, those that think negatively about Islam and have a negative influence regarding Islam. So being a believer means respecting all Islamic rules. So, from some basic things to gaining knowledge about Islamic rules in detail and all those things necessary to be a Muslim.

Being *vjernica*, according to Selma, required the individual to do more than just respect Allah's rules; a believer had to respect those rules because of the eternal life that awaited all of us. If a Muslim did not want to burn in the eternal fires of hell, they had to respect and observe all of Allah's commands. This focus on the afterlife, rather than the mortal life experienced here and now, was thus an important point of distinction between my pious and conventional informants. Few of my conventional informants referred to afterlife as a concern or a guiding force in how they lived their life in the present. Living in Islam, for Selma, was focused on making sure that the rules were followed, not only because it was the right thing to do in this life, but because it had a direct impact on their afterlife. These kinds of feelings and concerns were present among my pious informants.

Similarly, Badema saw being Muslim as a set of duties and obligations. In her mid-twenties at the time, Badema had a law degree and a stable career. She was raised in *tradicionalna Muslimanska kuća* where Islam was peripheral to their daily lives. According to Badema, she decided to pursue a life of Islam after her turbulent teenage years. As a teenager, Badema searched for answers to the questions about meaning of life and her purpose. At the time we met she was fully committed to making a transition into (what she

called) living her life in Islam (*živjeti u Islamu*) or as a *prava vjernica*. But her life was not always like that; Badema professed that in the past she identified herself as a Muslim, but did nothing that was expected of a good Muslim. Badema said she felt she lived a lie, instead she wanted to be complete. She said that Islam did just that, Islam calmed her down and give her purpose. Much like other women who experienced religious conversion into a life of a pious Muslim, fasting during Ramadan was the only one of the five pillars of Islam Badema observed prior to fully committing herself to living as a *prava Muslimanka*.¹⁰

To be a *vjernica*, Badema said that one has to,

Believe that Allah is the lord of everything, who decided everything. To stick to some basic principles, respect some of those basic responsibilities. Regarding the duties...some observe more, others less. There are people who do not pray, who are not veiled, who do not fast...but they believe. But Allah is the only one who decides. I am filled with positive energy when I am in religious centers. You become inspired. After that you can do anything. You are ready for anything. It strengthens your *iman*. It helps me understand *vjera* truly. I understand the source to which I must return. I have to find the true source of faith. *Iman* holds me on the right path, so that I don't leave it. It shields my *iman* and puts me on the right path, so that I may stay away from evil.

Focusing on one's own faith, one's own actions and behavior, was what counted, and not if they were a bigger or lesser Muslim than others. Statements such as "*I cannot judge whether or not they are a believer, only God knows what's in their hearts*" were common during my interviewees. This statement was significant because it pointed to the importance of an individual's responsibility in Islam. Owning ones actions was a common topic of discussion among pious women and was reiterated further in the School of Islam and various public events and lectures I attended. While pious Muslim women discussed

¹⁰ I elaborate on Badema's personal experiences with faith and Islamic lifestyle in Chapter 9 dedicated to conversion narratives and women's transformations into a conscious Muslim life.

here defined *vjernica* as dependent on prescribed practices, conventional Muslim women disagreed. The general understanding among my conventional informants was that to be a Muslim was not dependent on individual practice rituals and other Islamic obligations. Instead, my conventional informants thought to be a Muslim was based on what they believed in their heart, a point that I elaborate below.

Pious Muslim women's experiences and definitions of *vjernica* offer an insight into expectations of living one's life as a true or correct believer [*prava Muslimanka*]. A true believer [*prava vjernica*] or a true Muslim [*prava Muslimanka*], according to my interviewees, was about more than just faith in Allah as the only God and Muhammad as his Prophet, but was also about putting that faith into practice. The experiences highlighted above illuminate the necessity pious Muslim women feel in addressing all the duties prescribed by the holy text. The strength of their person (of who they were) was dependent on the strength of their *iman*. In the lives of women who grew up in conventional Muslim home, revitalization of religious belief and strength of their *iman* was essential in how they came to understand themselves and their position as women and as Muslims.

CONVENTIONAL MUSLIM WOMEN INTERVIEWEES

One challenge I encountered in my search for the defining socio-cultural aspects and practices experienced by my conventional informants was the lack of knowledge and familiarity with the concept of faith as it is understood in *Bosanska Islamska tradicija*. This discrepancy of knowledge, present among all the women I interviewed, stems from Bosnian Muslims' lack of presence of Islamic teachings and practice during the communist period. Moreover, many of the imam's who taught *mekteb(s)* and other Islamic teachings at local

mosques were not trained in the same Islamic school of thought as were many of present-day pious Muslims. Therefore, my conventional informant's understanding of *vjera* and *vjernica* discussed here did not come from textual sources and teachings but rather was a result of what they had learned at home. In order to compliment the discussion of pious Muslim women's ideas and experiences of faith and what constitutes a believer, I highlight responses of six conventional Muslim informants. Of those women, I met three at Medica Zenica and the other three I met through my ex-patriot contacts and networks. The age range of these women also represented the general distribution of the entire informant pool, with one woman in her mid-twenties, four in the late twenties to early thirties, and one woman in her fifties.

In her early thirties at the time we met, Jasmina came from a traditional Bosniak home with a Bosnian family structure, but had also spent many years living in neighboring Slovenia. She was university educated, with a Masters of Arts and was employed at a communications agency and she lived with her long-time boyfriend. Twenty-two years old and a volunteer at Medica Zenica, Ismeta was single and came from a family with traditional Bosniak family that spoke of Islam rarely until only recently. Similarly, twenty-three year old Sabiha (who was engaged and soon married) was a student at the university and a full time English teacher. Sabiha also comes from a traditional Bosniak home, but whose family structure was centered around her father as the head of the house and her mother having to fulfill all the necessary duties expected of a woman. I met Jasmina (31 years old) through an ex-patriot friend, Bronwyn, and became well acquainted with her over the course of the year. Finally, Fuada, at the time twenty-eight year old, single and an employee at a foreign

agency was also a student at the university and came from the same type of background. Fuada, however, had studied Islamic jurisprudence and, for a time, attended classes at Nahla.

Nermina, 53 years old and married, was a university-educated sociologist who came from Montenegro. However, despite living in a region that where Muslims were a small minority, her family had a very traditional Muslim family structure and gender roles. Hasiba, also married, was a 35 year-old activist who performed her therapist duties at Medica Zenica with commitment and passion. Originally from Višegrad, Hasiba was currently settled and employed in Zenica. Hasiba came from a Muslim family where she felt appreciated and equal to her brothers. She had a special relationship with her father who was later killed in the war. Islam was always observed and respected in her childhood home, thus unlike other women in this sample, Hasiba came from what she herself termed a religious home. Hasiba's experiences were unique and an important part of this collection about perceptions and experiences of faith. While five of the six conventional informants discussed here have some university education, Hasiba had only a high school degree. However, Hasiba shared this commonality with six other women among sixteen conventional Muslim women I interviewed. What these six women have in common was that they did not focus on practices commanded by the holy texts and Islamic jurisprudence. By giving me a definition of what constituted *vjernica* these women not only acknowledged they knew what a Muslim should do, but they also admitted that they did not meet those same expectations.

Jasmina was the only conventional informant I interviewed that self-identified as a non-believer in the Islamic sense. This meant that Jasmina did not believe in God (Allah) in Islamic theology, but was nevertheless, she said, a spiritual person. She was adamantly against being identified as a Muslim since she did not observe or internalize any of the beliefs and practices that came with the definition associated with Muslim. In an intense discussion over coffee on a warm spring afternoon, Jasmina said to me:

I am not *vjernica* and because of that I cannot speak for others. All believers are the same in all religions. It [religion] is a purely intimate thing. But that is not the case in this region where faith is mixed with other aspects of life. *Vjera* should be kept in *Muslimanska tradicija* and in the privacy of one's home. However, in Bosnia it is mixed with everything. In all aspects of life, religion is present and even in spaces where it should not be. I am not talking only about Islam, other religions too, but Islam especially. Of course it makes sense why religion is present. It is like that because of the war and the need people felt to belong.

Jasmina had neither a connection to *vjera* nor knowledge of the holy texts that would have otherwise increased her understanding of Islam as the religion into which she was born. *Vjera*, to Jasmina, was a deeply personal experience that could not be explained in words. She also did not see her beliefs as related to Islam, but rather general spirituality found among all religions. As a result, in Jasmina's experience of *vjera* was fundamentally different from those of my pious informants. However, Jasmina was adamant that being Muslim was part of her ethnicity and her family's history, meaning that she would always associate with Islam as a religion of her ancestors. This was particularly important to her because over the years her mother began adopting more devout interpretations of Islamic duty and began expecting the same from Jasmina. For the first time in her life Jasmina was told that she should pray and try to be a better Muslim. Unsurprisingly, this became a

challenge and a strain on her relationship with her mother as she rather disliked her mother's new-found *vjera*. Though she did not verbalize this last point, it was obvious from the comments such as calling hypocritical her mother's adoption of daily prayer and her new-found observance of fasting.

Ismeta, a 22-year-old university student and non-profit volunteer, said that in Bosnia all were believers by birth, by being born into Islam. However, Ismeta also observed that, in practice, few could be called *pravi Muslimani*. Ismeta said that although a Muslim was not supposed to consume alcohol, many did so without thinking twice about it. In this experience, for Ismeta, being Muslim had nothing to do with the Islamic duty commanded by holy texts. Ismeta observed the end of Ramazan with a party with her family, and occasionally prayed with her mother, but she rarely engaged any of the other duties. In fact, she said that she didn't understand or know all the verses required during the prayer, and rather simply followed her mother and uttered few words during the entire act.

Despite her own lack of practice, Ismeta defined *vjernica* as,

...a person who observes the rules that have been set forth by the holy book Qur'an, so a person who follows it in its entirety. Here [in Bosnia] it is rare to find someone who respects and observes all the rules, especially the youth [young people].

Clearly, Ismeta did not place herself within her definition as *vjernica*, nor did she conceptualize what belief entailed beyond believing in God. However, even though she did not consider herself a believer in the same way as my pious informants, Ismeta still recognized that a believer ought to observe the rules set forth in the Qur'an and the Haddiths. Ismeta's views on duties of *vjernica* were not singular in nature, but shared by the majority of my conventional informants. Even though she did not identify as *vjernica*,

Ismeta identified as a Muslim. Ismeta felt that she was a Muslim by birth, by right, and by name. Although she did not observe the majority of the duties, she indeed recognized them as important. When asked about the last time she observed an Islamic duty, Ismeta said,

...recently during the time of *Ramazan*. I fast and pray. But only occasionally. Normally I live like all young people. So, I go out, I drink something alcoholic and that's that. I do not practice Islam completely, so I do not consider myself *prava vjernica*. I will probably dedicate myself to religion in ten to fifteen years.

Prava vjernica was one of the terms used by my conventional informants to describe those women whose devotion of Islamic life was stronger than their own. However, even though they understood the duties of a *prava vjernica*, many of my conventional informants still believed that being *vjernica* had less to do with one's actions, and more with what they held deeply inside. As a result, *prava vjernica* was a complicated term to define since it held two types of meanings that changed based on whether or not I was talking to a pious conventional informant.

Likewise, Sabiha thought that to be a *vjernica* was to hold Allah in your heart. To Sabiha *vjera* was a deeply individual experience. Consequently, no one person could mandate what they should or should not do and believe. According to Sabiha, who identified herself as *tradicionalna Muslimanka*, she thought that being a *vjernica*,

...does not mean going to mosque, praying five times a day, wearing a hijab or whatever else. Belief is in fact a deeply individual thing and nobody can tell you how to believe, or to pray in this or that language. That [faith] is a matter of one's own personal experiences. Which means, it has always been [to me] rather stupid when people say "what kind of a believer are you, you don't do this, you don't do that [referring to Islamic practices]." Meaning *vjera* is my own thing, and I will practice it the way I think is best.

Furthermore, Sabiha pointed out that in the years following the war religion seemed to be forced upon people. Her frustration came from those who wanted to push what they considered true Islam on her and other conventional Muslims. Sabiha thought that *pravi vjernici* were not allowed to judge her as a lesser or worse Muslim, but had to be concerned with the state of their own souls. She was unhappy about the fact that people no longer respected Bosanske Islamske tradicije (like *tevhid*). Sabiha felt that many Muslims were being forced to practice a different kind of Islam, not a Bosnian Islam. She felt that too many foreigners (from majority Muslim countries throughout Middle East) were telling Bosnia's Muslims how to practice their faith, and she was upset that no one seemed to care about preserving *tradicija*. Sabiha believed that people had to approach religion on their own terms. People had to individually search for answers; they could not be told what to do. In this respect, Sabiha was deeply committed to keeping *tradicija(s)* she believed were somehow unchanged since before the communist period. She would fast from time to time, go to *tevhids*, but she kept *vjera* to herself. Sabiha didn't believe that one could tell how good or bad a Muslim¹¹ was, and that one's piety was strictly a personal matter. Sabiha believed that keeping faith in her heart was enough, that this made her *vjernica* and a good Muslim.

Similarly, Fuada thought that *vjera* was not measured by one's public display of religious practice, but what they did when others weren't looking and what they held in

¹¹ Morris observes the tendency among devout Muslims to situate less devout individuals in direct opposition to their own fidelity towards Islam (Morris 2006: 97). While most of my conscious Muslim informants observe there is no way of knowing what others feel in their heart, they nonetheless hold prejudices against those who do not believe and practice in the ways they do. As a result, there is some tension between conventional and pious Muslims.

their hearts. Fuada, 28 years old and single, defined *vjernica* as sticking to the basic moral principles. Ironically, when speaking of what constituted *vjernica*, she quoted her grandfather, a lifelong communist, stating:

I will tell you what my grandfather says: being a good person. My grandfather was a communist all his life, and even today, it is something nobody can change. My grandfather [despite being a communist] read the Qur'an and Bible and other holy books, and in a way he is religious. If you asked my grandfather, he would most likely be a Bogumil.¹² But I think that people make a mistake when they say: 'you have to [do Islam] this way, cannot do it in another way'. A real believer is the one who keeps his faith in his heart and that is something between him and God. And I cannot tell others "I pray 5 times a day, I give alms to the poor". I think that being a believer means observing those things that God demands of us, do good onto others and ourselves. How much a person can respect that which was ordered depends on the religion. In Islam that means praying 5 times a day, hajj, fast, and giving alms. A believer doesn't mean doing all of those things, one can choose. I don't do all of my duties. But I don't think that makes me less of a Muslim or a believer. I don't like it when people say "She doesn't pray". But I fast, every Ramadan, and according to them that doesn't count. That's just awful because it is better to do something than nothing.

Fuada's frustration with the imposition of judgment upon those that do not practice daily within the tenants of Islam was clear. Many of my conventional informants, like Fuada, expressed similar feelings. This kind of conflict did not exist prior to the onset of war. Rather, it was an outcome of the religious revitalization movement and influx of foreign interpretations of Islam. Fuada thought that being a believer was not a matter of practice, but rather *vjera*. She was a Muslim woman who cared deeply and pronounced her faith, yet understood that her obligations and duties were greater than the ones she employed. However, Fuada was very clear that what she believed and practiced did not make her any less a Muslim.

¹² Bogumils as discussed in Chapter 4 are the dualist sect of Christians that adopted Islam in largest numbers following the arrival of Ottoman Empire.

Similar to Fuada, Hasiba thought that being *vjernica* was not dependent upon one's practice. Hasiba was a strong woman whose dedication to helping women victims of violence was her passion. Growing up with a father who prayed daily and observed the five pillars of Islam (and whom she called *veliki vjernik*¹³), Hasiba was always aware of what was expected of a good Muslim. In fact, Hasiba used her father as good example of a *vjernik* saying:

I remember my father who went to the mosque every Friday before the war, and when the war broke out, all of his neighbors kept asking him to come too, and that's when he stopped going. It is your good faith whether or not you will go the mosque. [New Muslims] say 'you have to pray'. You cannot say 'you have to', that is something one should want to do. You cannot force someone to practice.

Hasiba's experiences with Islam were unlike many other Bosnia's Muslims. She came from a home in which faith and religion were a part of daily life. Her father, a self-proclaimed *vjernik*, even during the communist period, attended Friday prayers his entire life.

However, in the years before the war broke out, other men, who never walked into a mosque, started telling her father how to be a proper Muslim. That spelled the end of her father's public practice of Islam. Hasiba was disappointed by the way in which *vjera* was used to advance political agendas, and very critical of the ways in which it was used to control people. Hasiba was critical of those Muslims who started to practice only after public displays of piety began securing jobs and other benefits. The Muslim nationalist party became strong in Bosnia and its influence was far reaching. Therefore, if a person was to be a member of the party they had to show that they were pious or devout. This

¹³ Great believer.

bothered Hasiba whose own father was a dedicated believer his entire life but whose piety was overshadowed by new politically motivated, and in her mind, fake Muslims.

Moreover, Hasiba was wary of the new Arab-type Islam infiltrating Bosnia's borders and people's lives. Hasiba's relationship and focus on *vjera*, despite all the difficult and traumatic events, never changed, not even after the war was over. She was adamant that she was less likely to associate herself with Islam due to what she perceived as negative changes in how Islam was lived. I think the Hasiba's words best describe the feelings of many other Bosnian Muslim women who feel threatened by the entrance of non-Bosnian forms of Islam:

That is why I would love it for us to keep our own way of *vjerovati*.

Hasiba was a woman committed to her way of life, to her *tradicija(s)*, her father's Islam. Adamant that foreign Islamic influences were not only wrong, but oppressive, Hasiba was angry about the ways in which new Islamic practices (most notably the Arab practice of niqab for women and short pants with long beard for men) were making their way into the daily life of Bosnian Muslims. Hasiba identified as a *vjernica*, but that also meant that she could not judge others commitment to Islam.

A believer means that one cannot break those basic principles, like greed, hatred, gossip. That for me is being a believer, or being in faith. You have to believe and when it is something ugly, you still must draw something beautiful out of it. You cannot simply hate something, or some part of faith because of what you think is wrong.

Hasiba was skeptical that many *novi Muslimani*, as she called them, were quick to judge her for her interpretation of proper Islamic life. Yet, she could remember how many of the now visibly pious Muslims telling her she was *nevjernik* (a non-believer) while they were walking

from bar to bar, drinking alcohol and eating pork. For Hasiba, many of the new public representations of Islam were political, for show. In her opinion, they were not *pravi vjernici* because they were only adopting new forms of Islam in order to gain a better position at work or benefit in some other way. This was not *vjera* in Hasiba's eyes, and she struggled to keep her own faith in face of what she considered hypocrisy.

Finally, I focus on Nermina the oldest woman in this group that I met at Medica Zenica. Much like the other thirteen Muslim women I interviewed there, Nermina considered herself *vjernica*. Over a coffee on a hot July afternoon in 2008, Nermina told me,

In principle, I am deeply religious in my soul. I believe in God. I think we [Bosnian Muslims] all believe in God.

Although she grew up in a typical *tradicionalna Muslimanska kuća*, Nermina considered herself educated regarding Islam. She had read the Qur'an several times. Nermina observed all the main holidays including *Kurban Bajram* and *Ramazan*, and though she rarely prayed, Nermina felt that she lived her life as a Muslim. Accordingly, she stated that being Muslim was important to her, after all she had a Muslim name and so did her children. This was an important symbol of her belonging to Islam and its accompanying belief system. However, Nermina told me that,

....we were all communists, a communist family. We were all in the Communist party. My father was not the kind of believer that I am today. We all had Muslim names, my dear Emira, my boys were circumcised in those days [referring to the communist period].¹⁴ We knew we were Muslim.

¹⁴ This is an important point because many Muslims chose not to circumcise their male children during communist period. Circumcision was usually done by local *hodžas* (imams).

Despite growing up in the communist period Nermina identified as *vjernica*. She fondly remembered her childhood *Ramazans* when she and her siblings would wake up early to accompany her mother during morning prayers, and ritual eating before the start of the fast at dawn. Consequently, while Islam was not part of daily life, she claimed that *tradicija* was very important in her life. Nermina said that she and her siblings were always aware of her belonging to Islam, *mi smo uvijek znali da smo Muslimani* (we always knew we were Muslims).

CONCLUSION

All but one of the women I interviewed, conventional and pious alike held *vjera* in Allah, and identified as believers [*vjernice*]. However, even though Jasmina identified as a non-believer in the Islamic sense, she was nevertheless spiritual and believed in a higher being. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, faith has six components within Islamic theology, including a belief in Allah, Angels, holy books, messengers, the Day of Judgment, and faith in the higher power. Of these six components, only a few are shared and expressed by both conventional and pious Muslim women I interviewed. According to Qur'an all of my informants are considered Muslim because they are born Muslim. Conventional and pious Muslim women all share one thing in common: they believe in Allah. However, conventional Muslim women believed that faith in Allah was sufficient to make one a Muslim. According to my Muslim informants, being a *vjernica* was not dependent upon the level of knowledge, commitment to, and observance of religious doctrine. Rather, it was a matter of whether or not a person saw themselves as one. Meaning if I say I am a Muslim then I am a Muslim, and no one on this earth could affirm or deny my claim. This was

further supported by Islamic jurisprudence, which states that one cannot say who was or was not *vjernica*; rather, only God could make that assessment.

My interviews demonstrate how conventional Muslim women experienced *vjera*. Most importantly, their stories show that no one can assign or presume what another person *vjeruje* (has faith in) through simple observation. Among my informants, *vjera*, was neither a static, nor a well-defined, aspect of people's religious identity. For the 'conventional' women, *vjera* was not about the six aspects of faith. Rather, more significance was placed on their belonging to and identification with Islam as *tradicija*. *Vjera*, as it was imagined and described by Qur'an directly, has little relevance in the lives of my conventional informants. This means that the women followed their own personal interpretations of what it means to have faith that was influenced by their family's relationship with Islam. At home, *mekteb*, or local mosques my conventional informants came to understand faith as a much more individual experience and outside the generally accepted scriptures and theology. Although Ismeta, Fuada, Sabiha, Jasmina, Hasiba, and Nermina did not recognize or closely observe the notion of *iman*, let alone its six components, they nonetheless had *vjera*. Their *vjera*, while not as deeply examined as it was by pious Muslim women, was an important part of their identity as Muslim women. Their faith was thoroughly tied to keeping and continuing *tradicija*.

For pious women, to be *vjernica* was a much more complex experience. For them, *iman* or *vjera* held a special place. Living a life as a *prava vjernica* was closely intertwined with their experience of *vjera*. This was why the majority of my pious informants

internalized and described *iman* as an important force in their daily lives. As Saktanber observed among pious Muslims of Turkey,

the believer is one who accepts, who says "yes" to God, recognizes the situation as it is and commits [herself] to acting accordingly. [Saktanber 2002: 191]

This was exactly the experience of pious Muslim women like Aldina, Nihada, Belkisa, Badema, Naida, and Elma. The recounted experiences of my pious informants demonstrate the importance of faith in living one's life in pursuit of piety. This means that my pious informants nurtured their *iman* as a way of living, rather than simply accepting the fated gift and inheritance of being a Muslim by birth. *Iman* was something these women committed to, and something they continuously sought and reevaluated.

CHAPTER VII: THE ROLE AND INTERPRETATION OF *ISLAMSKA TRADICIJA* IN BEING A BOSNIAN MUSLIM

WOMAN

INTRODUCTION

Tone Bringa stresses the need to analyze and discuss what Bosnia's Muslims do since, according to her, there is a clear "distinction between Islam as a social identity, as a set of formal doctrines, and as actual beliefs and practices, and accounts for the interrelationships between these elements" (Bringa 1995: 9). Therefore, if I am to understand what it means to be a conventional Muslim woman I must discuss how conventional Muslims practice Islam (Bringa 1995: 9).

In this chapter, I examine conventional Muslim women's observance of Islamic duty and practice, as well as the importance of preserving *tradicija* or normative modes of practicing Islam. As demonstrated in previous chapter, both conventional and pious women identify as believers, but my conventional informants simply hold Allah in their heart (Shahhadah, the first pillar of Islam) and do not adhere completely or consistently to the other five pillars. However, conventional and pious Muslim women share a few other characteristics, including of course being born into a Muslim family, giving and having Muslim names,¹ paying dues to the Islamic Community and giving alms to the poor. Identifying as a conventional Muslim woman entails observing specific practices and rituals, sometimes including fasting but always observing and celebrating the end of *Ramazan*; conventional Muslim women typically observed Bosnian rituals such as *tevhid* and *mevlud*;

¹ Although both conventional and pious Muslim women have Muslim names, I only thoroughly discuss this topic with my conventional informants. Naming practices came up as an important topic for them because they said it was a way they affirm their belonging to Islam.

and often have some but limited textual knowledge of Qur'an and other the holy texts. Additionally, some conventional Muslim women also considered having a pious family member or ancestor a validation of their Muslim identity.

Since observance of religious duties (e.g., prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage) is different between conventional and pious women, I divide my discussion of Islam as a practice into two chapters; this one focuses on conventional, while chapter 8 focuses on my pious informants.

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Sixteen women who identify themselves as Muslim, but who also self-identify as *tradicionalna Muslimanka* or as conventional Muslims in an ethnic or national sense are featured in this chapter. Being a conventional Muslim is not a new concept within ethnographic scholarship. Several scholars have observed that ethnic identification, coupled with a religion, is a common experience throughout the world, and specifically what is now Eastern Europe (Ghodsee 2010; Igmen 2008; McIntosh 2009; Merdjanova 2009). Several scholars of Bosnia have used ethno-religious identity as an important concept when talking about Muslims (Bieber 2000; Bougarel 2007; Bringa 1995; Sorabji 1988; Sorabji 1993).

Religion and ethnicity are arguably “two of the strongest factors in maintaining the integrity of a group’s identity” (Gerth 2009: xi). Scholars define ethno-religious identity in a number of ways. Fenggang Yang and Helen Ebaugh best summarize different forms of ethno-religious identity:

First is 'ethnic fusion,' where religion is the foundation of ethnicity, or, ethnicity equals religion, such as in the case of the Amish and Jews. The second pattern is that of 'ethnic religion,' where religion is one of several foundations of ethnicity. The Greek or Russian orthodox and the Dutch Reformed are examples of this type. In this pattern, ethnic identification can be claimed without claiming the religious identification, but the reverse is rare. The third form, 'religious ethnicity,' occurs where an ethnic group is linked to a religious tradition that is shared by other ethnic groups. The Irish, Italian, and Polish Catholics are such cases. In this pattern, religious identification can be claimed without claiming ethnic identification. [Yang 2001: 369]

For the majority of Muslims in Bosnia, and particularly the conventional Muslim women I interviewed, being a Muslim most resembles what Yang and Ebaugh calls "ethnic fusion." Bringa's work further supports this characterization. She stresses that "the expression of religious (Islamic identity) was an integrated part of the expression of a Muslim secular (cultural) identity" (Bringa 1995: 9). For the purposes of my discussion I use the term conventional Muslim in the same way that Bringa uses ethno-religious identity. Without a doubt being a conventional Muslim remains part of cultural, rather than religious, identity for many of my informants. However, the communist project failed to completely erase Islam from people's lives and identities. This is the reason conventional Muslims closely tie their identities to the preservation of Bosnian *tradicija* and Islam from the pre-communist period. This chapter is about what conventional Muslim women say and do, and the role Islam plays in how they see themselves as Bosnians and as Muslims.

BOOK HIDDEN IN A TOWEL [KNJIGA ZAMOTANA U PEŠKIRU]

Some of my interviews described what it was like to be a Muslim during the communist period in Bosnia, when nearly all types of religious practices were suppressed. I chose Hajra's interview because I think it best illustrates how people practiced Islam in the privacy

of their homes. I met Hajra in July 2008 while staying at Medica Zenica. She agreed to an interview and we sat over coffee under a large tree in Medica Zenica's courtyard and discussed faith, belief, religion, and Islam. Our conversation lasted over two hours and we ended up drinking several cups of Bosnia's of strong and not very good coffee. Hajra, born in 1975 and then in her early thirties, was slim, with long, light-brown hair, and spoke openly about a wide range of topics. She was single, had never married and lived at home with her parents in Zenica. Hajra spoke assertively about what it meant to be a Muslim, as if this was a topic of importance to her. Hajra communicated her ample knowledge of the Qur'an and touched on human rights, international politics and historical events. In talking about what it meant to be a Muslim, Hajra said that Bosnia's Islam was unique, and that,

Tradicija related to Islam in this area [Bosnia] is specific. And it is beautiful. I love it [*tradicija*] because of its gentleness.

Hajra spoke tenderly of her love for Islam, of her love for Bosnia's Islam. She liked Islamic *tradicija*; she said she loved the way in which Islam was believed and practiced. Hajra said that the Islam she practiced was easy and did not resemble the Islam of the Middle East and East Asia. Hajra told me her practice was simple; she celebrated the end of the holy month of *Ramazan*, but beyond that Islam was not part of her day-to-day life. Hajra enjoyed wine, did not restrict her diet, and wore clothes without regards for modesty in Islamic sense (meaning covering her body and her hair). At one point during our conversation while describing the kind of upbringing she had, Hajra described her experiences with Islam in one sentence:

Qur'an was a book we [our family] kept in a towel.

Despite the Yugoslav government's attempts to dissuade people from the "opiate" of religion, nearly every Muslim household in Bosnia appears to have owned a copy of the Qur'an. More often than not, the book was in Arabic and therefore its owners could not read it (Bringa 1995). Because of the significance of the book and its special place in many homes, people commonly wrapped it in a towel, preferably new and clean, in order to prevent it from getting dirty and to preserve its integrity. Arguably, almost every Muslim home in Bosnia had one such book in a towel often hid in a wardrobe or a drawer, that the family brought out for specific occasions, most notably when there was a death in the family. In my interviews I found that 45 of 50 of both conventional and pious informants had mentioned there just such a hidden Qur'an in their home prior to the war.

A book wrapped in a towel can be taken as a metaphor for the state of Islam in pre-war Bosnia. A number of scholars of post-socialist Muslim experience observe that, despite the government's anti-religious policies, Muslims maintained their beliefs and faith by observing traditions and passing on their knowledge to succeeding generations (Abramson 2004; Ghodsee 2010a; Khalid 2007; Kuehnast 2004). Post-socialist countries with significant Muslim populations (e.g., Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Bulgaria) have experienced significant religious revitalization movements (Abramson 2004; Ghodsee 2010b; Kamp 2006). As Abramson argues in Uzbekistan and Ghodsee in Bulgaria, in part, this phenomenon resulted from Muslims undisturbed connection to the faith of their ancestors and the absorption of religion under ethnic and national identity. Furthermore, despite communist policies and the marginalization of religion, Muslims in Bosnia always retained their connection to Islam as a faith to which they belong through *tradicija*. Hajra pointed

out that many communist party members, and at times communist leaders, were known to be deeply spiritual, but hid their faith from the public. Those men and women who practiced religion did so behind closed doors, thus, placing Islam literally in the closet. I became acquainted with dozens of such stories during my fieldwork. Family members now admit that many of these public officials observed the basic rites such as the daily prayer, giving alms for the poor, and the fast despite their communist party membership. These types of stories were recounted time and time again among circles of men and women including both conventional and pious Muslims.

MUSLIM NAMES

Giving children Muslim names was an important way in which Muslims of Yugoslavia (as did members of other ethno-religious groups) preserved their faith and identification with Islam. First, this practice was one way in which Bosnia's Muslims maintained their connection to Islam. Second, having and giving Muslim names was another way in which they exerted their ethnic and national identities within the communist system, which required blending in and conformity with the dominant identity of Yugoslavism (South Slavism). During the years of Tito's "brotherhood and unity"², it was important to show and demonstrate one's allegiance to the political orientation of the state, i.e., atheism. Despite the state's encouragement of religiously ambiguous names, giving Muslim names to children, though perhaps unconscious, was essential in asserting ethno-religious identity and agency. Even party members and self-proclaimed atheists gave their children Muslim names. One's name automatically identified a Bosnian Muslim as distinct from a Croat or a

² Bratstvo i jedinstvo was the official Yugoslav policy instituted in post-World War II period to inspire inter-ethnic cooperation.

Serb. The passing on of Muslim names to the next generation though somewhat of a trivial practice, made a direct statement about one's religious and ethnic background. In this way, giving Muslim names was an example of two-fold (public and private) resistance to anti-religious and anti-nationalist sentiment of the period. As Bringa points out,

Muslim first names are of Turkish and Arabic origin. They may be the names of Islamic prophets or be connected with religious values. Sometimes, they describe personality traits. Examples: Ćazim means someone who calms anger, Hazim means dependable, Remzija means allegoric speech. The villagers seldom know the meanings of the names. However, the *sufi hodžas* do, and they are also able to assess the appropriateness of a name to a specific personality and how it fits with a child or person's astrological requirements at birth. When necessary, they can suggest a name more appropriate than the current one. [Bringa 1995: 183]

Despite the variety of experiences among my conventional Muslim informants, one consistency must be noted. All, despite their geographic, economic, social, or cultural background, had Muslim names, derived from Arabic or Turkish names, many of which are Persian in origin. Regardless of party membership, atheism, and secularism, all of my informants were born to Muslim parents and given Muslim names. Nermina, an informant I met at Medica Zenica told me that,

....we were all communists, a communist family. We were all in the Communist party. My father was not the kind of believer that I am today. For example, children's names, we all had real Muslim names.

Not only did the name identify my informants as Muslim, it served as a reminder of their ethno-religious background on a daily basis – to the degree they internalize it. Many of my pious informants have noted that most Bosnians were only Muslim in name. That usually meant that they did not internalize Islam as part of their religious, but rather cultural identity. For many of my pious informants, however, this was problematic because they

believed their religious traditions were denigrated by the behavior of those Muslims who were such only in name. While during the communist period both men and women gave their children names, many families continued patrilineal practices by giving their sons their fathers (and other important men of the family) names.

Both men and women with Muslim names had no control over their names; their Muslim identity was an outcome of their parent's need to preserve *tradicija*. Women of *moja generacija* continue this tradition today without giving much thought to the different ways in which preservation of *tradicija* was no longer an act of resistance, but rather an integral part of being a Bosnian Muslim.

OBSERVANCE OF THE FAST AND RAMADAN

My conventional Muslim informants usually only observed only parts, or just one of the five pillars of Islam. Daily prayer, although recognized by my informants as an important part of being a good *vjernica*, rarely observed this rite. In fact most of my conventional informants said that observing the daily prayer was simply too difficult in their daily lives. As Alija, one of my older informants I met at a tevhid and a professional, said to me,

It's just too hard to pray five times a day. You can't do that and go to work, take care of your family. Prayer isn't designed for our type of life here in Bosnia. Maybe it is easier in Saudi Arabia [and other Muslim countries] but here women have careers and jobs, they cannot just drop everything and pray.

This was a common belief among my informants and therefore an important part of the reason why prayer (as part of the five pillars) did not make it within the discussion regarding Islamic practices observed by my conventional informants.

One of the five pillars requires Muslims to observe the fast during the month of *Ramazan*. For many of my conventional Muslim informants, however, the fast was one of the bigger challenges that prevented them from fully committing to Islam. Many conventional Muslim women I interviewed admired those who observed the whole of the fast during the month of *Ramazan*, but few actually observed this rite as prescribed because they thought it to be simply too difficult. All of my informants celebrated the end of *Ramazan*, but they did not emphasize the fast in the same way as did pious Muslims. Rather, *Ramazan* was a holiday all Muslims observed because it was part of *tradicija*. To exemplify different ways in which conventional Muslims practiced Islam I focus on experiences of four women: Maida, Fuada, Halida, and Nermina.

Maida, a 54 year old woman from Zenica who was married and whose parents were relatively religious talked about being a Muslim as something she felt, that she belonged to. Our discussion of *Ramazan* and the importance of the observance of the holy month went like this:

Maida: Personally, I am not the kind of believer that goes to the mosque, that fasts, prays, because I am not that way in my soul, I wasn't raised that way. My mother prayed. During Ramadan she would fast. My father was a son of a hodža, he was raised not to go to regular school. That is why he pushed us away from Islam. This was all during the period when it was forbidden and you couldn't talk about (faith). I feel that I am Muslim, a believer, I respect my faith, but I don't know how to pray, I never learned it.

Author: How do you celebrate end of *Ramazan* in your home?

Maida: In my home? Every *Ramazan* my son and daughter come over. My son is married and he comes to my house for the breaking of the fast every day. I also have a grandson who likes celebrating with us. My son's desire to observe *Ramazan* has awakened in him. His father [my husband] was in the communist party all the way until the war. My son was in the war, he fought. There [on the front] he felt something and now says he is a Muslim and respects everything. He also doesn't go to the mosque and he doesn't pray. But I think that a believer can be someone who doesn't pray or go to the

mosque. So in our house we celebrate, both *Ramazan* and *Kurban Bajram*. We fast sometimes, only if we feel like it. But without the prayer. I invite others over for *iftar*,³ While my mother was alive I would invite the rest of the family. But now most of them have died. I love that time of the year, the smell of *Ramazan* in my house. I think I observe lots of obligations, but I fast when I can. And we are all like that, me and my children.

Our exchange was honest and true, Maida did not appear to be holding anything back. She felt that marking the *Ramazan* without the fast was just as much part of her belonging to Islam and being a believer as it was for those women who focused on the importance of fasting. Maida was a conventional Muslim woman, and although she had grown up in a home where religion was present, over the years her knowledge dissipated. Yet, she held on to *Ramazan* as her special month, a time when she felt most like a true Muslim and where her identity as one was validated.

Similarly, Mirsada felt that *Ramazan* was an important part of her identity as a Muslim. *Ramazan* and *Kurban Bajram* were a special time of year for Mirsada. Born in Livnjak and widowed, Mirsada had raised her daughter on her own since 1997. She came from a typical Muslim family of the pre-World War II generation with stricter gender roles and where men were seen as the heads of households. With only a high school education, Mirsada was resourceful and had always secured herself a job. Already 65 years old when we met, Mirsada still worked because she was helping support her daughter through college. Retirement was not an option until her daughter could stand on her own two feet. During our conversation about Islam and *tradicija*, Mirsada told me that *Ramazan* was a special time for her and her daughter saying:

³ Iftar is an evening meal following the break of the fast.

Every *iftar* is something big to me. Something beautiful, something I cannot describe or explain to you Emira. After *iftar* you say a prayer for the dead. Then there is the prayer. We know how to observe *Ramazan*. I am happiest after *iftar*. After that is *Kurban Bajram*.

Mirsada and Maida were of a different generation from me (and belonged to my mother's generation), meaning they were both born and raised during the communist period.

However, their experiences with *Ramazan* and the fast were not very different from women half their age. Fuada was a 28 year old university student and one of my closest informants. She had travelled extensively outside Bosnia and spent a year studying in the United States, which gave her a unique and interesting perspective of Islam. Fuada's dedication to preservation of her heritage and identity as Muslim was at its peak during the month of *Ramazan*. Unlike some of the other women in this discussion, Fuada was diligent about observing the fast throughout the entire month. In addition, she said she prayed five times a day and observed what she perceived were her duties as a Muslim stating:

I fast the whole of *Ramazan*, of course there are days when I cannot fast, but I really try to fast the entire month. I also really try to pray, but that is only during the month of *Ramazan*. I would like to go one day to *Hadž*, that is one of my greatest desires...I really try to be a good Muslim. I have told myself that I will be as good of a Muslim as I can. To be religious is to be good. I try to be a good person. I don't know if I am though. Others can't say if I am good or bad, only God can judge me.

Fuada was very critical of how many Muslims marked the end of *Ramazan*. She said that there were two kinds of Muslims in Sarajevo and each corresponded to the two central mosques in the heart of old town. Each of the mosques was located near an establishment that served alcohol, and thus two kinds of Muslims were identified. The first kind were those who spent their time at the Sarajevo Brewery and would attend the Careva džamija (Emperor's mosque), they were called *Pivara Muslimani* (Brewery Muslims). One the other

hand, those who spent most of their time at the City Pub located only few blocks from Begova džamija (Bey's mosque) were known as the *City Pub Muslimani*. This, for Fuada was a perfect example of what she deemed problematic with Bosnia's Islam. The young people of Bosnia did not respect *tradicija* like she did. Even though she admitted that she could be better about her practice of Islam during the rest of the year, Fuada was critical of those who thought that going from a place of sin (where alcohol is served) into a holy house was accepted. These kinds of Muslims in Fuada's mind gave a bad name to people like her. Yet, Fuada claimed that she could not judge other people's commitment to faith. Fuada proclaimed that, "God will judge me, and those meleks (angels) on her shoulders that record all her acts and deeds will be there to witness everything." In stating this, Fuada was actually talking about Brewery and City Pub Muslims.

Becoming an observant Muslim during the month of Ramadan was common for another one of my informants, Halida. In her mid-50s at the time of our meeting at Medica Zenica, Halida had spent much of her life living in Dobož (see Appendix IV). Overrun by Serb forces in 1992, Halida left her hometown and relocated to Zenica, where she had been living ever since. Married and with grown children, Halida had a high school education and was an active member of the working class in the pre-war period. She also came from a typical Muslim home of the pre-World War II generation with strict gender roles and where father was the head of the house. She was one of the conventional Muslims who knew little about Islam but held *vjera* and *tradicionalni običaji* in high regard, including owning a copy of the Qur'an, which she kept in her house and reserved for only special occasions. Halida fasted during *Ramazan* and called it special time of the year saying:

But during Ramazan I really like to fast, it's something special to me. If I could I would pray as well, but I don't know enough about it.

She rarely went to the mosque and only did so if invited to an event for a family member (i.e., *tevhid*). Halida reiterated to me that she came from a very pious family and that she even had a high-ranking communist party family member who, despite his public image, was a pious and devout Muslim in the privacy of his home.

On the other hand, Halida's parents, in her own words, were not people of faith. However, unlike her parents, both her sisters were pious and had even attended the Hajj. Aside from observing the fast, Halida admitted to knowing little about the ritual expectations. Halida cited her upbringing, including the city in which she grew up, as the biggest impediment in her lack of knowledge and experience of Islam. Having relocated to Zenica, with its majority Muslim population, Halida said that even before the war there was a sense of Islam there that did not exist in her hometown. She observed that in Zenica the mosques were full while in her hometown they served as mausoleums before the city was cleansed of Muslims in 1992. She was adamant that the region in which she grew up (Posavina),⁴ was the reason for her lack of practice.

Nermina, another woman I met at Medica and in her early fifties at the time, was born and raised in Montenegro and had come to Sarajevo 34 years earlier to attend the university. She earned a degree in sociology and has been a practicing social worker ever since. When asked about Islam and being a Muslim Nermina told me she was "deeply religious in her soul [*u duši*]", and said, "I believe in God, just as all Muslims believe."

⁴ Posavina: region of the river Sava basin. During the war it had been bombed and the majority of the houses and land have been destroyed. It is now primarily under Republika Srpska control, and its one ethnically heterogeneous population is now nearly all Serb with few Croats and Bosniaks.

Nermina's father and mother were in her own words were *veliki Muslimani* and observed all the Islamic traditions they said were expected of them as good Muslims. She said that it was her mother that raised her and her siblings in faith, in Islam. Nermina emphasized that her grandfather was an imam trained in Istanbul before the time of communists. Having a history of family members who were deeply connected to Islam was an important part of how Nermina saw herself and her own Islamic personhood. Her ancestry was an important part of how she understood herself as a Muslim, but also a Bosnian Muslim and they played a major part of how she raised her children and the kind of Muslim identity she imparted on them. In discussing what she had learned as a child, Nermina said:

The best lunch would be prepared, the biggest celebration...my mother prayed, even though we were communist family. My father however was not a believer like me. He respected everything [in Islam]. He supported my mother when she observed the holidays. Nothing was forbidden. Everyone knew my mother was *velika vjernica*, that holidays were celebrated and that my brothers were circumcised. My dear Emira, I also circumcised my son, and that was nearly 30 years ago in those days [communist period].

Nermina did not practice on a daily basis, but she observed the two major holidays. She read much of the religious texts that were available. However, she believed that many imams were uneducated and could not provide answers to life's questions. Nermina also said that uneducated *hodžas* were most likely the reason why so many people distanced themselves from Islam. Spiritual education was important and many people did not get it in the home. However, in her opinion, they could get even less at a local mosque. She read many Islamic texts at an early age out of her own interest, reiterating that her knowledge of Islam was a personal quest and curiosity rather than something imposed. According to Nermina, Bosnia was specific and unique in its practice of Islam. Nermina claimed that

being a Muslim was difficult in Montenegro where she grew up and lived among the majority Orthodox Serb population. Being a Muslim for Nermina was primarily defined by the events of Second World War, during which many of both her own, and her husband's family members were murdered by Serbs. Specifically, Nermina recalled the story of her husband's family. According to her, Serb nationalists executed thirty-two of his family members and threw them over a cliff near his hometown. Her experience of being Muslim was thus defined by struggle, ethnic-strife, and fear for basic survival. Nermina believed that Muslims (like her own family who had lost so much in the war) simply forgot too quickly. She also believed that it was this lack of memory that was the primary reason for the atrocities that occurred in the most recent war. "People forgot too fast, especially in Bosnia," she said. In this context Nermina refers to how many Muslims were once again acting and behaving as they did before the war (meaning interacting with other ethno-national groups as if nothing had happened), adopting non-Muslim practices and marrying non-Muslims. For Nermina, ethnic-reconciliation was necessary, but it was responsible for why so many Muslims only understood Islam in a cultural rather than a religious sense. According to her, even though Serbs and Croats repeatedly victimized Bosnia's Muslim population, they would eventually go back to living alongside their victimizing neighbors as if nothing had happened. This was troubling for Nermina because it indicated to her the inevitability of "another war down the line." This feeling was not uncommon among my informants. The fear of a future conflict was always present in the discussion, and in this way was an important part of how many of my informants understood themselves as Muslims.

It is impossible to observe *Ramazan* without a focus on the fast. Nearly all of my informants fasted at one point or another in their life. However, few of my conventional Muslim informants observed the practice of a daily fast during the entire month. Often the explanation for the lack of fast was associated with work hours, stresses of daily life and the inability to practice a ritual that was so demanding both physically and mentally. For Fuada, and a few other conventional Muslim women, *Ramazan* however held a special place in her heart, and the practices she was unable to observe during the rest of the year come to life during this month. *Ramazan*, thus, became a month when being Muslim was possible and when many of my conventional informants expressed their relationship to Islam.

Finally, Jasmina and Sabiha represent a different point of view regarding *Ramazan*. They both expressed their dissatisfaction with the way in which many Muslims in Bosnia observed *Ramazan*, meaning that they saw it as an obligation rather than something people wanted. Additionally, for many of my informants, observance of the holiday and going home to attend the celebrations "*reda radi*" (because one should because it would be proper) were common features of how they were being Muslim. Both Jasmina and Sabiha's experiences highlighted here were a representation of conventional Muslims who observed religious holidays because it was proper and because it was the one time during the year when it was appropriate for them to do so. A 31 year old at the time we met Jasmina was very educated, had lived in Slovenia for many of her formative years and was currently employed and working at a stable job for a communications agency. She lived with her long-time boyfriend at an apartment separate from their parents. They were both very western in their perspectives, enjoyed a solid relationship, but were not in a rush to get

married and have children. Jasmina was kind, open, smart and became one of my dearest informants over the year. We talked about my research, Islam and *tradicija* often, but it was not until our official interview in the summer of 2008 that I learned about where her stands and views on Islam came from. Talking about how it was practiced in her own home she said:

For *Ramazan* we always celebrated in the close circle of the family. It was just a family lunch. I remember some people would fast, my grandmother, my mother. But now even more, as she gets older. But nothing else was observed beyond that. I don't know. There is alcohol in the house, they would drink. But not during *Ramazan*. Which is something I am always fighting about with my family. This interpretation of faith. If you are a believer you have to stick to everything, all the rules. I think my parents aren't even sure what they are supposed to do, how to be a Muslim. But they have a need to keep this *tradicija*, to keep something.

Jasmina's feelings are not uncommon. Interestingly, Jasmina's feelings were similar to those of my pious informants who felt that Islamic duty had to be observed in totality, or not at all. *Tradicija*, in Jasmina's experience was a sign of not knowing what to do. Similarly Sabiha, a 23 year old university student and an English teacher felt that much of what people called *tradicija* was fake, that it was not in the true spirit of Islam. Describing a typical celebration/marking of *Ramazan* in her home she stated:

I am losing much of what I learned as a young child. Not just me, but the whole family. Everything is kind of done by force. When end of *Ramazan* arrives all the men get up early in the morning for the prayer at the mosque. I could never get up, too lazy to be honest. So then mom would make a lunch, then we would pack up and start visiting family, older members mostly. So now since we have a thousand sides of the family we had to visit everyone. This all started a hundred years ago as a way to soothe the tense relations. We would show up, everyone is all smiley, they would say "Bajram Barećula" and then you go home. That was it. Honestly, they wouldn't wait for you to leave anyway. They just wanted to get it out of the way.

This was a typical *Ramazan* in Sabiha's home. For her this was not what the spirit of the month of *Ramazan* was about. Rather in her mind it was about keeping family happy. While Jasmina and Sabiha's experiences with *Ramazan* were similar, they were not the common experience of all conventional Muslim women. For these two women *Ramazan* was part of *tradicija* that to a degree was forced on them. Despite these two cases, my assessment was that most conventional Muslims observed *Ramazan* as a special time of the year, a time when being Muslim was celebrated and encouraged.

TRADITIONAL RITUALS [TRADICIONALNI OBREDI]: TEVHID AND MEVLUD

Tevhid and *mevlud* are two important Bosnian Muslim rituals that were commonly accepted and widely observed before and during the communist period. *Tevhid* and *mevlud* are considered part of *tradicija*, and many of my conventional informants referred to these two rituals as an important part of what constituted their practice of Islam. What was Islamic practice and what was *tradicija*, was without a doubt, contingent on the exclusion and reification of boundaries based on post-war and post-socialist circumstances and beliefs. *Tevhid*, a rite observed for those who have passed away, consists of a number of prayers that help the person pass into the next world. It is a ritual that is observed only by women. The ritual required a woman to sit within a circle, with all participants in the kneeling position. A *tevhid* rite consisted of speaking specific prayers, verses, and parts of Qur'an that ask Allah to forgive the sins committed by the deceased individual. An imam, *bula* (female spiritual authority usually trained at the madrassa or the Faculty of Islamic Studies), *hodža*, or other authorized pious person hired by the family of the deceased leads the

tevhid prayers. While the deceased individual benefits from those observing *tevhid*, there are also benefits for the living.

Participants of the *tevhid* can earn *ibadet* or *sevap* (good deeds) by simply being present. In general, *tevheids* are observed in personal residences, sometimes at homes and *tekijas* (prayer houses). In recent years, however, many Islamic reformists (including many of my informants seeking to live their lives as pious Muslims) criticized the legitimacy of this practice within Islam: for them, it was simply wrong to practice this ritual as it was not prescribed by the religious jurisprudence or practiced in any other majority-Muslim country throughout the world. The Islamic Community, however, supports and sanctions these rituals as an important part of Islamic tradition and *hodža* and *bulas* are trained to conduct the rituals. Despite this, most of my conventional (and a few religious) informants felt that *tevhid* was an important part of Bosnia's Islamic *tradicija*.

I attended two *tevheids* during my fieldwork and was present during the entire process, from when the women begin gathering at the house to the end when women left following the formal ritual and prayer time. At one such occasion, at a *tevhid* for a distant family member, I observed eighteen women who participated in the ritual, the majority over the age of fifty. Each participant wore a headscarf and participated collectively in the circle prayer. The deceased was a long-standing member of the communist party, whose last wishes were to be buried in a Muslim *mezar* (graveyard). Though strict adherents to the idea of brotherhood and unity, the family was deeply concerned that the deceased would be buried in a traditional Muslim style. The deceased left behind three daughters raised as conventional Muslims. Despite this identity marker two of the daughters married

non-Muslim men and bore children with ambiguous ethno-religious identities. Their kids (around my age) were very reluctant to identify as anything other than Bosnian, thus reiterating the difficulty of belonging to any one religious group. Finally, despite intra-ethnic marriages and having children with little or no affiliation to Islam as a set of beliefs and practices, the daughters remained adamant that their father would be buried in what they identified as proper Islamic ritual.

Mevlud was another rite observed by many conventional Muslims of Bosnia, but not as commonly practiced as the *tevhid*. During the communist period, observing the *tevhid* helped Bosnian Muslims maintain the tradition of prayers and memorization of the holy book, much more so than *mevlud*. A traditional Turkish practice *mevlud* consists of a public sermon followed by a feast in celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. Although some Islamic fundamentalists consider *mevlud* festivities as idolatrous, Muslims of Turkish tradition (primarily Muslims living in formerly Ottoman lands) nevertheless celebrate the Prophet's birthday. According to *Islamska Zajednica* of Bosnia,

Mevlud is a part of Bosniak Islamic tradition accepted by the Islamic community because it is a way of showing one's love towards the Prophet Muhammad. It can be done in different situations primarily to mark the birth of the Prophet. [Rijaset n.d.]

A number of scholars suggest that tradition is imagined, invented, and reinvented, and as such inherently political (Asad 1986; Bauer 1997; Geertz 1968; Khalid 2007; Sharify-Funk 2008; Lukens-Bull 2005; Rambo 1993). By reinvention, I refer to the ongoing process by which traditions are socially constructed, transmitted, and transformed in order to accommodate a community's social dynamics, needs, and challenges. Despite what theory suggestions, the majority of my informants saw *tradicija* as unchanged by the context or

historical events. *Tradicija* for my conventional informants was thus unchanged since the pre-communist period, and as such was seen as the most authentic way of being Muslim. Thus, such practices as *tevhid* and *mevlud*, though in recent times⁵ were practices used in times of necessity and as a way of preserving Islamic ritual within an anti-religious environment, become essential in how *tradicija* was preserved and continued.

Conventional Muslim women I interviewed were adamant in their beliefs and perceptions that the above mentioned *tradicionalni obredi* were an important aspect of Bosnia's Muslim experience. Indeed, many rituals, such as *tevhid* and *mevlud*, as well as such pilgrimages as Ajvatovica⁶ and saints' shrines, allowed Islam to remain in people's lives. For decades the dominant secular ideology tried to encourage people from stopping such practices and characterizing religious rituals as signs of primitivism and backwardness (Karčić 2010; Shatzmiller 2002). Being pious was seen as being uncultured, and many Muslims, thus, hid their practices and beliefs. While being educated, 'cultured',⁷ or well-traveled does not factor into or correspond with one's daily religious practice, the use of religious talismans, visits to shrines, and observation of religious rites (such as the Ramadan fast), however, indicated that Bosnia's Muslims were not entirely dissociated from Islam. Hajra said that *Islamska tradicija* in her home included prohibition of cutting one's nails at night, bathing on Thursday's, and washing their hair on Wednesdays. These were customs

⁵ Mevlud and Tevhid were introduced during Ottoman period.

⁶ Ajvatovac is in a small town called Prusac in central Bosnia. The festival is Ajvatovica based on the legend of Ajvaz-Dedo who was a holy and pious man. The legend says that the place is a site of miracles and blessings and many pilgrims make their way to the place where the rock split to produce water which now makes the canyon.

⁷ Bringa writes, "Being 'cultured' [*kulturni*] or non-cultured [*nekulturni*] refers to a whole set of ideas associated with other sociological oppositions, such as town versus village, educated versus uneducated, poor versus rich, modern and Western versus backward and Balkan." [Bringa 1995: 58]

passed on to her and her parents through the generations. While the origin of these customs was unknown, they were nonetheless common among my informants' experiences. Henk Driessen (2009) found that throughout the Mediterranean, Muslims--despite having been westernized--still held on to religious traditions that kept them connected to Islam.

Different understandings of Islam are to a great extent linked to the basic variables of age, wealth, gender, and education, and correspond more or less with the ways the people apply Islam in their lives. Visits to the shrines of saints, the use of talismans, belief in evil spirits, mystical powers of certain fuqaha, and practices of sorcery are much more vivid among illiterate members of the older generation than among younger people who have received modern education. These practices are often condemned as superstition by the younger and more educated. But this does not mean that they will never resort to such practices themselves. [Driessen 2009: 286]

The majority of conventional Muslim women I interviewed held on to pieces of *tradicija* in a variety of ways. Without a doubt, one of the most important ways was through observance of rituals like *tevhid* and *mevlud*. Larisa Jašarevic also found that *tradicija* also held a widespread use of fortune telling, healing rituals performed by *hodžas* and *zapis* and *hamalije* (Jašarevic 2010). Thus, being Muslim was closely tied to preservation of these types of practices.

TEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND AUTHORITY

My data analysis suggests that the majority of women whom I identify as conventional Muslims did not have textual knowledge of Islamic holy texts. Their lack of knowledge was the primary reason why so many of my conventional informants felt they were good (enough) Muslims. I make this conclusion based on a number of questions asked in my one-on-one interviews. I asked my interviewees whether or not they were familiar with the

Qur'an or any of the Haddiths, their recollection of any rules/duties of Muslims, the extent of their familiarity with specific rituals and the meaning of any specific verses they may recall from Islamic texts. As I will show in the next chapter, women who live their lives as pious Muslims have a greater knowledge and understanding of the holy texts and often recall specific quotes and/or prayers. Though many conventional Muslim interviewees attended *mekteb* (religious school) as children, their study of Islamic duty and practice concluded when their classes ended. This was because *mekteb* was designed for young children and ended when they were pre-teens. Thus, while some of my conventional informants attended *mekteb*, their knowledge of Islam was limited to the bare bones. Only two of my conventional informants (Hajra and Nermina) read and attempted to understand holy texts as adults.

Hajra demonstrated her knowledge of the holy texts by quoting the Qu'ran, stating "in heaven, there are rivers of wine." This particular statement was related to Hajra's justification as to why she chose to enjoy a glass of wine from time to time, despite the rule that all Muslims were prohibited from producing, selling or consuming alcohol. The veil, hijab, daily prayer, and adoption of other practices (such as prohibition of alcohol) were not Bosnia's Islam, they were not part of our *tradicija*. Hajra thought it was inappropriate to transplant Islamic life from the Middle East into Bosnia. According to Hajra, there was no place for Saudi Arabian interpretations of Islam in Bosnia because it was never part of *tradicija* or our [Bosnian] practice. The new interpretations of Islam that Hajra observed were in her mind a misreading of the holy texts and she was convinced that majority of what were common practices in the Middle East were incorrect. Hajra believed that to truly

understand what Allah meant one had to be properly versed in the holy text, and had to know how to interpret it.

I have to say that a person has to be very well educated in order to interpret the holy book Qur'an in a correct way. I am personally upset when we are presented with half-citations [parts of whole Qur'anic or Haddith verses] when we [Muslims] are faced with placing of specific verses in wrong contexts in order to prove that Islam is hateful of women; this is simply not the truth. I am very well aware of who and what I am. I am not covered, I practice my religion as much as I feel I should and in a way that is close and familiar to me, so that there is no emissary between me and my faith. That is really important to me. It is how I feel comfortable and pleasant.

Nermina was the second conventional informant that had some textual knowledge gained as an adult. Even though she came from a religious home, Nermina left for the University at 18. The following two decades she focused on growing her career and family. She spent little time with her mother, who although pious, had taught her little when she was a child. When she was a teenager, and later as a young college student, Nermina wanted to know more about Islam and had read the Qur'an and some of the haddiths stating:

I read books, I searched for answers. I looked for answers and I found them for that period in my life. But during that time [communist period] Hodze were very illiterate, and there are many today who are illiterate. So I searched for the answers alone. That is in part why I chose sociology as my major in college, because it talked about rituals and religions of the world. I began when I was 15 maybe. I searched. It isn't surprising that I did that, it was that time of my life.

Many conventional Muslim women I met felt that they simply did not have time to read the holy texts or increase their knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence. One such informant was Zineta. Zineta did not observe the Islamic rules and regulations even though her parents were pious. She simply never learned them as many parents of that

generation were afraid for their children's future. Religion was not an asset in the early years of communism, and for Zineta it was a scary reality.. Born and raised in Foča, Zineta relocated to Sarajevo in 1988. She was married and came from a typical Muslim family but where gender roles were less strict and altered by a focus on women's education. She was 38 when we met in 2008 and had a degree in engineering from the university. Working as an engineer for the past 14 years, Zineta built a successful career in a male-dominated world. Zineta came from a home where her mother adhered to the Islamic lifestyle. Her mother prayed every day and observed all the necessary duties of a Muslim. Much like many other conventional Muslim women, Zineta experienced the generational gap in observance of Islam. While she had some religious education in her early years [*mekteb*], which she barely remembered, she did not practice in her daily life.

Explaining to me her lack of belief and practice, Zineta said that she might have had the strength and faith to adhere to the rules of Islam before the war, but she was now tired, exhausted and she could not find time to be *prava Muslimanka*. Zineta believed that the war made everything much more difficult, and that now she could find little time for her spiritual side when her primary worries were centered on putting food on the table. Zineta described a profound confusion and sense of loss when it came to faith. She knew many who were making a transition toward a pious lifestyle, but Zineta did not have such desires. Yet, she felt a sense of guilt about her own inactivity when a large number of her friends were adopting pious lifestyles. Zineta told me that she wanted to be more in Islam, but that she could not give it time at this point in her life. She felt that her priorities were not the same as many of her friends, and that she still had duties that many of them did not. Her

answers were unsure, and at times, I felt she was embarrassed by her lack of religious knowledge. In part, this was because she did not have a background or experience with Islam, like many other Muslim women of Bosnia. What she learned in her childhood home was now forgotten. Zineta said she felt embarrassed about asking others for help with a religion that she was born into, but did not know anything about.

Many of my conventional Muslim informants expressed feelings of embarrassment about their lack of Islamic knowledge. As Halida, an informant from Medica told me when discussing her definition of a believer, she admitted her knowledge of Islam was limited stating,

I mean, I don't know much, I know very little, but I would love to learn much more.

On a number of occasions, I was told "we [Muslims] were persecuted for a religion we knew nothing about." This was an important statement that relayed some of the frustrations and problems conventional women experienced with regard to being a Muslim. From this I concluded that many conventional Muslim women remained ignorant and resentful of generally accepted (Middle Eastern and devout) Islamic religious practices because of the intimidation associated with what was required of to be a proper Muslim.

On a number of occasions I was told being a proper Muslim is too difficult with all the other daily obligations. Several older informants said that being *vjernica* was impossible if a woman had to hold a job, be a mother and do everything else that was expected of her. Furthermore, as one's *vjera* was understood as independent from Islamic duties, textual knowledge was therefore not an essential aspect of being a Muslim. However, with the

introduction of foreign forms of Islam that emphasize Qur'anic knowledge, these women were nevertheless confronted with new forms of Muslim identity. This inevitably imprinted on many of my conventional informants, who like Zineta and Halida confronted their own Muslim identities and questioned what it meant to be a Muslim. Therefore, comments such as the one made by Halida became even more important as it resonated with many women who felt they ought to know more about Islam, demonstrating the growing influence of Islamic revitalization movement.

MUSLIM BY ASSOCIATION

An important way in which my conventional informants justified their belonging to Islam, and their ability to call themselves Muslim, was through association with relatives they consider pious or *vjernik/vjernica*. Azra, a 42 year old married woman from Zenica best exemplified the importance of having relatives who were pious, stating:

I cannot say I am some kind of *velika vjernica*. But I do respect my faith. I don't go to the mosque. But I come from a very religious family. My parents were *veliki vjernici*. I may not be very religious now that I am married, but before the war I would go to the mosque pretty often. Now that I work it seems as though I don't have much time for faith, but I can't say I am a non-believer either.

To best illustrate this, I return to Nermina once again. Nermina, in her fifties and staff at Medica Zenica, did not practice on daily basis, but did so mostly around *Ramazan* and *Kurban Bajram*. Unlike most of her friends and family, Nermina had a solid knowledge of Islamic text. Growing up in a majority Serb area, Nermina's family was very private about their religious beliefs and practices. Her father celebrated all the major holidays and supported her mother's daily prayer, despite his political and public interactions as a life-long communist. Her mother not only observed the daily prayer, but all the prescribed daily

Islamic duties. Nermina, therefore, learned about Islam through her parents. Thus, Nermina grew up in a home that was both communist and religious, a duality that has undoubtedly contributed to how she practiced Islam today. When Nermina went away to the university, her daily connection to Islam nearly disappeared. Despite the fact that her father was a life-long communist party member, Nermina's father demanded an Islamic burial.

My father died in the worst time, in 1986. He was buried in a religious manner, where *five hodžas* prayed for him. So, if one wanted to be buried in a particular manner, nobody could stop them.

In the mid-1980s ethnic tensions were growing across Yugoslavia, yet the communist party was still in power. Nermina felt her father's death marked the end of the period when Muslims could no longer express their religious identity. During the mid 1980s religion became a hot-button issue and was used by nationalist parties to gain power. It was during this time that nationalist political parties formed and Serb, Croat and Muslim leaders came into power by enticing ethnic hatred and attaching blame for economic and political problems on other ethnic groups. Because of the political tensions and her father's dedication to Islam in the last days of his life was an important point about the enormous changes that took place in the period right before the start of the war, Nermina emphasized that five *hodžas* prayed at her father's funeral. This statement has two meanings: first, it showed that Nermina came from a Muslim home, and second, that Nermina was a child of a man who was a Muslim. Furthermore, the number of *hodžas* also demonstrated that her father was an important person, an important Muslim, in a majority-Serb community.

Paradoxically, though a communist his whole life and a fighter in the partisan forces during World War II, Nermina's father respected and observed all the Muslim holidays, the fast, alms for the poor, and daily prayer at a later time in his life. To Nermina, her parents home was a true example of a *tradicionalna Muslimanska kuća*. Her parents' influence led to her own investigations and inquiries into the religious texts. Thus, much like the majority of Bosnia's Muslim population, Nermina considered herself a Muslim, a woman who knew about Islam as a set of beliefs and practices, a woman who practiced and observed all the major holidays, but a woman unburdened by (what she considered) the unnecessary daily practices. Nermina did not believe the daily prayer, wearing of the hijab, and observances of all the duties as prescribed by the holy book were necessary for her to be a Muslim.

An important part of how Nermina understood herself as a Muslim woman was through her mother whom she called a *velika Muslimanka*. Commonly used by conventional and pious Muslims to refer to those considered as devout to Islam, the term was an important way in which Muslims positioned themselves and others. By stating that her mother was a *velika Muslimanka* Nermina increased her validity and authenticity as a Muslim. Her mother's level of devotion was one way in which Nermina measured her own Muslim-ness. Thus, despite observing only some of the Islamic duties, Nermina could identify and call herself *vjernica* because she came from a family in which Islam was observed.

He (Nermina's father) was a huge support to my mother, who was in charge of keeping up *tradicija*. In our house, everything was decided in such a manner. Everyone knew that my mother was *velika vjernica*, that all of the holidays were observed, and that my brothers were circumcised.

Nermina believed in separate gender roles and thought that it was a woman's responsibility to take care of household chores and duties, despite having to hold a full time job. She trained as a cook in high school and spent a majority of her life in communist Yugoslavia's proletariat. Born in 1954, she was in her mid-fifties at the time we met. Similar to Nermina's experiences and opinions were those of Jasminka. Jasminka was from Zenica, born and raised, was married and came from a traditional Muslim family of the pre-World War II generation. Unlike Nermina, however, Jasminka was not raised in Islam, rather her family's practice and belonging to Islam was centered around celebrations such as Ramazan and Kurban Bajram. As a result of her own upbringing, Jasminka raised her children in a similar manner. She did however believe that marking these two major holidays was her duty as a Muslim and an important part of Muslim life. Though her own children did not practice any additional rites or religious duties, an interesting shift was happening in her grandchildren's generation. Jasminka spoke much of her ten-year-old grandson, with whom she started to learn more and more about Islam. Jasminka said,

He reads the literature he gets at religious classes and the local mosque. He is a good Muslim.

Fascinated by her grandson's interest in Islam, Jasminka indicated that she felt a sense of relief regarding her own lack of observance. Much like Nermina, her family member's devout observance of Islam validated Jasminka's legitimacy as a Muslim.

Ironically though, Jasminka's grandson was fascinated by and practiced what she referred to as proper Bosnian Islam and was passionately against the foreign influences. Even at the age of 10, Jasminka's grandson recognized and rejected the foreign Islamic influences in day-to-day life. Much like her grandson, Jasminka herself did not like the

presence and adoption of what she saw as foreign Islam. In particular, she did not like the black clothes on women, that is, the *niqab*.⁸ Jasminka, however, did not like that those Muslim women who have adopted foreign interpretations of Islam were insulted and humiliated by passersby in the streets, at work, and even by family members at home. She did not approve of the mistreatment of those Muslims who have chosen a new interpretation of Islam even though she did not necessarily approve of their choice. In particular, Jasminka did not like that pious women were forced into seclusion from the world by their clothes. She felt many of these women were cut off from the world. Jasminka, much like Hajra, spoke of her love of Islam, and the way “they” (foreign Muslims) practiced Islam was not pleasant or lovable.

Jasminka was not unique in her experiences of practice, nor were her feelings toward foreign influences. Foreign influences were identified not only in the way people practiced their faith but also by the clothing they wore and the language they used. These influences permeated the social fabric of Bosnia’s cultural and religious life since the end of the war. Some mosques were destroyed during the war, and the new mosques erected throughout Bosnia were built in a distinctly non-Bosnian, or, rather, non-Ottoman style⁹.

In conclusion, having a devout family member helped increase one’s relationship to Islam, but having a family that practices distinct religious traditions was just as important.

⁸ A *niqab* in Arabic, meaning a mask, is a face veil worn by women in Muslim countries. It is common in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Persian Gulf. It is often paired with a long, flowing black dress and gloves, leaving no skin exposed.

⁹ Non-Ottoman style mosques did not replace the old ones but were brand new. Some of the new-style mosques also were started before the war further supporting the argument that reislamization was already underway before the breakout of war. One example of this can be found on the outskirts of Sarajevo. King Fahd’s mosque was constructed with monies provided by Saudi Arabia’s king. Occupying several city blocks, the mosque was a grand structure built in a traditional Arabian architectural style.

Fuada believed that she was simply too busy to practice Islam at this point in her life. With all the responsibilities she had going on in her life, Islam was a burden rather than an embraceable way of life. However, Fuada emphasized that she came from a dervish family, which meant that she came from a prominent religious background.¹⁰ This relationship provided Fuada a stronger connection to Islam than other Muslims, lacking a similar background, did not have. Growing up in a religious family, thus, alleviated some of the guilt Fuada felt for not observing Islamic tenets in her daily life. She was also adamant that belonging to a family once known for their piety was a firm sign of her belonging to Islam, of her Muslimness. Undeniably, having and recounting stories of pious family members was an important way in which she and other conventional informants authenticated and understood their connection to Islam as a set of beliefs and practices.

IMPORTANCE OF *TRADICIJA*

The following discussion compares three stories by Mediha, Hasiba and Zlata regarding the importance and preservation of *tradicija*. Their stories show different ways in which *tradicija* is understood and practiced by women in the post-war and post-communist period. I start the discussion with Mediha, a 44 year old single mother living and working in Zenica.

My brother had an experience with a Muslim from Somalia. They worked outside all day, it was very hot. The Somali man went to pray even though my brother was trying to convince him that it was simply too hot. The worst of it was that the Somali man prayed right there, on the construction site. He asked my brother: "is it clean there?". My brother was dumbfounded by this

¹⁰ Dervish is someone treading a Sufi Muslim ascetic path, or "Tariqah," known for their extreme poverty and austerity, similar to mendicant friars in Christianity or Hindu/Buddhist/Jain sadhus. Orders of dervishes arrived in Bosnia with the Ottomans and remain to this day. Dervishes and Sufis were also considered deviant or too infected with local customs by some religious leaders and more 'true believers'.

question knowing that the man could not have kept *abdest* (abulution), he had gone to bathroom several times. It was unbelievable. We were taught to wait until we are in a clean place and had taken *abdest*. They (other Muslims) pray wherever they are, in a park, anywhere. That is not correct.

This vignette illustrates some of the ways in which my conventional informants differentiated themselves from Muslims from other countries and pointing to Bosnians' greater knowledge of what's most important in religious practice. Mediha came from a religious home, and she recalled the story of her mother, who as a young woman wore the veil [*zar*] before it was outlawed by the communist party in 1950. Women continued to wear headscarves, and they did in the villages and mosques. She therefore was raised in a home where strict gender roles and women's position was reminiscent of other majority Muslim countries. As a single working mother Mediha was an example of a woman who rejected her family's religiosity and gender roles (particularly as they relate to marriage and bearing children), however, still felt that some things were important and needed to be observed. Despite growing up in a home where religion and Islam were important, Mediha did not carry on any of her parent's dedication to Islam. She did however tell me that she had little time for religion beyond those rituals that were part of *tradicija*.

Hasiba (whom I also mention in detail in Chapter 6) understood *tradicija* in a different way. She came from a religious home, but focused on keeping *Bosanska Islamska tradicija* because of what she perceived as foreign and culturally irrelevant interpretations of Islam. Hasiba was originally from Višegrad, but now lived in Zenica, was married, a mother and in her mid-thirties when we met. She said that she considered herself *vjernica*, but not like those men and women she identified as *novi Muslimani*. Hasiba had met and interacted with a number of *novi Muslimani* and she felt uncomfortable not only with their

version of Islam, but with their judgment of her religious commitment and dedication. She said that a true *vjernica* could not judge or tell others how to live their life. Hasiba said that over the years she talked to many men and women who claimed to be devout, but whose conversations were characterized by hate, gossip, and greed.

To Hasiba, being a Muslim meant being a good person, and daily practice of rituals had nothing to do with that. Hasiba's father, *vjernik* his entire life, defied the norm during communist period by attending the mosque almost every day. With the rise of nationalism and use of Islam as a political weapon, those attending her father's mosque had a political agenda, which was one reason why her father eventually stopped going in the early 1990s. He said that they, newly pious Muslims who did not practice Islam prior to war, had perverted Islam and were only using it for their own political advantage. This was Hasiba's experience with Islam as well, and she was confident that all new forms of Islam now present in Bosnia were problematic and inherently wrong. Illustrating her disapproval of new forms of Islam Hasiba remarked,

During the war, people really took advantage of religion. Especially during *Ramazan*. Through *kurban* (halal meat traditionally given to the poor). People got rich through the slaughter of these animals. I saw it with my own eyes. Food would come from Muslim countries, but instead of giving it to the poor, they would sell it. That is why I distanced myself. That is why I quit fasting and praying. I used to fast and pray regularly, but after the war I no longer do.

Abuse and use of Islam for political advancement turned Hasiba away from developing a close relationship with Islam in her daily life. Hasiba did identify as Muslim and had faith in Allah, but she was unwilling to align herself with any group that judged one version of Islam as better than another. As a result, Hasiba did not follow in her father's steps, and rarely

observed any of the same rites. However, she identified as Muslim and believed she would die a Muslim. She respected Islam as a religion, and most importantly, as the religion her father was so deeply committed to. Hasiba said that no one should ever force others to veil or pray. Rather, people should feel religion and belief in their heart; that alone should motivate their practice. In this respect, Hasiba held onto to *tradicija* as a way of combating change. Thus, for Hasiba, *tradicija* became an indispensable part of her identity as a Muslim.

The final story is that of Zlata, a 47-year old who had an experience with a Middle Eastern type of Islam that she later rejected in favor of *tradicija*. Zlata was an example of a woman who came from a traditional Bosnian family but due to war was exposed to Middle Eastern kind of Islam and then she rejected it. While in Riad for her husband's surgeries and therapy due to wounds he sustained during the war, Zlata adopted all the Islamic duty and obligation observed by all Saudi Arabian women. However, after they returned to Sarajevo in 1996, Zlata returned to practicing Islam as she once did.

Zlata and her family faced two sets of challenges when they returned. The first was rejection from their neighbors and friends who remained in Sarajevo during the war, and second, was access to education. Her husband's loss of a limb and her family's psychological trauma were not enough to assure them acceptance into in post-war Sarajevo. In the early years after the war, survivors were bitter over the siege of Sarajevo by the Bosnian Serb forces. Those who endured the siege distanced themselves from those who escaped. Those who remained in Sarajevo regarded Zlata and her family as traitors and treated them as such for some time.

To gain a position and compete on equal footing in a non-religious funded organization, such as the University, Zlata saw public displays of religion as a disadvantage. Zlata said the post-war period was a chauvinist landscape that greatly diminished women's ability to compete. In post-war Bosnia, Zlata could have advanced quickly if she had kept the hijab, as there was a large number of NGOs and other organizations funded by conservative Arab countries aimed at promoting devout and pious Islam. Despite these potential advantages, Zlata chose to return to practicing *tradicija*. She did not want to accept an employment opportunity based on the politics of the hijab. She wanted to earn her position fairly. She took off the hijab, and though she had come to believe it was a duty of a Muslim woman to wear one, she did not utilize it in her own life. In Saudi Arabia, Zlata said, the veil was part of life; in postwar Bosnia, it was a political statement. She did not want to be associated with political agendas that were not her own. Finally, having grown up in a *tradicionalna Muslimanska kuća*, she felt oppressed by the Islamic lifestyle she had to perform in Saudi Arabia. She grew up in a family where male and female children were equally valued, but where the man was still head of the household. This all changed when Zlata moved to Sarajevo, married and had children of her own. She was very aware of women's position in Bosnia's society, and was constantly fighting an uphill battle to prove herself at work. Zlata was not used to the life organized and ordered by Islamic law as it was in Saudi Arabia, and she felt constrained by it. Moreover, she realized the political statement that her full veiling would make to her friends and family when she returned to Bosnia. For Zlata, faith and practice should remain private. Having always observed the holidays and sometimes the fast (although sporadically), it was her newfound religious

knowledge gained in Saudi Arabia that gave her the tools to fight those who judged her for being the kind of Muslim woman she chose to be. Finally, Zlata said it was simply “too difficult to be a Muslim while working and living in a non-Muslim country.” Here Zlata refers to the fact that Bosnia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with Muslims making barely half of the total population and where there is no sign of Sharia law as far the state was concerned. It was repeated to me on a number of occasions that it is simply impossible for Bosnians who have full-time jobs and are mothers to observe the daily duties expected by Islamic jurisprudence, as practiced in, for example, Saudi Arabia. For Muslims living in the Islamic world where social, political, and economic life is organized around Islamic duties, being a Muslim was not difficult; is it difficult in Bosnia.

CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates that being a conventional Muslim woman was closely related to keeping of *tradicija*. It is important to note, however, that many aspects of *tradicija* are not always religious, but are associated with Bosnian Muslims tradition. I use *tradicija* because my informants use the term itself when they talk about their relationship to Islam.

Therefore this is an emic term, and one that, despite not always having religious connotations, in the context of my research best explained how my conventional informants related to Islam. My conventional informants, thus, focused on four primary factors that help them understand what it meant to be a Muslim. These factors included giving children Muslim names, alternative ways of marking and observing *Ramazan*, limited textual knowledge, observation of traditional rituals such as *tevhid* and *mevlud*, and finally, gaining legitimacy and authenticity through devout family members. Without a doubt

observance of rituals that uphold *tradicija* was an important way in which Muslim women came to understand themselves as women and as Muslim.

For conventional Muslim women, all Muslims were equal, and despite observing only a limited number of prescribed practices they considered themselves to be *vjernice*. About a third of the conventional women had pious parents, yet, having grown up in the communist system they appreciate and focus on *tradicija*, rather than a strict interpretation of Islam. Only one of the women had a mother who wore the veil and even her perception of what she identified as “new ” (i.e., imported) Islamic practices reflected that of majority of conventional women. Many of my conventional informants were unwilling to observe or devote themselves to the prescribed expectations of an Islamic life. Nevertheless, religious doctrine was part of their identities and came out differently and in different levels for each of my informants. Multiple belonging was a lived reality for these women. Nevertheless, conventional Muslim women were able to fully negotiate the duality of belonging in such a way allowed them a coherent sense of the self.

CHAPTER VIII: PIOUS MUSLIM PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an ethnographic examination of Islam as it is lived and experienced by women whom I have identified as pious or conscious Muslims. As discussed in Chapter 6, the Qur'an clearly defines a difference between a believer [*vjernica* and sometimes, *prava vjernica*] who has completely submitted to Allah [*mum'in*], and a Muslim who has not. In addition to having faith in Allah, many of my informants observed practices that they regarded as part of complete submission and helped in their pursuit of a life as pious Muslims. The practices they engaged in constituted the primary difference between what I have identified as conventional and pious Muslim women.

In this chapter I focus primarily on fourteen¹ women whose personal experiences give insight into the ways in which one could live as a pious Muslim. Five were part of my faith-based group, including two university students. Mina (25 year old student of architecture) and Vildana, a 26 year old lawyer employed at Municipal Court. Three College of Law educated women were also part of the faith-based network: Fatima (25), Belkisa (25) and Badema (25). I met the other six women, all university students at Nahla. These included Fikreta (18), Amira (26), Vahida (27), Elma (28), Devla (25), and Lejla (21). The other three are Dina (a 29 year old lawyer), Alema (a 26 year old graduate of Bosnian language and literature) and Almasa (28). I met them in other contexts in Sarajevo.

¹ In total I have interviewed 50 women, 16 conventional and 34 pious women. Of the 34 pious women 12 wore the hijab, while others dressed in a range of what they considered modest clothing. Finally, of the 34 pious women, 7 were part of the small faith-based network.

According to Ayse Saktanber (2002) faith in Islam is something that people do and not something that they have; it is “something that people are or become”. Indeed, if this is true, and pious Muslim women believe it to be true, then it follows that to be a pious Muslim requires one to more than be simply born Muslim: one must engage Islamic practice in daily life. While faith is deeply personal, and therefore not discernible to others, practice is not (at least not always). Therefore, ethnographic observance of people fulfilling their religious duty and daily practice helps us distinguish between conventional and pious Muslim women’s lives. Complete observance of daily prayer, saying of the Shahhadah, and fasting during Ramadan separates pious from conventional Muslim women. While conventional Muslim women have quintessentially Bosnian rituals they observe as part of being Muslim, namely *tevhid* and *mevlud* (which many of my pious informants saw as problematic and not part of how true Islam is lived), many of my pious informants believed that there were a number of additional practices one must observe in order to be a proper Muslim. Scholarship suggests that multiple selves and agencies can occupy a single body, thus while the women I identify as pious Muslims have been assigned a single unifying term, their understanding of the self is multifaceted and fluid (Hafez 2011), and they have a number of characteristics they share with my conventional informants. In this chapter, I focus on how the fourteen pious informants interpret and incorporate Islamic principles into their day-to-day experiences and how, through these practices, they construct their Islamic personhood.

As I specified in Chapter 7, pious Muslims share with conventional Muslim women, a) the experience of being born Muslim and having and giving Muslim names; b) paying

dues to the Islamic Community; and c) giving alms to the poor. In addition, the fourteen pious informants described here, plus twenty others whom I do not discuss in detail (but whose profiles are included in Appendix IV and V and whose stories help inform this study) have the following characteristics: a) 34 observed prayers five times a day; b) 34 observed the fast during the entire month of *Ramazan*; c) 30 studied regularly in order to increase their religious textual authority and knowledge, d) 34 made a point of wearing clothing defined as modest in Islamic circles (and in some cases wear the hijab); e) a majority (26 out of 34) avoided places and situations in which alcohol was either served or consumed; f) more than one-third (12 out of 34) avoided physical contact with men they were not related to; and finally, g) 24 sought to accommodate Islamic norms jurisprudence with respect to relations with men, namely *šerijatsko zabavljanje* (Sharia dating) and trial marriages (temporary religiously sanctioned marriages) including a short discussion of arranged marriages. *Šerijatsko zabavljanje* was a term used by my informants to describe the courting practices of those couples attempting to live their lives as pious Muslims and who avoided all forms of physical contract or intimacy and were together only in public places.

In this chapter I do not discuss those commonly observed practices including being born Muslim and having and giving Muslim names, paying dues to the Islamic Community, giving alms to the poor because they are all part of pious women's experiences. They do not stress the importance of either of these practices because they assume them to be inherent in their experience of Islam and being Muslim. Conventional Muslim women on the other hand stressed the importance of these three practices because they used them to

affirm their relationship with Islam. For this reason, and because all of my pious informants believed these practices to be inherent part of being a Muslim, they spent little time ascertaining their importance in daily life.

DAILY PRAYER

Prayer is an essential part of Islamic practice and lifestyle. In contrast to other monotheistic faiths in Bosnia (Catholic and Serb Orthodox), Islam requires its followers to observe a practice that can be personally limiting and problematic, especially in a world where time is money and spiritual enlightenment is secondary to material and educational development. Many of my informants have observed that a world that functioned on a 7am-3pm timetable was unfriendly to the incorporation of praying five times a day (see Alija's comment in Chapter 7, page 222). In fact, Belkisa pointed out that she had to make adjustments in her pious practice in order to accommodate the demands of her job. Belkisa noted that early morning prayers were easy to observe, while mid-day ones had to be *naklanjane*, meaning that she had to make up the prayers at a later point in the day. Muslim must perform five prayers each day, and they must be done in a clean, quiet space (according to Sunni tradition). Each prayer (or *namaz*) lasts between 10-15 minutes (sometimes longer) and it includes a specific procedure and times. A woman can perform the prayer on her own, or in a group, and the act must be uninterrupted and focused. To complete the act of praying according to requirements a woman must find a space where she can do all this. For many professional young women such a space was not available to them in their office and they often must go to the nearest mosque in order to perform this daily ritual.

In order to best ascertain the importance of prayer in the lives of my pious informants I focus on the experiences of four women: Vildana, Fikreta, Vahida, Amira, and Belkisa. In addition to their prayer, I also focus on the ways in which pious Muslim women adjusted their practice of prayer in order to accommodate their secular environments. All the pious women I interviewed agreed that education was important, but some thought that pursuing a career could stray them from their path which was focused on fulfilling their roles as good Muslim women, namely to be mothers and wives. Thus, while many of my pious informants believed that women should focus more on being good mothers and wives rather than pursue careers if they deterred them from their domestic duties.

Unlike many of the pious women I describe in this chapter, Vildana grew up in what she called a religious home and had always been exposed to daily prayer. Despite the religious nature of her home, the family dynamic was similar to that of many of her generation. Her parents were encouraging and she was successful at school and in her career. Talking about how long she had observed the daily prayer, Vildana said:

I think I started praying regularly when I was six or seven years old. My story is rather interesting. I came from a family that was religious. My parents learned everything about Islam from their parents. But they were Bosnian Muslims. When I learned how to read I found a book about how to pray. But I didn't understand it right away. I didn't even know the basic, not even *fatiha*². So I would do based on what the book said [following instructions], and from there I began asking more questions.

Vildana's experience with daily prayer from childhood were unusual, most of the time, however, my pious informants went through a gradual process of adopting prayer in their daily life during their transformative years as teenagers or young adults (see Appendix IV-VI

² First verse of the daily prayer.

for a detailed summary of the conversion process). Saktanber (2002) observed that in Turkey many women seeking to live their lives as pious Muslims slowly incorporated prayer and a modest appearance because they faced having to navigate between secular and religious demands of daily life. Similarly, Vildana and Amira were slow in adopting a life as pious Muslims. Amira, 26 years old in 2008, was one of my classmates at Nahla's School of Islam. She relocated from Mostar to Sarajevo to attend the University of Sarajevo, where she enrolled at the teachers college. Amira's turn to pious life and daily practice of Islam began about a year earlier. When we met, she had been praying five times a day for almost a year. Amira's transformation towards Islamic lifestyle also happened gradually.

I always would start, then stop, then...it was period where I needed to understand why prayer was important, the meaning...and in the last two years I became serious about it.

Since she considered prayer an essential part of her faith, Amira put much stake into observing the daily prayers.

This set of women rarely discussed the importance of prayer since praying was an unquestionable, perhaps even unconscious part of daily duty. In addition to fulfilling a duty, these women also commented on the psychological benefits of prayer. Prayer, according to twenty-seven year old single lawyer Vahida, "relaxes me and helps me end the day on a positive note." For Vahida, prayer meant feeling released from all her problems and worries. Furthermore, prayer also provided a space for Vahida to ask for guidance from God and a way for her to give thanks for the good things that she received. She said,

I directly pray to God. It always depends, *dova* (verse) is filled up dependent on one's honesty. It is always dependent on how much the follower [rob] sends an honest prayer. I always try not to ask for things, to say "Give me this, and that." I ask God to give me what is good for me, so I let God decide

what to give me. I am just a human and I am not always a good judge of what is good. Only God knows what is good for me.

In contrast, Fikreta felt “refreshed after each prayer;” it was a “type of meditation and communication with the higher being,” she said. Islam was a philosophy of living in Fikreta’s opinion, a lifestyle choice she made every day. When describing the importance of daily prayer, Fikreta said,

Praying is a type of concentration, rest. It is a type of communication. I feel at ease, and refreshed. This has all been supported by medical research that says it calms down the nerves, it has its benefits.

Both Fikreta (18 years old and a single student) and Vahida (in her mid-20s and also a single student) shared Amira’s experiences with incorporating prayer in their daily life. Prayer for them was more than a duty; prayer was something that provided psychological and spiritual health. For each of my pious informants, prayer was a critical part of living an Islamic lifestyle, making it an integral part of how they organized each individual day, and consequently, their entire lives. While there were difficulties associated with incorporating five prayers into their work and school lives, each of the women I spoke to found different ways in which to accommodate the demands of their seemingly incompatible lives.

Naklanjati or making up one of the daily prayer at a later time in the day was not encouraged by religious leaders and imams, but nonetheless was a common practice among my young professional informants with full-time jobs. Not having time to conduct the prayer was only a part of their problems. In addition to having to make up prayers due to the demands of job duties, many of my informants had to make up prayers at the local

mosque or home because there were no facilities for them to observe this rite properly³ during work hours. For Belkisa it was difficult to pray when there was no clean or quite space where she could conduct the act. More often than not, Belkisa spent her lunch hour going to the nearest mosque in order to conduct this daily duty. This in turn meant she would often go an entire day without a meal.

I started praying intensively and I no longer thought about it [as in that she no longer had to remember to pray]. I no longer thought I had to get up in the morning. I would get up and that was all. However much I was tired. Simply faith changes you and it becomes part of your life. It becomes an integral part of your life. It determines when you will get up, when you will go to sleep, when you can take a break. But it makes it all fit nicely together. It is part of life how you eat, what you drink.

In addition to sacrificing her lunch, and at times any free time from her work duties, Belkisa was frequently ridiculed and harassed by her co-workers. Her modest dress and observance of prayer gave many of her colleagues an excuse to make demeaning and insulting comments. She reported that they told her that she was primitive, backwards, and uneducated on numerous occasions. Belkisa wore long sleeve shirts and skirts that covered nearly all skin surfaces except her face and hands. Her co-workers, all of whom had Muslim names and therefore were surely Muslims, would make fun of how she dressed as a pious woman and told her she ought to just go ahead and put on the headscarf. In their minds Belkisa was dressed as a pious Muslim and as such should not try to fit in with them (the conventional Muslims). Amira and Fikreta also received similar comments from co-workers and peers at the University. Comments such as “all you are missing is *mahrma*” or

³ In this case proper prayer refers to women having a chance to complete the abolution (if needed) and ample time to complete the prayer without being disturbed by coworkers (who did not pray or disagreed with their practice).

“why don’t you go put on the *mahrma*” do not sound as derogatory in English as they do in Bosnian. In Bosnian they imply that she was a poser and perhaps an exhibitionist. In this way, Belkisa was identified as dishonest, a devout Muslim who was trying to be part of both the conventional and the pious world, but was not really part of either.

Women like Belkisa, Amira, Fikreta, and Vahida were unable, even without any explicit public displays of their faith (other than modest clothes), to practice freely that which they believed was expected of them by Allah. These were only a few examples of the sacrifices made by pious Muslim women that I documented. Yet, despite menacing, sometimes even physical threats, demeaning comments, and suffering social ostracism, my pious informants continued to wear what they regarded as modest clothing. In this way, they were able to live in both worlds (the pious and secular) and able to please Allah and fulfill their duties as Muslims.

FASTING AND RAMADAN

Of the thirty-four women I interviewed and identified as trying to live life as pious Muslims, all observed the fast during the holy month of *Ramazan*. Furthermore, similar to many of my conventional informants, all of my pious informants celebrated the end of *Ramazan*, which usually lasted a few days and involved visiting family members, hosting celebrations at home, and at the local mosque. *Ramazan* was a special time for all Muslims and especially so for my pious informants. For most of them it was a time when they could start fresh, and make important life decisions and changes. A number of my informants, including Fatima, Badema and Belkisa, decided to begin their lives as pious Muslims during

Ramazan and two of my informants, Mina and Lejla, decided to put on the hijab permanently during *Ramazan*.

For Belkisa, *Ramazan* was a special time of year, because it was one time she thought she was in complete control over herself and what she identified as her volatile personality. During *Ramazan*, and throughout the fast, she “calmed down” because she completely focused on how she would make it through the day. Other problems and stresses could not enter her mind during the fast, she said:

You had a chance to fast, haven’t you [talking to me, the researcher]? When you fast everything has to be in order. People can say and do anything, but nothing bothers you, you have a smile on your face. Nothing stresses you during the fast. Everything is much easier.

For Belkisa the fast was a time when she disciplined her body completely. During *Ramazan* Belkisa literally embodied Islam, and in this way gained control over her life in its entirety. Many women, like Belkisa, did not experience fast until they were older. However, Lejla began at a much earlier age (as a pre-teen) and thus had a different appreciation and understanding of the fast. For Lejla (a single university student from the rather small town Glamoč), *Ramazan* was the month during which she gained strength and power to do things she wouldn’t otherwise do. It was also during *Ramazan* that Lejla adopted the hijab.

I remember as a child, I went during *Ramazan* with my aunt to the local mosque. It was such a beautiful feeling, everyone was quiet and there was a kind of peace, it was calm. That stayed with me forever. When I was in elementary and high school we learned a little about Islam. But that is when I started reading on my own, I thought I knew a lot, but I really didn’t. *Ramazan* is a special month; that was when I finally put on the headscarf.

For Alema on the other hand *Ramazan* was the time when everything worked perfectly, when things fell into place. The calming effect of the fast has significant impact on many of

my pious informants, and they begin intensive observation of fast during this month. For Alema this was the case; she stated:

You have times when your *iman* starts taking a back seat to some other responsibilities in life, everything else becomes more important. But during *Ramazan* everything becomes intensive. I have fasted since I was 7 years old. And during this month I return to *iman*, and it becomes stronger. Through fast and the holiness of the month I find myself. Other things no longer bother me.

As a holy month, *Ramazan* was an intensive experience for my informants, not only physically, but emotionally as well. For women pursuing piety, *Ramazan* and the fast was the one time of the year their piety was accepted and admired by the public at large. During *Ramazan* many conventional Muslims celebrated the end of the fast and some would fast (anywhere between few days to the entire month), allowing my pious informants to be free and open about their practice. *Ramazan* was a time of great sacrifice, and as such was the most important time for my pious informants, because it was through sacrifice that they earned *ibadet*⁴ and their place in heaven.

TEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE

An important aspect of living as a pious Muslim was having textual knowledge, and thus authority and agency, over how one chooses to interpret and practice Islam. As a result many of my pious informants spent extensive time studying and improving their knowledge of holy texts. In addition, with the recent influx of foreign interpretations of Islam, textual authority was essential in allowing women a choice in how they interpreted the text.

⁴ *Ibadet*, (sometimes referred to as *sevap*) as my informants understood and used it, was something that comes from the heart, from one's experience of faith. *Ibadet* was not something that can be forced upon a person. Rather, it was submission to and love of Allah, therefore all acts of *ibadet* are beneficial for all Muslims. The more acts of *ibadet* that a person does, the more likely they are to end up in heaven.

Having extensive textual knowledge also enabled them to navigate between secular demands of their public lives and the demands of Islamic duty and law. As the first words of the holy text are “to read”, many of my pious informants took those words literally to mean that they are obligated not only to read the holy texts, but to understand them.

Furthermore, a life as a pious Muslim was incomplete without a thorough knowledge of what the holy texts say about living such a life. In addition, many of my informants understood reading the Qur’an as *ibadet*. Recitation and reading of the holy text was an important way of earning *ibadet*, while understanding and applying the text made one a stronger Muslim.

Of 34 pious informants I interviewed, 30 were actively engaged in increasing their knowledge of religious texts whether independently or through formal classes including Qur’an, Islamic duty, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic history, Haddiths and a number of others. The remaining four women did not mention holy texts and did not offer answers to my questions in regards to this particular topic. This does not mean that these four women did not already possess the knowledge, it only means that they were not actively engaged at that time in increasing their knowledge. Finally, knowledge of the text offered women an understanding of Islam; moreover, it provided reasons and legitimacy for why they believed in what they believed. The text also conferred a deeper understanding and appreciation of the practices they were observing or attempting to incorporate in their daily lives. Finally, textual knowledge provided a number of psychological and mental benefits for many of my informants.

Over a cup of cappuccino following an exam at the school of Islam, Adila exclaimed that the best company she had was with Allah and the Qur'an. Adila spent most of her free time in prayer and reading of holy texts. She was also trying to memorize the Qur'an as she had heard from other pious Muslims that if you read the Qur'an 33 times in its entirety one would reach the point of memorization of the entire text. Muslims around the world recognize memorization of the Qur'an a great act of *ibadet*. Throughout the Islamic world, those who can recite the Qur'an in its entirety from memory are considered exceptional people with a very special connection to Allah and are referred to as *hafiz*. Additionally, for Adila Qur'an served as her 'medicine' or rather 'preventative medicine' in that it prepared her for whatever the day could throw at her; she felt protected, with God on her side. In addition to memorizing the Qur'an, through her readings of the Haddiths, Adila believed that she had to model herself after the Prophet. As a result, she read all the stories and books she could find on life of the Prophet. This kind of knowledge secured Adila in her belief and practice because having read it she was confident that her actions were correct. In addition, when questioned why she observed practices such as prayer, Adila could point to those holy passages that justified her actions.

A 28-year-old graduate of the Faculty of Law at the University and a born and raised Sarajevan, Elma held a stable job in the government sector. Unmarried and without children, Elma was, as she said, "in faith since young age". An active member of Nahla and a student in the school of Islam, Elma was committed to expanding her textual knowledge as a way of keeping her *iman* (faith) strong. Elma read the Qur'an on daily basis, both in Arabic and Bosnian. She explained to me that reading or reciting the Qur'an in Arabic had a

special way of earning her *ibadet*. Simply reciting the holy words in the language in which it was intended for the world, (i.e., Arabic or the language of the Prophet) helped her become a better Muslim. Belkisa elaborated on this topic by stating:

struggling to read the Qur'an in Arabic is dearer to Allah than the person who knows it by heart and can say it without a problem. The struggle to break one's tongue to say the words properly is seen and heard by Allah. Reciting the Qur'an every day, even if for a few minutes, earns one *ibadet* and God will reward the person for their struggle.

The simple act of reading the holy text, and even more so reading it in Arabic, was a good practice that can earn a Muslim access to heaven. Vahida seconded Belkisa's words about the importance of reciting the text on daily basis by stating that through this practice the 'words of Allah stayed in my head all day and all night'. Inadvertently, however, reading and learning Qur'an gave these women an ability to interpret the text in their own way, an important example of how Muslim women can empower themselves and those around them. My informants believed that knowledge and memorization of the text could literally eliminate and prevent negative thoughts recognized as against Allah's word. The text itself becomes a tool with which one can not only make oneself closer to the higher power, but also prevent straying away from the proper path. Therefore, when Adila said that the Qur'an was a 'preventative medicine' she was referring to the fact that the reading of the text can actually stop her from committing sin.

The importance of memorization and daily recitation helped the women keep their thoughts in line with Allah. The textual knowledge and memorization provided not only a sense of comfort that one could be earning their way into heaven, but also that they would be able to stay away from temptation and *haram*. Memorized words ringing in their head,

according to my informants, literally filled up their minds so intensely that the thoughts and words that were not in line with Islamic lifestyle would literally be pushed out. Vahida's experiences with the holy text were a result of her maturity and her development into adulthood, stating,

I read the Qur'an a few times in the Bosnian language. And every time I read it I see something else, probably because of maturity level. As you grown older and become more mature you come to different conclusions. Every time I read it I find something relevant to my present life.

Much like Belkisa, Vahida, and Adila, Elma focused on reading, reciting, and memorizing the holy text. She looked for answers and solutions to her problems in the Qur'an and the Haddiths. Therefore, textual knowledge provided her with the power of interpreting the holy text and proper actions without reliance on any religious scholar or imam (positions occupied exclusively by men). The importance of textual knowledge and its intense presence in the daily practice of my pious informants was common throughout the Islamic world. Numerous scholars have noted that knowledge of the religious text not only gave power to the believer, but it made the connection between the higher power and its follower more intense (Barlas 2002; Hafez 2003; Pang 1997; Saktanber 2002). Furthermore, as Islamic intellectuals enjoy a revered position in societies because of their knowledge of Islam (Eickelman 1985), many of my pious informants were revered among their peers and as such were empowered within the religious community, but not so much within the conventional Muslim circles.

HIJAB [*MAHRAMA*]

Discussion of hijab [*mahrma*] is a deeply contentious, divisive, and emotional topic that has been at the center of Islam for a long time. Countries governed by Sharia Law usually

require all women to cover their bodies (to varying degrees, but most commonly involving the headscarf and in some cases the face veil) while in countries such as Bosnia hijab (or simply the head scarf which sometimes covers the neck and other times just the hair referred to in Bosnian as *mahrma*) is widely regarded as a sign of women's subordination. In many western countries hijab is banned by law, for instance in France hijab is banned in public schools and workplaces, while in the Netherlands women police and military officers may wear headscarves but not cover their faces with a veil. In the United States many Muslims are (illegally) monitored, searched and arrested for bogus crimes, and instances of Mosque crawlers (police informants) are becoming more common (Suarez 2012).

Among my conventional informants, *mahrma* was seen in two ways depending on the type of hijab, the Turkish type of hijab, colorful and which covers all hair (and sometimes leaves the neck exposed by being tied behind the head) was seen as a sign of tradition and Islamic history, while the black Arab type hijab, which usually covers the neck and is much looser around woman's neck and accompanied by long flowing black one piece gown was seen as a sign of backwardness and women's subordination. Thus *mahrma* has both negative and positive connotations. My pious informants all thought that they ought to wear the Turkish style, hijab, however, most of them were not yet ready to do so, and instead wore modest clothing as a sign of their commitment to Islam or because they were afraid of possible negative repercussions from non-covered Bosnians. Therefore those pious informants donning *mahrma*, and those who wore modest clothing (identifiably "Muslim" clothes with long sleeves and long skirts and high necklines) without wearing a *mahrma*, faced prejudice and harassment. Out of 12 pious informants who wore

mahrma permanently all experienced varying degrees of harassment and discrimination, however, here I share negative experiences of only two women, Dina and Mina, that in my opinion were the most cogent even though they were not typical. The reason I chose to focus on negative experiences is to highlight some of the fears faced by many of my pious informants who struggle to permanently don the hijab. These kinds of experiences, which are widely circulated among pious women frighten and dissuade many from wearing the hijab.

Unquestionably, the hijab had a very important role in the lives of my pious informants. The hijab, as a visual representation of their faith, thus was an important way in which my pious informants understood themselves and their relationship to Islam. Furthermore, wearing the hijab, and modest clothing, was thus an important part of how my pious informants viewed living fully coherent and conscious lives in Islam. In her study of Egypt's Muslim women, Mahmood concluded that,

what is also significant in this program of self-cultivation is that bodily acts – like wearing the veil⁵ or conducting oneself modestly in interactions with people (especially men) – do not serve as manipulable masks in a game of public presentation, detachable from an essential interiorized self. Rather they are the critical markers, as well as the ineluctable means by which one trains oneself to be pious. Thus while wearing the veil at first serves as a means to tutor oneself in the attribute of shyness, it is also simultaneously integral to the practice of shyness. In other words, one cannot simply discard wearing the veil once a modest deportment has been acquired because the veil is itself partly what defines that deportment. [Mahmood 2001:214]

⁵ Mahmood here specifically refers to wearing the face veil, which none of my informants wore. However, the comparison between the experiences of Egypt's veiled women and my own informants who wore the headscarf or hijab are similar and therefore necessary part of this discussion.

In this way, hijab serves as a way of embodying the self, and subsequently fulfills two purposes. First, hijab assists women in making their bodies modest. Second, it mediated how they interact with others, especially men, that is, it provides women with a sense of humility and a safe space in which they can interact with men outside their family circle. In the case of my pious informants, the hijab was an important statement: it represented who they were, and, most importantly, that they expected others to treat them with the respect they deserved. The concern with respect, among my pious informants, focused on recognizing that they were sexually modest and conservative. Finally, following Mahmood's argument, the hijab challenged secular feminist notion of agency as resistance and freedom, and added discipline, that when repeatedly performed allowed for situational and historically specific agency (Mahmood 2005). The following ethnographic examples thus support Mahmood's definition of agency.

I have identified a number of reasons why many of my pious informants don the hijab, including religious duty, perceived safety and security, freedom from sexual objectification and finally, peace and comfort. For Dina, a 29-year-old student at the university, wearing *mahrma* meant a lack of burden. She said that,

when you wear *mahrma*, you are unburdened, from physical presence in front of other people and you can concentrate. Because you cannot scramble anyone else's [men's] brains with a headscarf that is a happy color or some interesting combination. You can look really nice. But the fact is that women, from hair, to looks to the body shape...you draw attention and when you notice you draw attention then you draw attention away from what you should be focused on. When you are under the headscarf, you feel better and you are more concentrated.

Dina's physical appearance was no longer a priority to her and she looked forward to the day she could walk down the street with *mahrma*. She felt that many of the young women drew too much attention to themselves through their looks and therefore their sexuality, rather than their character. She believed that *mahrma* itself was literally a cure for freeing women from sexual objectification and the wandering eyes of men. Therefore, to Dina, wearing *mahrma* meant that a person was able to let go of things she believed were unimportant (i.e., physical appearance). Under *mahrma*, it no longer mattered what she looked like (i.e., her body shape, color of her hair, lips, and face); what mattered was that she was a good person. Dina felt peace under *mahrma*, the kind of peace she did not feel before donned the hijab. The outcome of the hijab was autonomy and freedom from judgment, which in Dina's case was not only empowering, but an example of agency.

Much like Dina, Mina (a 25 year old student of architecture, single and from a strict patriarchal home) put on *mahrma* because she believed that it brought her spiritual and personal fulfillment. Mina told me that she never felt like she belonged to her generation or the lifestyle that was common among most of her peers. She felt peace and acceptance in those circles of friends in which observance and discussion of Islam was the primary topic. The *mahrma* she donned only a year earlier was an important sign of her faith and a fulfillment of her duties as a Muslim. For a long time Mina affiliated with circles of men and women of faith, however, she did not feel like she belonged without *mahrma*. For Mina, this was a taxing contradiction. In order to be true to her life in Islam she felt the need to make the next step. Mina said she did not cover her head for a long time because of fear. She was afraid that friends and family would shun her, that colleagues at work and school

would judge her, and that she would be unable to achieve personal goals while wearing *mahrma*. Moreover, as a student of architecture, Mina felt her professional options would be limited. However, Mina emphasized that wearing the hijab was her duty and that despite challenges she needed to make the commitment.

Surprisingly, all of these fears disappeared and proved false when Mina finally chose to put on *mahrma*. She said her professional, academic, and personal life changed only slightly. Meaning that people she knew did not treat her any differently, and she was still very successful in her studies at the university. She had some negative experiences with people since she donned the hijab, but according to her the positives outweighed the negatives. The only thing that did change, according to Mina, was the disappearance of her fear and an emergence of strength to live a life that was true to herself, and Allah.

I felt much more fulfilled when I put on *mahrma*. I felt it. It came to me during the night. I thought about it for a long time, but because I was afraid for my job, there was a fear inside me for a long time. An architect, I was always ambitious to accomplish much in my life, but I was afraid that *mahrma* would present problems. *Mahrma* suggests being closed off and unfortunately, it also suggests a lack of education. Then I realized that I cannot simply live like that but that I needed to be fulfilled as a person.

Mina's dilemma was representative of the experience of the twelve women I interviewed who faced similar struggles in their decision to put on the headscarf. While her strength came after a long deliberation, the process and the feeling of obligation to enter a Muslim life completely, was far greater than the fear of rejection by the society.

Mina and Dina were not the only women whose experiences of the hijab were associated with duty, obligation, and protection. Lejla, a 21-year old student, told me that

the hijab was much more than just observing her duty, it was a representation of Islam as a whole:

I realized I had no purpose being uncovered. I say '*mahrāma* is simply a rag'. The principle of *mahrāma* is the concept of life, it is not just about putting on the headscarf, but you also become a representative of Islam. You become a commercial. And everything you do people will say all Muslims do. That's why you have to re-educate yourself so that you no longer do things as you used to.

Devla, single 25-year old college student of language and literature from Bugojno said that coming from *tradicionalna Muslimanska kuća* meant that she knew and practiced little. Her home was very similar to that of other women of her generation with gendered, but relatively equal roles with father at the head of the household. It was not until she was 19 years old that she chose to put on the headscarf. Dealing with the failure of her first love affair, Devla found solace in prayer and with prayer she found herself in a life that she could no longer justify. The secular world in which she grew up, and the pious life she was entering, were contradictions and as such created problems for her. Commenting on putting on *mahrāma*, Devla,

It took me a long time to put on *mahrāma*. I didn't think it was right how I was living. It was contradictory. I go out to a bar, sit down, it doesn't say on my forehead that I pray, that I am a believer. In such a state a young man (of questionable character) could approach me. I exposed myself to uncomfortable situations. I knew I would have problems with my mother. My father would not be such a problem. It took me a year, I really wanted to put on *mahrāma*. I dreamt of picking out scarves at the market stall. I thought I would be alone, locked inside the house [because of *mahrāma*]. I was coming up with reasons why not to put on the *mahrāma*. Then I realized that nobody would defend me when Allah asked me why I didn't put on *mahrāma*. That helped me decide to put on *mahrāma*.

Devla's struggle to put on *mahrāma* was influenced by all those difficulties she'd seen her pious friends encounter, as well as ones she knew would be specific to her. For Devla, the

scarf was a way to completely enter the life of Islam she so desperately tried to achieve, as well as a form of protection from people with whom she did not necessarily want to interact.

For Amira (then a 25-year old single student), being a good Muslim meant that she had to avoid revealing articles of clothing (i.e., short sleeves and skirts) and replace them with items that covered more of her body, including long sleeve shirts, full-length skirts, and pants. In a conscious act of changing her clothes and covering her body, Amira made an open statement to the outside world; through her clothes, she said to the strangers she was a pious Muslim woman. By changing her clothes and hiding her body from the male gaze, Amira knew she was rejecting the dominant notions of femininity and womanliness. In this way, Amira's actions in protecting herself from men's unwanted advances, a trend observed by other scholars working with Muslim women, was an example of agency (Mahmood 2005; Saktanber 2002).

The combination of reasons women used to decide whether to put on the hijab starts to get at the complexity of ways in which women try to live their lives as pious Muslims. The difficulty in adopting an Islamic lifestyle in a less-than welcoming environment was just one part of the problem these women faced. Unlike the earlier stories I have related, a number of my pious informants choose not to don the headscarf despite living their lives as pious Muslims in every other aspect. During fieldwork at first I was convinced that women wearing *mahrma* faced greater problems than those pious Muslim women who did not. However though interviews I found that it was actually my pious informants who were dressed modestly but have not put on the *mahrma* that faced

greater challenges. Regardless of whether or not they donned the *mahrma*, all of my pious informants agreed that wearing *mahrma* made a woman more true to Islam. This meant that all of my pious informants aspired towards *mahrma*. Alema wanted to wear the hijab, but she was not ready, instead she observed the practice of wearing modest clothing.

I don't wear anything short, nothing tight, nothing see-through. One thing that I do miss is *mahrma*. I am not covered, I would like to be covered [looks up and pauses] my parents were never communists. My parents were believers. Especially my mother, not my father, my father does not pray, but his parents, they were big believers. However, I guess here there wasn't that custom for a long time, wearing headscarf. So many thought it was a new thing. Despite it not being new. Let's say in rural areas of Bosnia they were especially conscious of their faith and wore headscarves. My parents didn't allow me to cover in high school. They thought I was too young for that, and they thought that I needed to live, have a good time, act crazy. However, that is not me. I was really never like that. I am not covered, and I still do not act that way. And they thought I would have a hard time finding a job because there are a lot of prejudice against covered women, and that I couldn't freely go to other parts of the country. I think it is not easy to go to Banja Luka with a headscarf. I don't know. Especially to some smaller place, like Foča, Višegrad, to places where there is almost no Muslims left.

For many of my informants, it was simply too difficult to be a representation of the whole of Islam, especially when their actions were judged as representative of all Muslims.

Vildana best voiced this concern, stating:

I don't wear *mahrma* because I don't feel it 100%. You cannot wear it unless you really feel like you should. You have to want *mahrma* in order to wear it. You cannot wear it for anyone else other than yourself. You have to do it for Allah, and not anyone else. The headscarf comes at the end [spiritual quest].

For Belkisa the struggle was even greater as she saw some of her close friends experience discrimination in the workplace. Because she wanted to be the best representative of Islam that she could be, while at the same time provide for herself and her family, Belkisa did not

wear the hijab despite having adopted modest clothing and all the other duties associated with living as a pious Muslim. In Belkisa's own words, her decision was a difficult one, but a part of how she saw herself and how she lived Islam. She says,

I don't wear it because personally I feel that I haven't reached that level spiritually and emotionally. Not because it would be difficult to do it. But because of the picture that I would give about Islam. I have an explosive personality, I am not 100% sure that in every moment that I would have the level of responsibility that is needed for *mahrma*.

Mahrma was thus a commitment many pious Muslim women took into serious consideration. Accordingly, putting on *mahrma* was often a long process. For many of my pious informants, the process of becoming a pious Muslim peaks with wearing modest clothes (and many will never get to wear the hijab). Indeed, both Belkisa and Vildana were in the process of conversion, and in their own words had not yet reached the full transformation into living life as pious Muslims. This was the primary reason why I say it was easier for women once they have made the decision to put on *mahrma*; they made a visible commitment, and to a degree that visible commitment saved them trouble of having to explain why they did what they did and their external appearance. On the other hand, though this was not the case among my informants, some pious Muslim women in Bosnia choose not to wear the hijab because they believe that it draws attention to them. In their opinion wearing the hijab in Bosnia has the opposite effect of its intentions of protecting women and inspiring men to lower their gaze. For these pious women the hijab has little effect in dissuading men's sexual desires and in fact creates greater conflict.

PERMITTED AND FORBIDDEN SPACES

The mixing of secular and religious life and customs further complicated living a life as a pious Muslim woman in a non-Islamic society. Pious Muslim women had to interact in a public sphere where they were required to abide and follow the secular rules and expectations. When my pious informant left the comfort of her home, a multitude of polluting images, spaces, and people assaulted her. For pious Muslim women who entered the public sphere out of necessity of daily life, external pollutants were difficult to control, therefore, avoiding the public often was the best solution to keeping away from *haram*. As a result, my pious informants adopted specific strategies that purposefully and efficaciously protected them in situations that challenged their piety.

The public displays of living Islam, such as the hijab, daily prayer, and modest clothing, were all symbols of being a pious Muslim. My pious informants carefully choose how they employed these symbols (i.e. the hijab). In addition, many of my pious informants used physical movement as a symbol of their deep spirituality, faith and practice. Thus, these women's physical movements, specifically their spatial movements and identification of good and bad spaces, were symbolic acts. The locations in which they met were also symbolically charged spaces. The spaces occupied by my pious informants were saturated in Islamic symbols of the moon and the star, Arabic script, and Middle-Eastern décor or what many Bosnian's referred to as "Oriental" in the colonial/Saidian understanding. In such Islam-friendly spaces, my pious informants could relax and enjoy being in public without worrying about committing *haram*.

The two most common spaces that fit this description were *Morića Han* (no. 3 on Figure 8.1 below), and *Divan* (no. 7 on Figure 8.1). These were both coffee/tea shops. In both of the spaces the furniture was in the Turkish style, the decorations were colorful and represented multiple traditions of the countries of near East. Both of these coffee shops were in the Ottoman parts of *Baščaršija* where such styles predominate.

An important way in which my pious informants lived Islam was through identification of public spaces as ‘clean or non-polluted,’ including the paths between them. While secular and religious shared spaces were common throughout Sarajevo (and every other city in Bosnia), my pious informants did their best to mitigate this contradiction by selecting specific paths and identifying places as appropriate. Similarly in Turkey, Saktanber observed pious women avoiding similar types of spaces and concluded that women took “the Prophet's thoughts and deeds as an example, setting the boundaries of correct actions in a modern secularized world becomes the most appropriate way to create morally justifiable ways of living” (2002: 165). In this way, for my informants, *halal* spaces excluded cafes that served alcohol, played music of questionable moral message, and where people of questionable moral character spent their time. Questionable moral message and character here refers to spaces that did not promote an Islamic lifestyle and morals. Therefore, music that referenced sexual intercourse, consumption of alcohol, and encouragement and promotion of other sins (according to Islamic law) was not in line with Islamic principles and therefore people who occupied such spaces and were comfortable listening to such music were automatically deemed to have morals that were questionable.

Thus, restricted spatial movement and occupation of *halal* spaces was one of the ways in which my pious informants mediated between their secular environment and Islamic religious duties. The spaces they occupied were a conscious decision, which also constituted a moral statement against those Muslims who occupied spaces they deemed inappropriate. Their rejection of immoral space, as indicated in red (on the map below), was an important part of being a pious Muslim. Conversely, my conventional informants were not concerned with such issues. I found that my conventional informants did not evaluate public spaces in the same manner, meaning that did not judge whether or not they would spend time in a particular coffee shop or bar based on the moral character of the people and music, but rather on the quality of food, drinks, and location. Conventional Muslims also made similar judgments about where to spend their times with moral character being linked to class markers, gendered space (meaning that women would avoid all male bars), age and also along ethnic lines (for example a space that is known to have specific nationalist politics or a place that plays Serbian turbo-folk music). Despite all these judgments on both sides, my conventional informants and I met in spaces considered to be of religious orientation, such as Morića Han and other religiously themed public spaces. Therefore, conventional and pious Muslim women occupied the same spaces, but only in *halal* spaces. This was not surprising because occupying a religiously oriented space did not challenge conventional Muslim identity, while for my pious informants, being in a *haram* space was a contradiction and a sin and a direct challenge to their identity as pious Muslim women.

[illegible]

In particular, for women who were part of the small faith-based network, location was very important. These women, including Belkisa, Badema, Fatima, Hanka, Mina, and Sabira, were very specific about whether or not the space was *halal*. The map below highlights acceptable and unacceptable spaces within old town Sarajevo where my pious informants and I spent the majority of our time socializing. In the map I indicate primary locations occupied by members of my small faith-based network. Red lines indicate regions where alcohol was served, and where my pious informants would not enter. The green space indicates acceptable locations and paths deemed appropriate by my pious informants. Our small faith-based network met primarily around the Bey's Mosque indicated by no. 1 on Figure 8.1, the Emperor's Mosque (no. 6 on Figure 8.1), and sometimes at Baščaršijska Mosque (no. 4 on Figure 8.1). Ironically, across the street from the mosque were several bars and coffee shops that served alcohol and were occupied almost daily by visibly intoxicated men and women (outlined in red)⁶. Thus, though it was important for my pious informants to avoid interaction with people (Serbs, Croats, Jews and Bosniak atheists) who clearly were committing *haram*, it was difficult to stay on a path that avoided such encounters as the two worlds were continuously intersecting.

In order to make sure they avoided *haram* easily encountered in secular spaces, we spent the majority of our time at a coffee shop called Morića Han. Morića Han was particularly important space because of its history and its association with the Islamic lifestyle that many of my informants pursued. In 1939, Young Muslims [*Mladi Muslimani*] was organized and established its headquarters at Morića Han. *Mladi Muslimani* formed as

⁶ Eight significant objects are indicated on the map below. The remaining places are discussed in Chapter 7.

an early attempt to forge a Bosnian Muslim identity and movement. Their mission then, and today, was spiritual, cultural, and material development of Bosniaks. Therefore, it was not surprising that my pious informants felt at home in the inn. In a space such as Morića Han, women felt comfortable and safe to express who they were, and what they believed. Being a pious Muslim in these spaces was accepted and encouraged.

ELIMINATING PHYSICAL CONTACT

A particularly fascinating newly practiced custom among my pious informants was the restriction of physical contact between men and women unrelated by blood or marriage. The most common way in which this custom has come to transpire was through avoiding the practice of handshaking between men and women. General understanding and practice in Islam is that men and women who are not related are not to touch. According to Islamic text, contact between men and women is forbidden, which according to Haddiths was demonstrated through Prophet's practice of not touching women who were not related to him. Furthermore, Haddith Bukhari (the most widely accepted Haddith) states that, "It is better for one of you to be stabbed with a metal needle than to touch a woman who is not Halaal for him" (Haddith Bukhari, verse 486) demonstrating evidence against handshaking in a western sense. The story about Prophet's practice from Haddith, coupled with this statement, has led the Islamic Sharia courts to conclude that contact with women who are unrelated is forbidden. In fact, the face veil and headscarf (or the hijab) were in part created as way of reducing the possibility of physical contact and interaction. Unsurprisingly, avoiding handshaking among new acquaintances or old friends is almost impossible in contemporary Bosnia. Much like the rest of the world, handshakes are not

only an integral part of socio-cultural interactions, but are a necessity in the professional, business, and academic world.

Alema, a 25-year-old single graduate of the University in Bosnian Language and Literature, was one of the informants who started incorporating avoidance of physical contact in her day-to-day practice. Born and raised in Sarajevo in a typical Muslim family, Alema had adopted Islamic lifestyle, dress, and daily practices when she was just a teenager. Although she had not put on the hijab, her clothing choices of long-sleeved shirts and skirts, and minimal exposure of skin and body parts, were part of living her life as a pious Muslim. For Alema, being a pious Muslim was not limited to prayer, modest clothing, and proper observance of Islamic rituals; it extended beyond them. Because of her extensive study of the holy text and Haddiths, Alema concluded that she needed to eliminate physical contact with non-related men as part of her daily practice.

I am now trying to eliminate shaking hands. It's really difficult. Sometimes people tell me I am *zaticana* (uneducated and backward). They immediately assume I am one of those uneducated Muslim women. In fact, it is easier to avoid it with my non-Muslim acquaintances (referring to Serbs and Croats).

Often unconscious and unavoidable, handshakes and other physical contact between men and women permeate many aspects of Bosnia's social and public life. Handshaking for most Bosnians was a deeply embedded habit, and many of my pious informants found it difficult to refrain from practicing it in their daily interactions. The only way a woman could replace shaking hands was by simply saying hello to a man and then initiating conversation. There was no replacement for handshaking within Islamic practice. Commonly, my conventional informants characterized this practice as not shaking hands as backward and primitive behavior (*zaticana*), reserved for Muslim countries. Because of the prejudice associated

with it, Alema found it very difficult to eliminate handshaking in her daily life since the majority of the times she would be told she was meaning she was *zatućana*. Often, people treated her differently and she has struggled to make the transition completely.

Nevertheless, despite difficulties, refusing to shake hands was empowering for Alema, and a way in which she fulfilled her duties as a good Muslim woman.

NEW PRACTICE: SHARIA DATING [ŠERIJATSKO ZABAVLJANJE]

My pious informants were constantly negotiating the demands of the secular and religious life. The problems often arose when they tried to meet the demands of the pious life in a society that did not accommodate their needs. For example while arranged marriages were common and even expected of a good Muslim woman in Muslim-majority countries, the custom was rarely practiced in Bosnia. In order to be able to identify eligible young men, my pious informants had to find creative ways that would fit within Islamic expectations. To address this disconnect between the world in which they lived and the one they pursued, pious Muslim women came up with several new practices that allowed them to participate in both worlds. The two examples of these practices were Sharia dating (*šerijatsko zabavljanje*) and trial marriages (*probni brak*).

Over the year of fieldwork I had heard about both of the concepts and practices, but it was not until I organized a focus group that *šerijatsko zabavljanje* was brought up and discussed. As I mention in Chapter 2 in spring of 2008, while at Nahla, I met a researcher from England working on her PhD in Sociology, which focused on Muslim women in Bosnia. Sanja was a Bosnian Muslim herself and had returned to Sarajevo to collect data on pious Muslim women's experiences, challenges and successes. After our meeting I suggested to

Sanja that we organize a focus group to get at some of the questions both of us were interested in addressing. I called Badema and Belkisa to organize the focus group, to which they replied with excitement. They both called other women in our small faith-based network and brought in two additional women. The following week six women, plus myself and Sanja, met in the courtyard of Bey's mosque.

Six women who participated in this particular focus group included some core members of my faith-based group including Mina, Badema, Belkisa, and Fatima plus two women (Nazila and Amra) who were brought in specifically for the day's topic. Nazila was an older woman that Badema and Mina visited occasionally. She was married and in her 50s. Badema and Mina saw Nazila as a grandmother, an older, wise woman they could talk to about living as a pious Muslim. Amra was a young Turkish student studying at the University and she was a friend with Belkisa. Amra joined us from time to time, but she was not a regular member of our small faith-based network. The focus group was scheduled to take place after one of our regular meetings. My role as an interviewer was very clear during the focus group. Sanja and I set up the first set of questions, starting with introductions, names, age, occupations and where they were from. After we all introduced ourselves we asked following set of questions: What does it mean to be a Muslim woman in Bosnia today? Describe a specific moment and what led you to change your life towards a life of piety? In addition, we asked the women to describe the process of becoming pious, how it came about and what were the primary influences.

To these young women, whose daily lives revolved around Islam, discussing different aspects of proper behavior was a normal part of daily discussions. One could not lead the

life of a pious Muslim without continuously questioning their knowledge and actions. On this particular day, the idea of hypocrisy and living a lie were a central part of the discussion. Several young women, Badema in particular, talked about their lives before accepting Islam as a way of life. Badema mentioned how before her transformation she found herself in a number of morally questionable and problematic situations. She could not reconcile wearing revealing clothing and then covering when she prayed or entered the mosque. The reconciliation was not only difficult, but impossible. Badema, like several other pious informants in the group, chose to adopt all religious duties and expected behaviors. Anything less than a full adoption of Islamic principles felt like a contradiction that the majority of my pious informants said they could not bridge.

From this conversation, our group moved into the discussion of dating. All the young women who participated were unmarried, and the question of dating was important to them. Dating was and remains an uncommon practice in the Middle East, especially among pious Muslims. In majority-Muslim countries throughout the Muslim world parents often arrange marriages and few couples go out together alone. On the other hand, Bosnia's youth commonly practiced public displays of affection, physical intimacy, and pre-marital intercourse. This kind of behavior, of course, was unacceptable according to the Qur'an. Consequently, many pious Muslim women (and men) found themselves in a predicament when it came to romantic relationships.

All of my pious informants strongly believed that marriage (and motherhood) were essential in their pursuit of a life in Islam. They all had general ideas of what kind of a husband they wanted, which focused on a man that was pious, educated and who, while

upholding strict gender roles, did so in a way that was true to Islam and did not take away any of their rights or equality within the home. They all thought that women and men had duties, at home and outside the home that they needed to fulfill. They all agreed there were women's jobs and men's jobs, particularly at home and they wanted their duties to revolve around those (such as cooking, taking care of the children, etc.). These were, of course, not that different from many duties that conventional Muslim women performed as well, but my pious informants stressed the need for the division of labor in the home that was very strict. In particular, they did not want men doing home-making duties, and they wanted little to do with men's duties such as taking care of the car.

My pious informants thought that being a wife and a mother were more important than having a career, but they all wanted the option of having a successful career if they so chose. Being a good mother for them meant that they raised their own children rather than putting them in care of someone else. This was a drastically different perspective than that of their mothers' generation that had easy access to childcare and jobs outside the home. Many of my pious informants believed that if a woman pursued a career and ignored the duties of being a mother and a wife that she would be turning her back on Allah. In this way, they had radically different perspectives than the majority of Muslim women that came of age in communist period. Fundamentally, these women were caught between two worlds. Their mothers' experiences in socialism taught them that they needed to be educated and have careers, while Islam told them they needed to remain inside the home. This was a difficult position many of my pious informants found themselves in and which they could only reconcile by trying to find husbands with similar beliefs. All of my pious

informants agreed that a successful marriage was one in which they would retain equal standing with their husbands, but in which gender roles were assigned and upheld. To them, this meant living an Islamic life (wearing the hijab, praying, observing all Islamic duties), being mothers and wives (and retaining strict gender roles in the home), but also working on their careers if they chose.

In order to reconcile western notions of dating and this rather contradictory set of criteria for a successful marriage, all of these women engaged in *šerijatsko zabavljanje* or what is also commonly referred to as *ašikovanje*. According to the women who participated in the focus group, *šerijatsko zabavljanje* was limited by a specific set of rules. First, the couple would always meet in public spaces. Many couples often met through friends, at mosques, teachings or in places that were acceptable. Second, there would be no touching or intimacy of any kind (i.e., kissing, holding hands, or sexual intercourse). Finally, they were together for the explicit purpose of determining whether they were a good match for marriage⁷. Hence, *šerijatsko zabavljanje* allowed a couple to interact and get to know one another before marriage, but without the risk of engaging in *haram*.

Both Badema and Belkisa, who participated in the focus group, had experience in western-style dating practices considered the norm. However, by their own admission, due to guilt and eventual dissolution of relationships, they both decided that the customary dating, where the promise of marriage was not included and where expectations of sexual intercourse were high, was no longer an option for them. If these young women were to live their lives as pious Muslims, they had to refrain from relationships that led them to

⁷ Marriage is also the purpose of secular dating practices, however, the expectation is stronger among the pious couples.

commit *haram*. Thus, *šerijatsko zabavljanje* was a newly constructed hybrid practice that accommodated the difference between western-type dating and the Islamic practice of nearly no contact before marriage. The way in which these young women reconciled these two fundamentally opposing practices was a significant contribution to the discussion about the changing nature of Islam in present day Bosnia, especially the role women were playing in defining Islam.

By observing this new practice and defying official *Sharia* law, Muslim women, and men, were empowering themselves as active and strong individuals. Scholars have identified such acts of defiance throughout many Muslim countries (Abu-Rabia 2006; Bowen 2010; Dwyer 1999; Gilliat-Ray 2010; Saktanber 2002). In other Muslim contexts women have defied official religious jurisprudence in order to accommodate their needs (Dwyer 1999; Mernissi 1996; Wadud 1999; Wadud 2006). *Šerijatsko zabavljanje*, as practiced by my informants, was an entirely new type of practice unheard of prior to the post-war period (prior to 1995). Because it was a new practice, and not sanctioned by *Islamska Zajednica* (Islamic Community) or any other religious scholarship or jurisprudence, there was no ethnographic or scholarly record of *šerijatsko zabavljanje*. Therefore, in this instance I focus on the information I got about *šerijatsko zabavljanje* as it was experienced and understood by my pious informants.

The following is an excerpt from the focus group's discussion of *šerijatsko zabavljanje* recorded by me:

Alema (27 year old single and college educated and employed): You cannot approach him without others looking at you too. I dated my husband for a year before we were married. I always used an opportunity to go to public places with lots of people so that I wouldn't find myself in a situation where I

would be tempted, in a situation where the devil would tempt us. You have a face to keep, a type of shame. Thank Allah I never was [shamed].

Fatima (then single 25-year old lawyer): We were alone in a few situations. But something in your head tells you it's forbidden. So you cannot and that's it. No conversation, you simply cannot do it. But that was *Sharia* dating. It's towards marriage. It was beautiful. It was a form of friendship.

Mina: *šerijatsko zabavljanje* means that you can sometimes meet in a place where people cannot always see you. But you both know that there cannot be any physical contact. What happens when nobody sees you is important. When you're walking around town, you have to walk separate from each other, without touching, so that everyone can see that you're truly dating in a *Sharia* way.

For Badema, her *šerijatko zabavljanje* started by meeting the young man at work.

They started by going on dates, a process that lasted nearly three months before they decided that marriage is what they both wanted. Within a matter of weeks their wedding was arranged and Badema was married in religious fashion called *šerijatko vjenčanje* (*Sharia* wedding is usually performed by a local imam) and in a civil marriage ceremony. Nearly a year later Badema gave birth to their son and put on *mahrma*, making a very important step towards a life of piety.

Use of *šerijatsko zabavljanje* as a way to compensate for both secular reality, and religious expectations, was a clear example of the ways in which religious practices transform within new cultural and social environments. Furthermore, *šerijatko zabavljanje* demonstrated the extent of women's agency and challenge some aspects of patriarchy within Islam that does not allow for men and women to meet before they marry.

Traditional Islamic practice requires fathers and mothers (but mostly fathers) to decide the best match for their daughter, thereby taking away their rights to choose their partner for life. Most importantly, implementation of *šerijatko zabavljanje* allowed my pious

informants control over their sexuality in a way that circumvented the restricting binds of the Islamic jurisprudence and law. Thus, the creation of *šerijatko zabavljanje* also allowed my pious informants to accommodate expectations of the holy text they felt was their duty, and the social expectations of Bosnia's society by interpreting the Islamic law themselves, through a woman's point of view, and in a non-Middle Eastern context. To live one's life as a pious Muslim was intimately tied to how one interacts and behaves around other people, particularly those of the opposite sex and with no family connection. Therefore, *šerijatsko zabavljanje* served an important service for women for whom meeting and securing a mate was an important part of living their life in piety. Most importantly, sharia dating fulfilled their number one duty of being good wives and hopefully mothers.

Talking about the difficulty of meeting a possible husband, Alema exclaimed that young couples who were *vjernici* had to use Sharia dating. Alema also referred to Sharia dating as *ašikovanje* (derived from a Turkish word meaning dating). The word *ašikovati* was only used by Muslims in Bosnia.

Normal relationship without physical touch and contact. I have heard that there is supposedly no *šerijatsko zabavljanje* in Islam, that there is only marriage. But I have to meet someone. We do not live as they did 300 years ago and where people would say: 'so, you are from this family, she is from that family, now children get married'. That doesn't work today. We cannot have arranged marriages, you have to be able to meet the person on your own. Sharia dating developed during Ottoman time⁸. Young couples would *ašikovali*. They would date in their own way. You could *ašikovat* for months. A girl could *ašikovat* with three different boys until she decided which one she wanted to marry. She would schedule a different date with a different guy. Often they would meet after *džuma* (Friday mid-day prayer) and before *akšam* (evening prayer). During *akšam* hours it was time for *ašikovati*.

⁸ According to Alema Sharia dating and *ašikovati* were the same thing, even though I would argue that they were not. In communist period *ašikovati* (in traditional Ottoman sense) nearly disappeared, but the use of the word remained in use to talk about dating.

My analysis of Sharia dating indicates that in Bosnia it is a reinterpretation of the idea of *ašikovati*. According to Cornelia Sorabji, who examined Islamic revivalism in the immediate period before the break out the war, *ašikovati* involved:

The courtship of young revivalists on the other hand, involved only long walks and conversation, the girl usually wrapped in headscarf and long dress and walking a few paces apart from her young man. (Courtship itself is not an innovation among Bosnia Muslims). Traditionally, urban Muslims engaged in *Ašikovanje*, a type of courtship whereby the young woman sat in the window of her home and conversed with male suitors standing in the street below). These young couples were anxious to marry quickly, partly in order to establish their own families and distance themselves somewhat from parents whose views were more traditional and less radical their own. [Sorabji 1988: 335]

Therefore Sorabji's findings exemplify the move away from tradition [*tradicija*] by my pious informants in regards to dating and married life. The actions of my informants resemble Sorabji's conclusions that women were concerned with their roles as mothers and wives.

Although rare, I identified two women who experienced arranged marriages. As a young woman of nineteen Devla asked her parents to find her a husband and make the arrangements. The family identified a young man with similar pious aspirations who was looking for a young woman to marry. Her parents arranged for a meeting after which they communicated by phone over the next several months. Several months into their long-distance courtship, Devla decided that indeed she did want to marry her parents' choice and the formal request was made to her parents.

We talked on the phone a few times and I saw that we got along. That we have similar thinking and opinions. We decided to meet, and if we did not find each other attractive physically that it would be forgiven. No loss. Really I could not marry someone I wasn't attracted to and then wake up next to them every morning. I am not that kind of a person. My faith doesn't ask that of me either [to marry someone I was not attracted to]. So

when we met we realized that we liked each other. You can't, if there is no chemistry, if you are not attracted to each other then the marriage won't work.⁹ Then after you are married you build a relationship. That is when respect and love are born. That is my opinion at least.

For those women whose interpretations of the Qur'an and the Haddiths were more literal, as in the case of one of my informants, the notion of dating before marriage was problematic. Sabaha, a teacher at Nahla's School of Islam, deliberately held a lesson on *šerijatsko zabavljanje*, stating that what many young Muslims were now practicing was unsanctioned by Sharia law. As such, the practice was in fact sinful and against Sharia law. Sabaha reminded our class that any form of contact before marriage was forbidden and *šerijatsko zabavljanje* was *haram*. Women like Sabaha, who were trained and educated in Islamic law in an Islamic country, believed that *šerijatsko zabavljanje* was a problem. Yet, despite what the teacher said was inappropriate behavior for a good Muslim, *šerijatsko zabavljanje* was an important way in which my pious informants lived Islam. After the class lecture many of my informants discussed the contradiction of what the instructor was saying and what they believed, and though they said that the teacher was most likely correct in her assessment that for them (personally) *šerijatsko zabavljanje* was important. In comparison to Islamic countries in the Middle East and elsewhere, it was incredibly difficult for my pious informants to find a husband within a limited pool of eligible pious Muslim men.

Since Islamic jurisprudence most often excludes women's perspectives, one way in which women have challenged male-centered perspectives has been through practices such

⁹ For many of my pious informants intimacy and sexuality were important, but only within the bounds of marriage. Once a woman was married she was expected to perform satisfactory sexual acts that pleased her husband and vice versa.

as *šerijatsko zabavljanje*. Reinterpreting the Islamic law and creating a brand new practice was a great example of how my pious informants experienced Mahmood's (2005) interpretation of agency. For these young women, living Islam was not just about following rules and regulations outlined by the holy books or religious leadership; rather, living Islam was a transitive process in which they played an active role in determining how one can be a Muslim.

NEW PRACTICE: TRIAL MARRIAGES [*PROBNI BRAK*]

Another important addition to Bosnia's Islamic life was the introduction and practice of trial marriages. On several occasions I heard about trial marriage (*probni brak*) and a similar Bosnian Islamic tradition of *ukrala se* (elopements) from different sources, once from a classmate at Nahla, and once from a colleague. In order to find out more about this practice, I brought it up one evening when our small faith-based network was meeting at Divan hookah and coffee shop in *Stari Grad* (old town Sarajevo). When I brought up the issue, many of the women were at first uncomfortable and did not want to address the subject. Most of them said that it was clearly unacceptable, but that they had heard of men and women who had trial marriages. That evening the women gave me a good definition of trial marriages and we had a discussion about whether or not trial marriages were *halal* or *haram*.

The women agreed that indeed it was not a good idea to attempt trial marriages because many women were left without any assurance that they would remain permanently married. However, generally they agreed that trial marriage usually required the young couple to declare out loud that they are married, and then according to Islamic

law they would indeed be married. For pious Muslims, the women agreed, this meant that physical contact (i.e. sexual intercourse) between the two was permissible since they are officially married in the eyes of Allah. Although most of the women expressed their disapproval of trial marriage, I noticed that few of them did not seem bothered by the discussion. Knowing these women as well as I did during fieldwork, I would venture to say that none of them had direct experience with trial marriages.

Also known as 24-hour marriage or 'practice marriage' throughout the Middle East, to my knowledge trial marriages had not yet been researched or discussed in the case of Bosnia. They are however heavily discussed in Islamic chat rooms and discussion boards. Although the practice was relatively new to Bosnia, it draws its roots from the Middle East. No Islamic school of thought or doctrine permits trial marriages; yet, the practice was widely present. One *Sharia* law states that there are two kinds of marriage, permanent and fixed-time marriages (Esposito 2003). First is that in a fixed-time marriage, a man and a woman enter into a contract to marry each other for a fixed period. When the contract expires, the couple may extend it, otherwise they separate. Muslims are unanimous in the opinion that during the early period of Islam, fixed-time marriage was permissible. The Prophet allowed Muslims to contract fixed-time marriage during some of the journeys when they were away from their spouses and were feeling hardships. Historic documents indicate that during the period of second caliphate (period of 634-644), Islamic courts agreed and stated that fixed-time marriages were banned. The second, and more accepted kind of marriage is a permanent one, and as such is not contested but encouraged. Yet, this does not prevent Muslims from seeking and gaining divorce if the marriage is unsatisfactory.

Most often, Shi'a Muslims practice the tradition of fixed-term or trial marriages. A survey of Iranian trial marriages indicated that young couples unable to marry by the law, due to their age, economic, or social conditions, often entered into trial marriages in order to satisfy their physical needs (Haghighat-Sordellini 2010). Throughout Muslim countries and Islamic scholarship, marriage was the duty of all observant Muslims. Therefore, Muslim families and communities expect men and women to enter into the union, because marriage prevented them from indulging into their carnal needs in a sinful manner.

Halima, one of my informants, exclaimed that *'it's just a trial marriage and a permission to have sex'* while still within the bounds of Islam. What Halima meant was that the marriage part of this agreement was not a serious commitment. That is, no one other than the couple recognizes the marriage, moreover, these types of marriages often lead to sexual intercourse between two self-identified devout Muslims constricted by the bound of Islamic duties. This type of trial marriage has become a subject of jokes among many of my conventional Muslim informants. One of my informants pointed out the irony of moral judgments passed on couples that had physical contact before marriage when the so-called devout Muslims were proclaiming trial marriages in order to do the same. Moreover, according to Amira, trial marriages were creating serious problems by devaluing the institution of marriage. Whether or not a couple was married was irrelevant because the outcome of their actions remained the same.

As there are no other ethnographic accounts of trial marriages in Bosnia, it was difficult to ascertain whether or not trial marriages were a good practice in the lives of women seeking to live their lives as pious Muslims. My pious informants refused to admit

that any of them had ever tried this practice and agreed that it was not appropriate. This suggests that trial marriages were not part of my informants' lives at that time, however, this did not mean that they were not familiar or that they themselves had not engaged this practice. In effect, trial marriages have few benefits for women, and many for men because like the stereotypic conventional style of western-type dating, it leaves women without protection and security.

CONCLUSION

At the time of my research, one could not help but observe a religious revitalization. In the last few years, Bosnians experienced significant political, economic, and religious transformation. A decade and half after the war, Muslim women were in the process of defining a new type of Islamic lifestyle that allowed them to live their lives as pious Muslims. I am confident that any future research conducted in this region will reflect further developments of religious practices and changes in how pious Muslims live Islam. Although being a pious Muslim was difficult within a largely secular and inter-ethnic setting, I predict that if the numbers of pious Muslims increase, it will become easier not only to be a pious Muslim but that practices such as *šerijatsko zabavljanje* will become more common. From this assessment it can be predicted that the number of arranged marriages will grow as well to accommodate the needs of newly devout individuals wanting to live their life according to Islam. Despite challenges thrown at them by the secular world (and traditions such as trial marriage), my pious informants pursued and attempted to achieve complete piety. A sense of self-assurance and empowerment came from knowing that they are on a 'true' path.

Change in religious practice has had a number of individual, and broader social, implications in the lives of my informants. Living in two worlds, one secular, the other religious, was a difficult task in a society where their behavior was seen by some as problematic, backwards, and somehow a threat to the preservation of co-existence and inter-ethnic unity. Yet, my pious informants found ways of reconciling their lives, and their transformations into fully pious lives were possible because they made them possible. Use of both old and new practices helped women live their lives as pious Muslims. However, it was those practices through which they felt most empowered, such as increasing their textual knowledge, identifying good and bad spaces, and wearing modest clothing that had the strongest impact in their lives. Through these practices women were able to live as they wanted to, with autonomy, and that in the most basic sense meant that they had agency.

CHAPTER IX: CONVERSION PROCESSES

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I analyze the process of conversion in the experiences of those women I identify as pious Muslims [*pobožne Muslimanke*]. Conversion is also referred to as a spiritual journey or spiritual transformation (Austin-Broos 2003; Buckser and Glazier 2003; Coleman 2003; Rambo 1993). Following these authors, I use these two terms interchangeably throughout my analysis. In the context of this research, I understand conversion as a process of acquiring and embracing a deeper and closer connection to the basic tenets of Islamic life (Buckser and Glazier 2003). Furthermore, conversion here also refers to a transformative spiritual journey in which a person transitions from a state of being that lacks a religious component in day-to-day activities, to one in which all actions and thoughts are directed towards the pursuit of spiritual development (Rambo 1993) and is a “multifaceted process involving personal, cultural, social, and religious dimensions” (Glazier 2003: 205). In keeping with Rambo’s observation that, “conversion can be triggered by particular events” (Rambo 1993) and is often a protracted process that can take a lifetime, I identify series of experiences and events that led my pious informants into conversion, analyzed through the process chart detailed in Appendix IV and V.

In my interviews, pious informants shared narratives (including symbolic and transformative events) and the processes through which they were trying to become (in their words) a *prava Muslimanka* or *prava vjernica*. Naturally, non-converted women also shared stories of serious, life changing, and traumatic experiences. Yet, these conventional Muslim women did not turn to faith as a source of answers or solace. Thus, although

conventional Muslim women also experienced struggles, none of them mentioned “struggle” as a significant part of their life or something they felt they could not resolve. In the case of my conventional informants, families, co-workers, and peers helped them address any philosophical questions that arose. In this chapter I first discuss the context in which conversion evolved for pious women as well as the process itself. Second, I discuss and analyze their conversion experiences. Third, I analyze how conventional Muslim women coped with struggles at work, home and work.

Of the thirty-four pious Muslim women interviewed all had some elements of the conversion narrative in their stories. Detailed description of the process for each informant is summarized in Appendix IV and V. Even Elma, whose first introduction to a life of Islam was through aerobic classes at Nahla (the women centered faith-based NGO), had a story that fit the parameters of conversion. I focus on ten of the thirty-four whom I believe I have the richest ethnographic detail necessary for this analysis. Nine of the women were part of *moja generacija* (my generation), and four of them belonged to the small faith based network. One of the informants highlighted here was older, but because of the powerful impact of her struggles and troubles I decided to include her experience of conversion, as it made an important contribution to understanding of the process. In order to account for why all women did not experience conversion, I also examined five conventional Muslim women’s life experiences and struggles (see Appendix VI for process chart summarizing all of my conventional informants’ experiences). I chose these five women because their experiences matched those of my pious informants.

The majority of the pious women whose stories I narrate here converted between 1997 and 2007, which was several years after the end of the war and around six years after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Undoubtedly, continued economic devastation and coming of age in a time where one's skills and abilities were measured by their networks and cash flow (in order to pay bribes) had taken a great toll on an entire generation. A 2010 poll by Gallup Balkan Monitor in Bosnia revealed that 42% of youth (ages 15-25) and 24% of those between ages 25 and 39 wanted to leave the country in search of economic opportunity elsewhere¹. Such struggles and frustrations were an important aspect of understanding some of the causes of women's turn to faith. Facing philosophical questions regarding the meaning of life and one's purpose, or experiencing life changing event(s), these women began trying to make sense of their lives and circumstances. Sometimes these answers were found on their own, sometimes at Nahla, or at the small faith-based group. Ultimately, these women were searching for solutions to their problems, and for peace and stability. For many of my pious informants, Nahla and faith-based networks provided additional support in their pursuit for answers. These alternative support systems allowed women to deepen their faith, but also provided them with an alternative for living their lives as Muslims that was very different from the convention. Through research, lectures, school of Islam and conversations with other pious women, my pious informants learned how to be better Muslims.

¹ These numbers have consistently increased between 2006 and 2010.

THE CONTEXT AND PROCESS OF CONVERSION

Bosnia's economic and political situation since the war is most commonly described as "hostile" due to high unemployment rate and little investment. A recorded 18.6% of the population lives under the poverty line, and this, coupled with an unstable political situation, means that many women have insufficient income. In addition, many of the socialist-era institutions and benefits, such as socialized child-care, maternity leave and employment, have been de-funded and discontinued. Ergo, some aspects of civil society have become increasingly important to women. In a trend that is common throughout the post-socialist countries, women turn to NGOs to seek substitutes for the socialist era subsidized programs that are no longer available (see Chapter 7). In addition, many women are going to university in hopes of securing a career. However, staying in school has also become a way of avoiding the pitfalls of trying to find employment in an economy whose unemployment rate was up to 43.1% and financially dependent on their parents. Only young women enrolled full time and who made the priority admission deadline received a small student stipend from the government, which though nominal, was helping women and their families. The rest of the women (and men) who enrolled as part-time students or after the deadline did not receive stipends.

For many women of *moja generacija*, comfort was found in conversion and the pious texts and doctrines. In accepting their situations as God's will, these women were able to find other avenues through which to empower themselves. For pious Muslim women I interviewed Islam, control over their bodies and movement, a more regimented lifestyle, and similar devices, has provided a new way of living that they found empowering. This was

an important part of how women came to understand the self, and their place in the world. Furthermore, through conversion pious Muslim women become part of individual-level reislamization movement.

Through stories of conversion, my pious informants attempted to rewrite biographical and cultural scripts pressed upon them since birth. These scripts were rooted in secular goals, such as career advancement, accumulation of material wealth, acquisition of social and cultural status, marriage, and motherhood. Unlike religious scripts that placed family, motherhood, and marriage at the forefront of an exemplary life, secular scripts focused less on the development of the spiritual self and more on the material and the worldly self. For many of my pious informants, the physical was ephemeral, and therefore in their mind was not a primary concern. My pious informants experienced Islam in a new and profoundly transforming way. Thus, it took creativity and imagination to accommodate Islamic duty and remain true to one's self. In this way, to borrow from Hafez, the coherent self that my pious informants sought was:

described as an autonomous, bounded self in search of expression and realization. The experience of conversion, although a long process, is often collapsed into a definable period. But more important, the transformation from secular to religious self is presented as a complete and coherent process. [Hafez 2011: 92]

Stories of conversion help us better understand Bosnian Muslim women's motivations behind the significant transformations they made in their lives.

For many of my informants the first stage of their conversion was usually triggered by an initial event that drew them into Islam. These initial events generally have two common themes: 1) philosophical questions about one's existence and purpose, and 2) life-

changing events including struggles in personal life and/or introduction to mortality. The second stage of conversion process usually followed two directions including a) individual pursuit of answers in the holy text, or b) attending local lectures and mosques to learn more about how to be a proper Muslim. In the case of my informants, the third step involved joining a formal school or classes such as the ones found at Nahla and a drastic change in their lifestyle. (See Appendix IV for the process chart outlining the ten women I mention in this chapter; and Appendix V for the remaining 24 pious informants). For many of my informants, drastic lifestyle change meant modifying what they wear (i.e., adopting a modest appearance), praying five times a day, and observing all the necessary daily duties prescribed by the holy book (such as the modest clothing, fast, zekat [alms to the poor] and others). In the case of women who joined Nahla, going to formal classes and learning about Islam and how to be pious helped deepen some of their practices, knowledge, and faith that in many cases started before they joined. I met five of the ten women whose stories I narrate here at Nahla. These include Fikreta, Adila, Devla, Fata and Dina. Three others, Belkisa, Badema and Fatima, were part of my faith-based group. Belkisa and Badema were also part of Nahla but I did not meet them while I was conducting research at the organization. Two of the women, Alema and Selma, I met through my other connections and they were not participants in any formal or informal organization (or group). One of the most important steps in their spiritual journey was making the public and visible statement about their lifestyle, i.e., putting on the hijab and/or getting married and becoming a mother. All of my pious informants experienced conversion as a protracted process, and for many this process continues to this day. Accordingly, this chapter is not

about a singular experience, but rather a collection of narratives about the passage from one way of living and being, to a radically different one. The journey, though not always the same for each woman, was nonetheless similar in its goal and purpose. This was not a rigid set of steps, because some people go straight to Nahla and read the holy text for the first time.

Finally, conversion narratives help demonstrate the individual experiences of reislamization in present-day Bosnia. Focusing on narratives was important, because they illustrated how individuals become entangled within a broader complex of historical, geographical, and political conditions and circumstances, which in turn situate and influence individual religious transformative experience. The women I interviewed used conversion narratives to interpret their personal experiences. In the context of my research, conversion narratives connected my informants to the larger religious community. Through the telling and re-telling of stories, my informants were able to give meaning to and sense of their own life story.

PIOUS MUSLIM WOMEN LOOKING FOR AN ANCHOR

Searching for an anchor was the best metaphor in which to describe experiences of my pious informant's process of conversion (Buckser and Glazier 2003). This metaphor refers to my pious informants' search for a stabilizing force within an unfamiliar, frightening, and at times tumultuous sea of life. The anchor also represented finding answers and through these answers fulfillment and peace. While for conventional Muslim women the anchor comes from a variety of actions and solutions, for pious Muslim women this anchor was their faith. Just like the anchor prevents a ship from drifting aimlessly, faith did the same

for my pious informants. For women experiencing spiritual conversion, a sense of feeling lost and without a purpose was prevalent. In this sense, faith stabilized and grounded them. Thus, in the next discussion I first focus on the ways in which faith helped answer questions, and then how those answers helped women find a sense of peace and fulfillment.

PHILOSOPHICAL LIFE QUESTIONS

Many conversions started with a feeling that something was missing in their life. These women felt that there were more questions than answers, and all of them wondered about the meaning of life. In addition, many of my pious informants felt a sense of restlessness and turbulence in their day-to-day existence, a feeling commonly found by psychologists and social scientists during transformative times of one's life (i.e., childhood into adulthood). The first three stories I narrate here all asked the same questions: a) What was the meaning of life? and, b) What is my role and purpose in life?. These three examples demonstrate types of philosophical questions that can lead a person into a life of piety. The following narratives are most representative of Coleman's conclusion that conversion calms the turbulent chaos people experience during transformative periods of their life (Coleman 2003).

FATIMA

Fatima, a twenty-four year old Faculty of Law graduate and single at the time, with long blonde hair and an elongated face with striking features, was one of my closest informants. I met Fatima through another close informant when she was invited to join us during our small-faith based group meetings at Moríca Han (Islamic coffee shop). Over the year, we often spoke of the sacrifice one had to make in order to live in line with Islam. Fatima's

transformation began just a few months before we met in the fall of 2007. Entering her mid-twenties, having finished her university degree, but remaining unmarried was a wake-up call to Fatima, who then began to explore Islamic lifestyle. Her transformation was a direct reaction to feelings of loss and lack of purpose. The story of her life before conversion was like this:

I was too full [zasićena], too satisfied. I had everything in life. But nothing made sense, not college, not money, not going out, and traveling around the world. I would return home at night dead tired, at four-five o'clock in the morning and sleep through the next day. I would wake up and feel really terrible. I saw Bugari (popular imam) and he says, we all reach a certain point [the breaking point]. Without his lecture, I don't know where I would be. When you think about where you will end up [hell] something inside you moves.

Despite the abundance of worldly possessions and physical comforts she enjoyed, Fatima felt empty when she returned home at night. Feeling like she needed to find answers, as well as purpose and a mission that would justify her existence, Fatima became inspired to adopt a pious life. Fatima's transformation began during the month of *Ramazan*. Although she had fasted and observed the holiday from time to time, it was in the fall of 2007 that she made a conscious decision to live fully in Islam.

During *Ramazan* last year, to really start practicing, praying five times a day. Before that I was not following the rules. I would pray, but would miss a *namaz* here and there. I would sleep through the morning prayer. It was like that, on and off, until last year.

Fatima's transformation began with incorporation of the daily prayer alongside extensive reading on the topic of duty for proper Muslims. Like most Bosnian Muslims, Fatima came from what she called a *tradicionalna Muslimanska kuća* (traditional Bosnian Muslim home).

Fatima's transformation started after attending a number of talks by Imam Bugari². His words not only influenced her change, but also gave Fatima's courage to make the transformation. She then expanded her search for knowledge of Islam and the pursuit of living a life as a pious Muslim by taking classes at local mosques, learning how to read Qur'an and become more familiar with haddiths.

I read many books. I wanted to increase my knowledge. I did not go to any formal schools, or classes. I mean I went to *mekteb* as a child, but you have no idea of why you are even going to these classes. Yes you memorize [as a child], but you do not have any special feelings towards Allah and Islam as a lifestyle. I mean I was interested in the events, some of the history, battles, wars, it was all very interesting to me.

Unlike many of my other pious informants, Fatima did not join a formal organization, but rather pursued her piety through personal investigation. Eventually, she joined our small faith-based group, which provided the final boost of support she needed in her quest for meaning and purpose. Commenting on the importance of the types of people you surround yourself with, Fatima strongly believed that being around pious men and women was important for her own spiritual peace.

In this company I really work on developing myself, my *iman* (faith). We talk about *iman*. We go to *namaz* together. The feeling is completely different than with my secular friends. There is real love for Allah. There are no negative interests in the group. Allah is the only thing important. It is completely different. I had friends for almost a decade... we went through a lot together, school, life problems, health issues, problems at home. You all become close through that. You love those people. But, when you meet a

² Imam Sulejman Bugari finished madrassa in Sarajevo before heading to the Faculty of Islamic Studies (also in Sarajevo). Following his third year at the Faculty he transferred to a University in Medina (Saudi Arabia) where he graduated with his Bachelors with special focus in Qur'an. He returned to Bosnia and received the post of an imam in Old Town Sarajevo mosque. He currently leads the Islamic Community program focused on helping young people escape a life of drugs. His theology and ideology are influenced by both Bosnian Islamic tradition, as well as his training in Saudi Arabia. He has published many books and regularly gives speeches domestically and internationally.

pious person, you are tied together by your love for Allah and you feel that person is truly honest, true, they are a good person to be around.

Though slow at times, Islam became the pillar of Fatima's life. She made the full transformation within a year. Upon her marriage in August of 2008, Fatima achieved her goal of wearing *mahr*, marriage, family, and life in line with Islamic principles. When I saw her in January of 2010 Fatima was pregnant and on her way towards her goal of motherhood. In her view, this completed her conversion and she beamed with happiness and satisfaction. Reflecting on Mahmood's definition of agency, Fatima provides a good example of the ways in which submission to life of Islam is an example of agency. Fatima's spiritual transformation was free, deliberate, intentional, and successful, exemplifying an important way in which Muslim women can have agency. In this way, Fatima provided an example not only of agency and empowerment, but demonstrated that conversion, in the lives of my informants, was a process rather than a single event.

FIKRETA

I met Fikreta, single and 28 at the time, while attending Nahla's School of Islam. Fikreta and I often shared coffee during breaks between lectures, and got to know each other very well over the course of eight months. Fikreta told me that when she joined Nahla she felt depressed about her purpose and her life. At that time she had just started her University studies and was living on her own for the first time. Her family was also going through a very difficult time.

I had a phase for about three years in regards to my father. We lived through a really ugly period. After the war (here in Bosnia) there is a lot of hypocrisy. Your true friends come out when you are in trouble. When my father experienced financial problems and lost his company, not one of his friends called and said: How are you? How are your children? Do you need help? He

went to court, he was accused, but he was innocent. He lost his job as a result.

Learning about Nahla from a friend, Fikreta said she was excited to discover a place where she could pull herself out of lethargy and depression. The pressure of starting the University, being on her own for the first time, and having to make decisions that would affect the rest of her life were too much to bear for Fikreta. She was unhappy about how her life was going, and she felt alone in her day-to-day struggles. Through Islam, Fikreta said she found solace, and she was able to cope with family problems that arose several years earlier. For Fikreta, living her life as a pious Muslim was an essential part of existence, her being and her sense of self.

Islam, according to Fikreta, was not just a religion or faith, but a philosophy of living and a path that leads in the right direction. The comfort of knowing the path (through Islam) and the duties expected of her was life-changing, and Fikreta finally found happiness and peace she needed. The first step that Fikreta took was to explore the Islamic text on her own. After a while she joined Nahla and the school of Islam in order to find clearer and better answers.

I started praying regularly at 18. When I came to Sarajevo to start the University, I thought I would finish in 6 years. But problems started around that time. I lost myself. That is why Islam is a lifestyle for me. I started reading a lot about Islam. When I experienced difficulty on my own skin (her family troubles), that's when I woke up. Everything was already there, inside me, I had the basics, but it was then that I began to really live Islam. Islam means a lot to me. Not only as a religion, but also as a philosophy of life. We have to wake up and inspire that need to know more about Islam. The word Islam also means faith, philosophy of life. It is a kind of path that leads you on the true path. From this path I cannot get lost. So it isn't just about praying, but you have to have a connection to Allah in every step you take.

Faith fulfilled Fikreta's needs in ways that work or school could not. Being a good person was not enough. Rather, wanting to be a good person with moral authority rooted in religious doctrine drove her transformation. Furthermore, experiencing struggles of figuring out the sense of self was an essential motivator in Fikreta's transformation. Without Islam, she was without a path. For a young woman at the crossroads into full adulthood, faith provided all the necessary answers she searched for and could not find in secular life that, according to Fikreta, focused on "accumulation of material things and worldly possessions". In this way, Fikreta was a good example of the importance that conversion plays in the lives of my pious informants. Feelings of loss, melancholy, emptiness, and depression arising from the lack of answers commonly plagued women who chose to make this transitional journey.

ADILA

Adila, a thirty-six year old, also felt that there was no direction in her life and had few goals. For a long time Adila pondered the questions of why she was alive and what she was living for. Adila constantly worried if she was going to meet a right man, have a family, and finally start a life that she believed she deserved. Already in her mid-thirties at the time we met, Adila felt that her life had not taken the course it did for many of her generation. She was unmarried, unemployed and had never finished her university education. Her family was strict about gender roles (and particularly her role as a woman) and she felt that her brothers were treated much better than she was. She had a contentious relationship with her family which she felt treated men better than women. She found Nahla through a friend and started coming for fitness classes; however, after a few months she decided to

take classes on Qur'an and finally joined the School of Islam where we met. Adila came from a pious home:

I have prayed since grade four. Islam (and prayer) was commonly practiced where we lived. People expected it [to pray]. But now days it is much more individual. I do it on my own.

Adila's hometown was small, and as such there was an expectation of everyone to behave in the same way in order to fit in. Although Adila had always been exposed to Islam, she admitted she only practiced because it was expected of her. However, after she moved to Sarajevo she stopped practicing. It took another several years before Adila began to seek answers in Islam again, and this time it was because she wanted to and not because of others' expectations. At first Adila began reading holy texts on her own, but after a while she felt she needed more structured guidance. After hearing about Nahla from a friend, Adila joined. When asked about the importance of Nahla in her life, Adila stated:

I am sad when I am not at Nahla. I always learn something new here. When you are out there in the world, you remember what you have learned here. Then you know how to act, what to do and you know that it is the correct thing to do. I try to practice what I have learned here. First of all I gain new knowledge here every day. Not only in the domain of religion, but also in the domain of life. School of Islam is not only about the religious life, but the worldly life and how to maneuver through that world.

At Nahla, Adila found peace, comfort, and a morally acceptable space where she could be at ease. After she started taking classes in Qur'an, she decided to join the School of Islam where she would get formal training in Islamic lifestyle.

Faith calms me. It gives me peace. Faith means peace, calm, stability, strength. It gives you belief in yourself.

Her questions about her purpose, her role in this world and her responsibilities as a woman were discussed, presented, and talked about at length. Though she had some knowledge of

Islam from early childhood, it was not until she attended classes at the organization that she really understood what was expected of her. The transformation, according to Adila, saved her life, as she believed that without Islam she would have engaged in activities that were *haram* (sin) or pursuits that would have eventually killed her.

As soon as she started reading and learning at Nahla's School of Islam Adila's depression and unhappiness diminished. Through her readings of Islamic duty and life, Adila began her quest for piety and living a life as a pious Muslim. Within months of starting to read the Qur'an and coming to classes at Nahla, Adila finally understood what she wanted in life and found "a sense of the meaning of life". Islam helped Adila because it gave her a guide (the Qur'an), a blueprint, and a goal in life. In Islam, Adila found answers to the questions she had, questions about her life purpose.

and then, I understood simply that (you know) those things which are offered to you, those which are not connected to Islam. When you do not think in that direction, you have no goal or sense. Depression. Everything is difficult in life. When you understand what you are living for and why you are doing all this, and for what you are fighting for, and everything is returning to you basically. When you understand that, then you see you are on the right path. [I gained] some sense of life, it makes sense of my life. It helps me. Helps me. [pause] It simply gives me guidance, some sort of path in life. To have, so that I can come if I have a dilemma, this or that, I know where I will get an honest answer [to questions about life and any other problems she may have].

Through faith and practice, Adila solved her problems, dealt with her depression, and found a purpose. For her, Islam empowered her to take charge of her life. Islam provided Adila answers to questions she could not otherwise find in her secular existence. Discovering one's purpose in life, and answers to questions about the meaning of life and our existence, make an important part of discussions about conversion. Purpose was also

inevitably tied to the pursuit of truth, a goal of most people on a spiritual journey. Thus, finding truth, much like purpose, in the lives of my pious informants was an essential part of their self-transformation. The truth had the power to give them individual agency, a purpose, a sense of a life worth living. Bucker observes a similar phenomenon among Protestant converts:

conversion involves a fresh vision of the truth, a realization that the new religion represents a higher understanding of the world. Such conversions echoed in Protestant revival movements and in “born-again” churches, where even longtime members seek to experience a new consciousness of the meaning of their faith. [Buckser and Glazier 2003: 81]

Islam, according to my informants, provided answers to the greater questions in life, that of goal and purpose. While such questions strike all human beings, faith and religious doctrine appear to provide the answers these women so adamantly seek. In the lives of my pious informants, more specifically those searching for answers to the questions of existence, Islam served that purpose. Finding the truth, answers about the purpose of life, and discovering one’s role in it were essential parts of spiritual enlightenment and empowerment. In the absence of an ability to define one’s purpose and duty, and space in the society in which they lived, Islam provided these women with power. For my pious informants, the truth was not found in secular society; it was found in living a life as conscious Muslim and characterized by a detailed set of directions. These directions, laid out in the Qur’an and Haddiths, offered the converts a list of attainable worldly goals that made their eternal purpose easier to attain.

FULFILLMENT AND PEACE

As the previous discussion demonstrates, struggling with the larger life questions was without a doubt one of the largest motivators behind religious conversion. For the next set of narratives by Belkisa, Devla, Badema and Fata, pursuit of religious lifestyle was a response to the search of fulfillment and peace. The stories below demonstrate the outcome of finding answers to philosophical questions.

BELKISA

I met Belkisa (25 year old lawyer) through Fuada (one of my conventional informants). Belkisa told me that she came from a *tradicionalna Muslimanska kuća*. Belkisa's family observed only some holidays and she admitted to having a limited knowledge of Islam from when she attended *mekteb* as a child. However, Belkisa was always aware that she was a Muslim. Belkisa's spiritual transformation began with a need to fill a gap, a hole she felt inside her soul. Only 18 at the time Belkisa felt a strong sense that something was missing in her life and had a strong desire to answer the questions of the meaning of life and her purpose.

Belkisa's parents did not teach her to think that there was a specific course of actions she needed to follow in order to be a good Muslim. Islam was not associated with any rules or regulations in her home. Towards the end of her high school years and just as she was about to enter the University and become an adult, Belkisa realized that she was responsible for her own life and that something was missing: faith and spiritual strength. Soon after, Belkisa stopped accompanying her friends to places she believed were immoral

and outside her comfort zone. Quite simply, Beliksa felt uncomfortable in spaces where sex, alcohol, and drugs were topics of interest and freely discussed.

When you are raised in religion you have a different sense. But we were not raised in faith. We were not raised to pray, to fast. Everything we did was because we wanted to, not because it was ordered. But when I turned 18 I began to realize I was responsible for my own life and then you realize that you are missing a part; that you are missing faith; that you are missing spiritual strength. During that period I felt that I no longer enjoyed going out with friends to places where alcohol was served. I did not feel comfortable in such a setting. I also felt that people were concerned with things that were not that important. I realized that I was missing spiritual food. At the time my sister was telling me about Nahla and the school of Islam. I woke up one day and decided I will go enroll. That is when I started.

Instead of adapting to the surroundings in which she was growing up, Belkisa decided to look elsewhere to find a way of life that felt more significant and that would fulfill her.

Belkisa, turned to Islam in hopes of finding her life's purpose. She followed her sister's advice and joined Nahla, as her sister had a few years earlier in her own quest to learn Islamic ways of living. This step initiated Belkisa's transformation into adulthood and Islam. Belkisa knew that choosing Islam would not only have a strong impact on her daily life, but the eternal life as well.

Belkisa told me she walked home in tears after her first day at Nahla's School of Islam. At Nahla, she was introduced to and spoke with women whose level of spirituality, knowledge of Islam, and practice greatly exceeded her own. In addition to admiring their lives, Belkisa noticed that all the women were happy, positive about life, had a purpose, and were calm. Belkisa rarely encountered such feelings in her day-to-day life, though she desperately sought them. Attending the School of Islam was an important way for Belkisa

to develop her knowledge of Islam as a set of rules, beliefs, and doctrine, knowledge she desperately wanted. Describing the start of this process, Belkisa recounted,

My entire world changed and the everyday feeling, that sense of who I am and what I am supposed to be doing, it was different.

Belkisa declared that faith and Islam brought her back to life. Her transformation had a profound physical and spiritual calming effect, an experience commonly described by religious converts. Often converts describe that prayer helps them not only achieve calm and peace, but lowered their blood pressure, and healed them of other physical ailments associated with emotional turmoil. In this way, once a believer was calmed spiritually, their body was affected too. Her sense of self and her confidence rose as she began to align herself with a group of people who were on a mission to attain piety and remain in God's graces.

Your entire world turns around...I am much more stable since the period I entered the faith more intensively. I am much more stable physically and spiritually, and University went by much easier...Simply, you calm down through faith.

No longer bothered by insignificant things that mattered in earthly life, faith literally changed Belkisa's state of mind. She said she felt intoxicated with Islam, that it made her completely happy.

Faith...directed me on the right path. In such a way so that I didn't commit the sin...when I pray, when I get ready for prayer, I feel wonderful. I feel fulfilled in my soul, I feel happy.

BADEMA

At the time we met, Badema was just entering her mid-twenties and appeared to be at a crossing point in her life. Badema was a world traveler, philanthropist, professional, and

college graduate. As this, Badema was part of a very small minority. According to recent studies most Bosnians Badema's age had not ever left Bosnia, were completing their university degrees with an 8-year average, and faced nearly 45% unemployment. Badema's experiences were unique, as the post-war generation was plagued by lack of employment, stringent visa requirements, and general apathy regarding their futures. Badema's successes and experiences made her a model representative of Bosnia's moderate Muslim women: cosmopolitan, European, and westernized. Yet, Badema felt lost, in turmoil, and without a purpose.

When we met during the month of *Ramazan* in 2007, the most important part of Badema's life was her relationship to Islam. Calling me into her life-changing story, she began her narration,

My dear Emira, my life changed 180 degrees only few months ago. First I wasn't at all in Islam. I did not pray. I dressed very differently: shirts with no sleeves, mini-skirts. I was not in Islam at all. I used to go out, to parties, every weekend. I don't know, personally, I do not drink but at the parties I would. That was exactly a year ago. Somewhere around March/April everything changed 180 degrees. I broke up with my boyfriend at the time. I had to order things up in my life. I felt completely lost. I didn't know what to do with myself.

Despite the nice job, charity work, and busy social life, Badema described her life as purposeless. She was lost and she could not find a word to define herself. This was when Badema turned to Islam. Similar to Fatima and Belkisa, Badema felt that she had to order things in her life. The most important outcome of this transformation was peace. Things began to make sense and Islam provided her with a specific set of rules that she did not feel she had before.

It all began about a year ago, the process [of conversion]. Before then I had wrong ideas about proper behavior. I dated a guy and he was in Islam. Once we broke up I stopped [practicing and observing Islamic duty]. So I would go and pray with him, but it was all for the wrong reasons. Slowly, and as *Ramazan* arrived, I saw that there is so much more to practicing Islam. So I decided to take it on step-by-step. There were no more excuses, I could not miss *namaz* (daily ritual prayer). Then it was difficult to figure out how to get to the mosque from work. What kind of skirt length I should wear. I started to pay attention to all of that. Especially to what I was wearing. It was hard in the beginning, wearing clothes that were loose, I felt un-attractive. I would come home and tell myself, I can't do this. But then, thank Allah for Nahla, and the school of Islam, everything changed. After every class there was a change in me.

Badema viewed her life prior to her transformation as opposite to the way she was now living. The most important change she made was to surround herself with people who were believers, or rather, people for whom faith was a primary part of their life. Once she had made this change, Badema said that her conversations were no longer meaningful and for the first time they revolved around Allah. This new way of being in the world brought depth to her life and her relationships with people. She spoke of her past and present life. The past life, according to Badema, was with people who did not wish to look deeper within themselves and the situations in which they found themselves. Her participation in Nahla sped up her transformation. Badema and I attended the School of Islam for 10 months every Sunday. We drove, took the bus or tram together to the classes. During our drives our conversations were about the next exam, a particular reading we had, or simply things we were thinking about in relation to the classes. She called Nahla the source of knowledge. She spoke of the peace she found during her morning prayer and while reading the Qur'an. These conversations and experiences, Badema said, became her inspiration to

do things better, to be better. Her opinion and view of the world was changed for the better, and she was more positive.

In the beginning I was totally lost; especially when I was in my last relationship. When he left, I felt lost and I lost a sense of self. I mean I always had goals, but after we broke up, I felt without a purpose, I was depressed. It was a catastrophe. So that is when I started learning about Islam. And it calmed me down. Because I was trying to find peace...when you wake up in the morning with a difficulty or a worry, one doesn't know what to do. So that is when I started this phase. First and foremost, I found peace. Everything has more meaning. I didn't have any rules before. Now everything has meaning, rules. I know why I'm doing it.

Badema told me her life changed every Sunday. Classes and socializing at Nahla gave her what she called her "soul food." Her *iman* grew stronger the more she studied and the more she spent time in the company of other (in her words) pious Muslims. On the days she did not make it to the class, or a lecture, or read anything, she felt lost and her *iman* decreased. Having *iman*, to Badema, was directly correlated with her daily practice and belief. If she failed to dedicate at least a moment each day toward advancing her *iman* then it was not surprising that it could decrease. She shared the experience of her close friend, who, when veiled, was experiencing what Badema called an 'outburst of *iman*'. The strength to veil, for her friend, was in a moment of strong *iman*. *Iman* was very important to Badema. It was what defined her relationship with Allah. The understanding of *iman* was something we picked up at the School of Islam. It was during a discussion and a set of lectures on the topic that Badema began to internalize the term. Her transformation was strongly correlated with her *iman*, and without a constant focus on it, she would be unable to make the full transformation. Therefore, the more she focused on *iman*, the more complete her transformation was becoming.

Her transformation to a more devout lifestyle did not go unnoticed by Badema's family. In the beginning, they would question her about praying five times a day. After a while, they left her alone and respected her decision to make this journey. Unlike many of my other informants, Badema's family was more accepting of the changes she was making. Badema's transformation came to completion in August of 2009, when she married in a small ceremony that was sanctioned both by Islam (Sharia wedding) and the state (a civil wedding at the courthouse). During Ramadan 2009, within months of her marriage and two years after she began the process of conversion, Badema embraced *mahr* as a permanent symbol of her piety and devotion to Islamic faith. Her full transformation into Islam was formally complete, but according to Badema, it remains a never-ending process. She was always struggling to keep herself out of situations in which she could be exposed to sin or where she could be tempted to break one of Allah's laws. She was dedicated to a pursuit of piety despite the difficulties and challenges she faced in her day-to-day interactions.

Badema's transformation into a pious Muslim occurred at a very important time in her life, that of transformation into adulthood. While her religious transformation happened for some while they were in their teens, for Badema it was her mid-twenties, a time when psychologically many young adults express a need to realign their behavior and actions. In the case of conventional Muslim women, "the growing pains" of this period were alleviated by friends and families, and their questions were answered through secular channels. For women in this chapter, the transition was not as simple and the challenges of

the secular life took a greater toll on young adults who experienced the process of reislamization.

FATA

Fata's story of conversion highlights the role of depression and some people's inability to deal with difficult times. Saying that she felt out of control and hopeless, Fata embarked on a spiritual journey that she claims saved her life. Fata felt that she was a lost cause and she felt that her life had not taken the course it should have. In addition to feeling left out and singled out at a male dominated program of her University, Fata also had difficulties with the people who were close to her. Fata was depressed and felt lonely as her friends and family members married and started their own families. Remaining single into her late 20s was a great concern for Fata. Marriage, according to Fata, was a duty of all young women. If she remained single into her thirties, it indicated the possibility of remaining alone for the rest of her life.

I have been in Islam on and off. Mostly I observe everything during Ramadan, and then after that it would get lost. I started to pray and learn about Islam at the end of the war with a friend. She taught me how to pray because I did not go to *mekteb*. She taught me the basics. Then after that we went to an Islamic organization (at a local mosque funded by money from Saudi Arabia). They had lots of other courses, mathematics, Bosnian language, English. It was for free and so we went together. We learned *sufara* there (how to read the Qur'an). When I was with her I felt more confident, those were beautiful days.

Fata continued her pursuit of piety after she found Nahla and consequently identified a close group of friends that had the same goals of living their lives as pious Muslims.

Nahla means everything to me. I am a loner, closed off. I had a difficult time before I became a member and this organization saved my life. I was a lost cause. At school it was all men, I didn't have many friends who were girls. I

had one friend, but we had a fight, so I lost her. My cousin got married. But here at Nahla I made new friends. Things don't seem so scary anymore.

Her elders were pressuring her to finish college, to get married, to do the worldly things that they had already done by the time they were her age; yet Fata was unable to meet their expectations. As she began to turn to faith to address her struggles with these expectations, she faced another set of issues. Her family criticized her growing commitment to Islam and many family members publicly insulted her dedication to *vjera* (faith). Thus, Fata's depression was circular. Once she began addressing family expectations by becoming pious, in return she faced criticism because she addressed them through faith. The external pressure generated tremendous stress and frustration in her, and she felt the need to escape somewhere safe. The cause of many of her problems stemmed from the feeling that she needed to hide her faith and practice from those closest to her. Fata's first steps into Islam were reading and observing daily duties, which she did on her own without anybody else's influence. This eventually moved into a search for more systematic knowledge of Islam as a set of beliefs and practices at Nahla where we met.

My mother and I pray together, but the men don't believe anything. They say this is primitive. They tell us to move away from the window so that neighbors wouldn't see us pray, even though all of our neighbors are Muslim. They still hold that opinion from before the war. I can't even explain to my brother why this is important to me. I have two brothers and it is impossible to communicate. I can't explain to them as much as I try.

Without *vjera*, Fata explained she would have remained lost, traumatized, and discouraged.

Fata's conversion was a way for her to deal with disappointments, to find peace and purpose, and, most important, to find the support she needed in order to overcome the pressures placed upon her by her family.

For pious Muslim women in this group, conversion was about answering larger life questions that arise at the age when a person leaves childhood into adulthood. For these women the questions were harder to answer and they turned to faith. Many of them were psychologically more vulnerable than their conventional Muslim counterparts. Their search for answers was not fulfilled by what the secular life had to offer. The secular world, in the lives of these informants was corrupt, immoral and full of temptations that would provide little for them in terms of leading a fulfilling life. Pious life on the other hand provided clear-cut answers, a roadmap by which to live one's life. There were no gray areas if one entered life of a pious Muslim and the transformation into adulthood was smoother.

The use of transformation language was an important point of discussion here. Making the passage, or crossing into a new state of being, was a significant unifying aspect of all the narratives of transformation. Much like the experience of Belkisa, Fata, Fikreta and other informants, the transition provided them with a new sense of identity. When Belkisa said that she now belonged to something bigger than herself, she was expressing this new form of relatedness to those around her. Through her conversion, Belkisa actively created a new identity, a new self that was defined by faith. Belonging to a pious group also defined these women and this new relatedness had both negative and positive outcomes. In many cases, the positive effects on individual mental health were immeasurable. In addition, a new sense of belonging and purpose in life came to define these women's lives in ways they had never experienced before. Despite positive effects of conversion, there are also a few negative outcomes. The negative outcomes are most often encountered in

rejection of family members and insults, jokes and discrimination many pious Muslim faced daily.

LIFE CHANGING EVENTS

Sometimes the story of conversion was more than just an example of a person expressing philosophical concerns and questions. At times, conversion was triggered by an event or series of events that bring Islam at the forefront and as a solution. It is widely documented that fear of death (in case of health concerns), loss of a loved one, trauma and a broken heart are common motivators for religious conversion (Austin-Broos 2003; Buckser and Glazier 2003). In this section, I narrate the stories and experiences of three women: Selma, Dina and Alema. These three stories recount how life - changing events inspire spiritual transformation and pursuit of living one's life as a pious Muslim.

DEVLA

I start my discussion of life changing events with a story of a broken heart. The transformation of Devla a young woman I met at Nahla, began after a man she was engaged to left her. Her disappointment with the failed relationship was an example of typical problems that come up during the transition from childhood to adulthood and the societal pressure to marry. Devla was broken hearted after the young man she was in love with and with whom she believed she would spend the rest of her life decided to leave. One of the reasons they split up, Devla said, was his pressure on her to have extra-marital relations, an act that Devla found morally wrong. The only activity that brought her peace and calm during these stressful days was prayer that she had learned from a close friend who was pursuing a life of piety

Devla's first step in living as a pious Muslim was to begin observing all the rules prescribed by Qur'an and Haddiths, including a strict observance of daily duties (most notably praying five times a day). This transformation was gradual and took around two years. During her transformation Devla faced a number of questions, including: How to handle this new lifestyle? Could she handle all the responsibilities and obligations that came with the new lifestyle? The process culminated in the ritual placing of *mahrma*. For many of my pious informants, donning *mahrma* was the final step in embracing life as a pious Muslim. According to Devla, remaining without *mahrma* was ultimately hypocritical. Devla's spiritual transformation was completely her own, the cumulative result of prayer and personal reflection. This transformation was not without its consequences, however. Like many pious Muslim women, she experienced ridicule and rejection from friends and family.

However, Devla was not completely alone in her transformation. She was a witness and present for a similar transformation by her close friend. Upon seeing her friend make the full transformation, culminating in *mahrma*, Devla was disappointed by her own lack of strength to do the same. Reinvigorated by her friend's transformation, Devla decided to don the headscarf. Aware of the risks and problems that would arise from this choice, Devla proceeded with her spiritual pursuit. For Devla, any rejection and mistreatment she could possibly experience in this 'earthly' life would be insignificant in comparison to the wrath she believed awaited her in next life. Her soul, if not in line with Islamic principles, would burn for eternity. Devla knew her mother would disapprove, but her father always said "do whatever you think is best." Devla wanted to make her parents happy, but also do

what was expected of her. Having her father's approval allowed Devla to pursue her goals of living a life as a proper devout and pious Muslim woman. Despite the sacrifices and disapproval of her mother, for Devla peace and fulfillment could only be found in faith and living a life as a pious Muslim. Describing her path, Devla declared,

Since I was little, I was raised traditionally. We prayed during *Ramazan*. But otherwise, we didn't pray. When I started college, it was internal sadness after an unsuccessful relationship, I found...through *Ramazan*, I found comfort in faith. I saw that it's good for me. It made me feel peace. It was difficult for me, when I was in love, blinded in a young man I met before I started college. Since it was my first love, it was really difficult for me to deal. I found peace in prayer. If a person doesn't have peace, they don't have stability. If they are not honest with themselves then they don't have anything. So I started to pray during *Ramazan*. After *Ramazan* I continued. I didn't understand much of what I was reading in the Qur'an but I still found comfort. It felt good and calm. [That all started when I was 19 years old.]

Devla considered every possible situation that would arise from her choice to live her life as a pious Muslim. She knew that her mother would be unhappy, however, Devla also knew that with time her mother would accept her choice. Worried about judgment by friends who were not as deeply in faith as she was, Devla considered which of her friends would accept her. The final push towards making her choice to live as a pious Muslim arrived in the month of *Ramazan*. It was during this the holy month that Devla decided to make the final transformation and fully enter Islam. Thus, at the end of the month of fast, Devla completed her religious conversion and put on the hijab.

Nearly all the conversion stories I recorded faced problems and complications. In a society recovering from war and ethnic cleansing, religion has come to occupy a prominent space in the social, economic, and political life of Bosnia. Despite Islam's presence on the streets (and on the bodies of those living their lives as pious Muslims), television, and

political discussions, nearly all forms of devout interpretations of Islam were seen as a threat to the society as a whole. This was why Devla could not make her transformation sooner and why she had to consider many questions before she made a public statement about what she believed and how she lived. Through the entire process, however, Devla became stronger in her conviction to veil. The internal battle she experienced was nothing to the battle Devla felt would await her in the next life if she did not abide by Allah's wishes. In this way, the promise of the afterlife outweighed the potential benefits of remaining within *tradicija*. This was not a bargain Devla was willing to make.

SELMA

Tumultuous and stressful periods often preceded spiritual journeys and conversions. Thus, for many individuals, conversion becomes a way to find peace and solace. Selma, 54 years old, was born and raised in Odžak, but moved to Sarajevo after the end of the war. As a young woman, Selma completed high school and started college, but her husband's alcoholism prevented her from finishing. However, since she was raised by illiterate parents who did not value education, nobody encouraged her academic pursuits. Her family's only expectations were that she would finish her primary education, get married, and move out. Selma's greatest regret was not completing her college education, and this was in part why in her sixties, she was adamant about educating herself.

When the war broke out, Selma lived in Semizovac, a small town about 13 kilometers from Sarajevo. Trapped in Semizovac when Serbian forces occupied her town, Selma became a prisoner in her own town, and her own home. Individuals and families who remained in their houses when Serb forces invaded often became victims of grave

human rights abuses. Selma's experiences during the war were horrific: she survived organized rape camps. Because she was a Muslim, Selma was taken out of her home and sent to a local gym where soldiers were stationed. She was held captive and raped on countless occasions, sometimes several times a day, and by multiple men. With no means of escaping, Selma was a constant target for drunken soldiers who would take her out of her own home to commit violence on her³. After six months of sexual and other torture Selma was released, and she went in search of her son, who was a soldier in the Bosnian Muslim forces. She found him hospitalized after he had lost his leg to a Serb grenade. Her son was also recovering from months of torture and trauma endured in Serb captivity. Due to the severity of his injuries, her son was transferred to Saudi Arabia for rehabilitation in 1993. Selma accompanied him as his only family member, his father having died few years before the war.

Selma became pious in Saudi Arabia. At the time, she said that she was in the process of coming to terms with the physical and emotional reality of the long-term violent trauma that she and her son had sustained. Through Islam Selma made peace with everything that happened to her during the war. Selma first learned how to pray from another Arab woman staying at the hospital. Through her she learned the basics of prayer and memorized all the necessary steps. She then began to learn Arabic and read the Qur'an. The following year Selma began wearing the hijab permanently, not only because it was the law in the country where she was living, but because she felt that it was her duty to wear one. By the second year in Saudi Arabia, Selma had attended the Hajj. Following the

³ What Selma endured has been described as an act of ethnic cleansing during the war in Bosnia. Rape was used a political and nationalist tool of subjugating Muslim women, and men.

pilgrimage to Mecca Selma felt that she had fully made the transition into a life of a pious Muslim woman. Over the four years she lived in Saudi Arabia, Selma dedicated her time and energy toward learning about Islam, the Qur'an, and being a good Muslim. She said that through prayer, she found peace, calm, and a purpose in life that she felt had been lost during the war.

Upon their return to Bosnia, Selma and her son moved into an apartment that had once belonged to a Serb family. In explaining the irony of what she now called her home, Selma told me:

Allah's ways are unknown and unknown. We don't know his path for us. We can try and plan out our lives, but we will fail because we don't know what Allah's path is for us.

Selma's story of significant events in her life teemed with pain and struggle. Following her return to Bosnia in 1997 her son committed suicide by jumping off their balcony. After everything they had endured together, Selma was left alone. However, through her faith she believed that Allah would take care of her and that all her earthly struggles were going to earn her a place in heaven. Selma needed to believe this, or as she told me, she would also have jumped off the balcony. After her son died, Selma taught herself how to read and write in Arabic through various books brought to her by friends and family. She rarely left her home and did so only when she visited her family. During our interview, Selma brought out notebooks filled with Arabic writing and copies of entire excerpts from the holy Book and the Haddiths. She was proud of what she had accomplished in her studies. Most importantly, she reported that she lived her life as Allah wanted her to, and that she was

deeply committed to being a good Muslim. Describing the start of her deep commitment and pursuit of piety, Selma exclaimed:

Three years go. This is the fourth. It was a desire that I had since I left Saudi Arabia. That was when I first started to read the Qur'an. I started learning letters, one by one. A line here, a line there. When I got something it was like I was one of the young men watching soccer games, I would shout from happiness. Really, back then I only knew how to pray. I didn't know anything else. Despite the stress, I learned. One by one. I learned all the verses.

Selma said that Bosnians were never good at being Muslim. She felt that true Muslims were those who practiced and kept their faith during the most difficult circumstances, like she did. Selma's story demonstrated the validity of scholarly arguments claiming that conversion often comes from tumultuous events.. Selma found peace and solace in her daily duties as a Muslim. What she had feared most had already happened and was therefore behind her. Now, she looked forward to a place where only love and peace existed. Her faith was that place.

Faith in that which is real, faith in the existence of Allah and his world...it keeps you and Allah gives you strength...I have cried all the tears. Nothing comes out of those tears. But Allah gives you answers, it gives you hope.

ALEMA

Alema, 25 years old when we met, was a graduate of the University of Sarajevo with a degree in Bosnian literature. Unlike the majority of my informants, Alema's journey in Islam started when she was a young child. She was raised by her grandmother, who regularly observed Islamic rites and rituals. Raised in a traditional Muslim family during the communist period, she did not, however, begin to practice and live as a pious Muslim until she was 17 years old.

I started praying since I've known about myself. Because, because my *nana* (grandmother) was a believer, our nana raised us, we were not in kindergarten. And then, in time of communism my (parents) were not in the party but were simply Muslims, they kept to their faith, Ramadan and all. Really intensive, so that I started praying all five times. I was on and off for a while, then you skip a whole month, then you don't pray, then you only pray at Ramadan. Finally I started in Junior year of high school, so at 17 years old.

So, at seventeen Alema began praying five times a day, observing the fast, wearing modest clothing, and refraining from *haram*. Explaining her early draw to Islam, Alema elaborated,

I started with my grandmother, but then with mother. Towards the end of the war [the ceasefire] we started going to *mekteb* (Islamic-type Sunday school). Since I live in Vratnik, it is an Islamic neighborhood so I had the luck. Maybe if I lived in Dobrinja or somewhere else I wouldn't know anything. The location has a lot of influence on it. So, I went to *mekteb*. After *mekteb* we moved to Dobrinja, and down there was no *mekteb* or anything. There was one woman from Qatar. My mother asked her to help me learn Qur'an. So I started with her. After that I continued in *Mesdžid*.

Even though she had known about Islam her whole life, Alema did not make the choice to fully commit to life until after a surgery. Alema had to have three surgeries, which made her wonder whether or not she was going to live, and if she did indeed live, what that life should look like.

I always knew about faith, but I was not very active in it. We would pray during *Ramazan*, we knew and observed the Kurban Bajram. But, when I was 17, (4-5 years ago) I had an incident in my family. Then I broke a bone that required 3 surgeries, and all three surgeries it was a matter of life and death. That situation brought me to faith. It was hitting me from all side, my mother was sick, my sister was away at college and the other one working. That is when I turned to faith. That is when I found out that a person must rely on Allah because he is the only one that can save us.

For Alema it was a time of tragedy, stress, change and struggle. The surgery and recovery was what first led Alema into Islam. She made this transition on her own. With too much time on her hands while in the hospital questions arose, and to find the answers she began

to read the Qur'an. Following examination of holy texts, Alema began to spend time with other women in faith. She also started to attend religious lectures and classes around the city. Eventually, she adopted all aspects of living a life as a pious Muslim. However, at the time of our interview, she was still in the process of deciding whether or not to put on the hijab. Although she felt that it was her duty to wear it, she did not yet feel that she had the strength to carry what she said was the burden of hijab.

DINA

Dina's story is my last example of how life-changing events can start a person on the process of conversion. When she was only 21 years old, Dina's father died. Although she had already been depressed, following his death, Dina fell into deeper depression characterized by a feeling of being lost and without a purpose. Soon after her father died, Dina made a decision to explore "*živjeti u Islamu*" (living in Islam). Although she admits that she had played with the idea of Islam during her teenage years, it was until her father's death that she made a conscious decision to change her life. She referred to the period after her father's death as a time without *iman*. Feeling that her iman was failing her, Dina turned to Islam as a way of addressing larger questions about how she should live her life.

In the period before the war, 1989, 1991, right before the war. I can't remember a Ramadan before then. The war changed the situation. I was in seventh grade. Through some of my friends I learned about Islam and Allah. My parents did not practice Islam. Then in 1995 I began, but only to stop again between 1997 and 1999. That is something other believers understand, my iman fell. During this period [1997-1999] I did not pray, but I believed in Allah. I prayed for Allah to forgive me and I promised I would return to daily prayer. In that period I did not feel I had the opportunity to do that, I was lost. My father died. Then in 2000 [at the age of 21] I started to pray regularly.

At the time of our meeting, Dina had not yet started to wear the hijab. She said that she was waiting until she was a little older. Ever since her father died, Dina felt that she had to be careful with how she approached the life of a Muslim out of respect for her mother. Dina said that to put on the hijab would be too much of a change for her mother who was still grieving the loss of her father. In some way, Dina did not want her mother to feel as if she had lost her too. At the time of our meeting, she was in a state of limbo and waiting for an appropriate time to make her final transformation. Explaining her hope to put on the hijab, Dina explained,

When you wear the headscarf, you are unburdened from physical presence in front of other people and you can concentrate. Because you cannot scramble anyone's brains with a headscarf that is a happy color or some interesting combination. You can look really nice. But the fact is that women, from hair, to looks, to the body shape...you draw attention and when you notice you draw attention, then you move your own attention away from what you should be focused on. When you are under the headscarf, you feel better and you are more concentrated.

The first step Dina made into a life of a pious Muslim was by familiarizing herself with duties and expectations of all Muslims by reading the Qur'an (translated into Bosnian) and the Haddiths. Then, she began spending time with other young people of similar conviction, thereby finding a space where she could nurture her new-found lifestyle. Though she did not join a formal organization like many other women, Dina did find spiritual guidance at local mosques and group meetings of Young Muslims (political organization with focus on addressing the situation and conditions of Muslim population, see Chapter IV for further discussion). When Dina and I met in July 2008, all that remained for her to make the complete transition into fully conscious life as a Muslim was the hijab. She wanted to complete her education and to be financially secure first. For Dina, delaying

the hijab was a lesser sin than disobeying her mother, who was against her doing so. This was an important element in stories of transformation into life of Islam, because parents are the most important authority to Muslims, aside from Allah. If one disrespects her parents, one also disrespects Allah. The hijab was not an obligation and, therefore, could be interpreted in a variety of ways. However, respect for parents was an unquestionable duty and part of being a pious Muslim.

As pious and as women, my pious informants were marginalized twice over. The marginal position they occupied in Bosnia's society can be best described as the periphery. In this case, periphery refers to a hybrid space of secular and religious, post-war and post-communist, still unidentified and constantly shifting space, which often yielded new possibilities for social and cultural organization. The periphery became a space where pious Muslim women were able to relate their experiences in a way that provided them with a voice and a receptive audience. However, peripheries are inherently dynamic and unstable, and, therefore, it is important to note that women's experiences can be both positive and negative. Therefore, this peripheral experience was not only empowering, but it also helped women build stronger alliances and support networks that were essential in living fulfilling lives. This was best exemplified in the growing popularity of Nahla and small faith-based networks I encountered.

CONVENTIONAL MUSLIM WOMEN

In order to account for why all women do not experience spiritual conversion, I look at five conventional Muslim women who faced similar questions and issues as my pious informants. Conventional Muslim women's experience struggles at work, school and dating

just as much as do pious Muslim women. However, my conventional informants found other ways in which solve these obstacles. These women addressed their problems by forming networks or by dating men outside their own religious tradition. The five women whose stories I highlight here are Zlata, Ismeta, Fuada, Sabiha and Mirsada. Their varied life experiences allow for a good comparison to the experiences of ten pious women I single out earlier.

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Seeing that the majority of my informants were single women in their twenties, talk of marriage and dating was a common topic. For conventional and pious women I interviewed, much of their energy was spent in finding a mate. Sabiha a 24-year old student of computers at the University and an English teacher, a conventional Muslim, was adamant about faith as a personal and private experience. Only a year earlier she had a tumor removed from her stomach and was now doing much better. During her illness and subsequent recovery, Sabiha did not turn to faith as some of my pious informants. Instead she found a partner. In discussing her future husband and some reservations she had about their union, Sabiha said,

I always said I could never marry someone who was not Muslim. I thought everyone was ignorant. I was worried about how we would raise our children, what kinds of names I would give them. What about circumcision? Will we celebrate Christmas or Ramazan. Will he respect me? Then I met my current boyfriend. He told me right away "I am from a mixed marriage. If you are bothered by that you don't have to date me." And then slowly through conversation we continued to date. I realized that his mixed background will not affect my life as a Muslim. I like how his parents get along. I like how his father treats his mother. That is what I want.

Unsatisfied with the kind of marriage that her parents had and wanting to avoid a similar experience, Sabiha found a man that she felt would allow her to be and live as she wanted to.

I look at a classical Muslim marriage, where the father is a classic Bosnian and requires his wife to be a slave, and he is the head of the house. But in actuality the woman takes care of everything. I am bothered by this. I am not some kind of feminist, but I want those rights. I think that as a woman I should make lunch, to make my husband happy, but he should be able to vacuum the house for example. That is my logic. My father is like that [traditional Bosnian man]. He comes home, sits down, without a word of thanks, my mother serve him. When he is done coffee is served and then he lies down. If there is no lunch he freaks out. He tells my mom "I want to shower". She gets up, prepares his clothes, washes his back. She bathes him. Because that is supposedly a woman's job. That's one thing. But she also has to cook, clean, he wouldn't lift a finger. My mother is a crazy woman. I don't know why she does it all. She gets up at 5 am to prepare his breakfast and then she would go to work. She would go to bed at midnight, all in service of her husband. She forgot about herself, she forgot about her children. I don't want that kind of life.

Sabiha's frustration in how men treat their wives was one of the reasons why she looked for a partner that would give her a different kind of life. The frustration she felt at home as to how her mother was treated and what was expected of her as a woman were not what she wanted. Sabiha got around this. She found, and eventually married, a man that would give her the kind of life she wanted. With a possibility of her illness always returning, she knew that being in a solid, loving, relationship even though he was not a Muslim was going to provide her comfort and peace she needed. Her fiancée was a half-Muslim, however, and that was an important part of Sabiha's acceptance of him. She felt that non-fully Muslim men treated their wives better.

LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

Many women, both conventional and pious, experienced the loss of a loved one. Although many men and women died during the war, the hardest losses were those that happened in peacetime. Mirsada, a 65-year-old widow said she had faced many struggles in her life. She lost her husband soon after the war and was left to take care of her daughter. A seamstress by trade, Mirsada was then a cook at Medica Zenica. Talking about her work and career

Mirsada said:

I have to work. My child is at the university and I have to work until she is done. My husband was 6 years older than me. I was married at 19 years old and came to Zenica.

Despite having lost her husband and means of support, Mirsada persevered. She found and fought for a place for herself. She knew that she would have to work for many years to come but the success of her child was what kept her going. Moreover, working at Medica was a place where she felt comfortable and accepted and she wanted to be part of their mission. Medica offered her a means of survival and a way for her to give back to other women.

Similarly, Ismeta lost her father when she was very young, leaving her mother to raise her and her brother on her own. She remembers that before he died, her father was beginning to explore and devote himself to Islam. He started turning to faith and his last wish was to go to hajj. However he died before he was able to attend the pilgrimage. At the time we met, her mother also started to live as a pious Muslim. Ismeta did not have any problems with her mother's choices, but she was adamant that at this point in her life Islam was not for her. Despite relative exposure to Islam, Ismeta considered herself a normal

Bosnian Muslim. She thought that perhaps she would later turn to Islam (when she was in her thirties), but for now, she felt fulfilled and happy in her school and volunteer work.

STRUGGLES IN WORKPLACE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Zlata, a 47 year old professor at the University, lived in Saudi Arabia for several years before returning to Bosnia following the end of the war. Zlata had an interesting life story that involved living in Saudi Arabia. I recount Zlata's story in Chapter 6 in greater detail, but here I wanted to give examples of some of the ways in which she dealt with problems similar to those faced by my pious informants. While in Saudi Arabia Zlata put on the hijab because it was the law. However upon her return to Sarajevo, Zlata chose to take off the hijab and return to her previous life.

When we returned to Sarajevo we found ourselves in a difficult political situation. For a while I couldn't take off the hijab because I was used to it, it became a part of me. I accepted it. However, when we got back to Bosnia the hijab was a political statement, because a person is politically identified through the hijab. I wasn't and I didn't want to be part of that politics. I didn't want anyone to put me in that group. My mother in law said "please don't go out with the hijab". I didn't take the hijab off to please her, especially because I think too many mothers-in-law ask too much. But I understand that it was a political identification. I didn't want to be inside that debate. However, now I know that if I had kept that hijab things would have been much easier for me. Mostly because people would treat me differently at work.⁴ Without the hijab you are just a woman, and as a woman you have to work in a workplace that is dominated by chauvinism. Especially in the post-war period. There is real male chauvinism, constant pushing of women, men trying to be better than us. The competition is not about trying to be better, but because they want to put you in your place as a woman. As a woman it is my duty to do this, or that. They treat you any way they want. There is a clear power differential. I am a male you cannot do anything to me. If I had the hijab they would have never behaved that way.

⁴ Here she refers to the possibility of receiving faster advancement at work if she had kept the headscarf. In years following the end of the war many men and women who publicly identified as pious Muslims got advanced positions at their respective jobs. Zlata also thought that women who wore the headscarf were harassed less in public. However, her opinion is different from many of my informants who wore the headscarf personally and permanently.

In 95% of the cases I found myself in these situations where they pushed my boundaries, they tested me. But I also know that for women in Islam it isn't that easy either. But it is easier for women in United States or Germany, a lot easier than here in Bosnia. Here they categorize you as a woman and that is all you are.

Zlata understood the struggles in both worlds, she knew them first hand. However, she found herself in the secular world. Even though she believed that life as a pious Muslim was the correct way to be, Zlata chose to present herself as a modern and educated Muslim woman.

Similarly, Ismeta was an average college student who faced similar problems in school as many of her peers. Yet she rose about those issues, and one way in which she did this was through her volunteer work at Medica. Talking about her experiences in school Ismeta said,

In any society and especially here in Bosnia. There are many instances in which women are treated differently than men, I see some of it at the university. I mean you finally see women in politics, perhaps in small numbers, but we are making some inroads. I think it will take some time before the situation gets better. We have to fight for our rights.

In order to deal with discrimination she witnessed, Ismeta went to Medica to learn and educate herself. She recalled the meaning and importance of Medica to her, saying,

I like the feeling here, it is very relaxed, it is nice working with only women. I like that it is an organization of women, for women. There is so much violence against women and children in our society. Medica provides a safe place. Medica helps enlighten people. They are always waking up people about these issues. Twenty years ago it was ok to hit your wife. Now, it is not like that. It will take a long time to change these beliefs. People need to be educated and women have to be aware of their rights and they shouldn't allow for others to mistreat them. I also work at a Swedish humanitarian organization, I teach English classes. I want to be a teacher. But it is hard, you have to have good connections. So I am trying to get some experience.

Ismeta was thinking long-term about how she was going to deal with problems associated with lack of opportunity in her future profession by finding volunteer work. She knew that without strong connections she would probably never secure a teaching job at a high school. She dealt with these struggles by joining an organization and gaining experience. She knew that this would pay off in the long run. Ismeta was correct in this assumption because it was through her connections at Medica that she secured a scholarship and admission to a university outside Bosnia for her graduate work.

Unlike Ismeta and Zlata, Fuada was still struggling to finish her university degree. In 2007 she was already in her ninth year at the university. This was of course in part due to difficulties she faced with professors who had high expectations, usually met by monetary donations. Discussing her struggles at the university, Fuada said,

Unfortunately I am not done yet with my college degree. I am at the Faculty of Philosophy in Bosnian literature. Before that I was at Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian Language and Literature department. But then I transferred. But I still have lots to go. I just want to finish. But I have some problems with some professors.

Fuada dealt with the struggles at school by securing a solid job. She worked for a foreign embassy and though she was a full time employee she did not receive any benefits. Her job was nevertheless a good opportunity and she was very well respected and her opportunities were not tinged on the completion of her degree. Although she faced a number of struggles at school, Fuada dealt with it by building a reputation and strong networks within the foreign community that secured her professional success.

CONCLUSION

Gabriele Marranci suggests that instead of essentializing Muslims as people whose religion induces them to “believe, behave, act, think, argue and develop their identity as Muslims despite their disparate heritages, ethnicities, nationalities, experiences, gender, sexual orientations and, last but not least, ‘mind’” (Marranci 2008: 6), we should write ethnographies about how Islam makes people feel and the emotions it stirs in them. This was only one of the reasons I chose to spend much of this chapter on the feelings and emotions of my pious informants. Conversion narratives were a great way to understand some of the motivations and situations that push women in the direction of piety because they allowed an insights into what it was like to transform, or make the passage from one state of being to a completely different one. More importantly, stories of conversion provided more than just an insight into living Islam: they exposed processes that transpire when a person makes a journey from a secular state of being to a pious one. On the other hand, including stories of conventional women allowed me a chance to explore some of the reasons why only some women chose to live their lives as pious Muslims. Through the stories of how they dealt with difficult and traumatic experiences, my conventional informants demonstrated that many women were able to solve problems without having to turn to faith.

However, my pious informants’ experiences demonstrate that conversion processes can provide women with the sense of self or who they are. The quest for a life of piety forever changed these women’s personal and professional relationships, as the practices incorporated during conversion effectively disrupted, reorganized, and redefined their

position and status within family and society. As this chapter demonstrates, converted womens' conception of their identity was dependent upon and defined by this transformation. As Austin-Broos writes, "conversion is a type of passage that negotiates a place in the world" (Austin-Broos 2003). This was certainly the case for my informants. The journey upon which they embarked provided them with precisely the experience Austin-Broos refers to -- a passage to a metaphorical home. In the case of my pious informants this metaphorical home was Islam.

CHAPTER X: CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

Using the literature on Islamic feminist thought, discussions of post-socialist development projects (most notably NGOs), scholarship on religious revitalization (reislamization), and anthropological insights into conversion, I have analyzed what it means to be a Bosnian Muslim woman since the disintegration of Yugoslavia. This dissertation examines faith [*vjera* or *iman*] and practice (what women do) as it has evolved from traditional Bosnian Islam (secularized form of Islam that developed during the communist period) and the way it compares to those practicing *povratak Islamu* (return to Islam or reislamization).

Experiences of my informants indicate that there are two primary ways in which one can be a Muslim (and specifically a Muslim woman) in post-war and post-socialist Bosnia. She can be what I call a conventional Muslim (based on the Bosnian terms *obična* or *tradicionalna Bosanska Muslimanka*) or she can be a pious Muslim (referred to in Bosnian as *osvješćena* or *pobožna Muslimanka*). Conventional and pious Muslim women share a number of commonalities; yet, how they understand themselves and their relationship to Islam, including their duties and obligations, are notably different. These conclusions are based on interviews and participant observation with women involved in two women-centered NGOs (Nahla and Medica Zenica) and a small, faith-based network.

The biggest challenge of this dissertation was to provide an understanding of not only the different ways in which women can be Muslim, but also the changing nature of what we now understand to be Bosnian Muslim identity. This dissertation demonstrates (by comparing and contrasting) different approaches to being a Bosnian Muslim woman by

focusing on agency and the ways in which women adapt to Bosnia's transforming economy and social structure. My research reveals that, for some women, being Muslim is no longer primarily associated with ethnic and national identity. Rather, for some Muslim women Islam is a religion with its own specific set of beliefs and practices that adhere to Islamic jurisprudence and duty. In this way, pious Muslim women's identities are fluid and transformative, and these young women are acting out their identities and openly displaying their Muslimness in a variety of ways. On the other hand, for conventional Bosnian women retaining their sense of the uniqueness of Bosnian Islamic *tradicija*, while forging ahead with their education and career plans, is the core of their Muslim identity.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONVENTIONAL AND PIOUS MUSLIM WOMEN

My analysis of the differences between conventional and pious Muslim women is drawn from fifty interviews in which I asked women about their relationship to Islam, how they defined a believer, what they had faith in, and finally, how and what kinds of Islamic practices they observed. In each of the data analysis chapters I was able to ascertain how these two groups of women deal with the same issues of belief and practice differently and how they have two ways of constructing their identities as Muslims. Through an analysis of their own accounts, I show the ways in which Islamic practices can provide the space for them to claim autonomy, agency and control over their lives. This is true for both conventional and pious women, but a particularly point in the case of pious Muslim women who are often seen as victims of patriarchy who live under false consciousness. I was also able to analyze the different ways in which women conventional and pious women

grapple with issues of adolescence, unemployment and education and the way in which Islam helps or does not help in addressing their concerns.

An important observation I made in Chapter VI was that all the women I interviewed identified as Muslim. My conventional Muslim informants not only claim that they are Muslim, but feel very strongly about it. In addition, they are adamant about protecting what they term Bosnian Islamic tradition (and the rituals that go along with it) and they believe that this is the correct way to practice Islam in Bosnia. They often felt that women who adopted more strict interpretations of Islam (such as my pious informants) were moving away from practicing a truly Bosnian Islam. Moreover, they all also identified themselves as believers (*vjernice*), but differentiated themselves from those whom they considered to be true believers (*prave* or *istinski vjernice*). For my conventional informants, *pravi vjernici* were those Muslims who practiced and committed their lives to Islam during the communist period. Many of my conventional informants also agreed that there were still many *pravi vjernici* in Bosnia even after the war, however, they believed that many of them were wrongly accepting (what they deemed) foreign interpretations of Islamic duty and practice. However, my pious informants did not agree with this definition of *prava vjernica* and thought that being a true believer meant that they had to adopt a number of practices in addition to and in some cases, apart from Bosnia's Islamic traditions that came into common use during the communist period. Among my pious informants being a true believer was a continuous and difficult task they always worked towards.

In addition to these two approaches to being a believer conventional and pious Muslim women also had very different understanding of the concept of faith (or belief).

Conventional Muslim women thought that faith was dependent on believing in Allah, while pious Muslim women had a much more complicated and restrictive definition. For my pious informants, faith was also often referred to as *iman*. *Iman*, in my informants' experience, required them to not only believe in Allah, but observe all the necessary duties that came with that definition. In effect, to have *iman*, was to be deeply and consciously connected to God every minute of every day. *Iman* was a feeling, a state of being, that my pious informants commonly referred to, and they used this term when they discussed how they gauged their pursuit of piety and living a life in Islam. In this sense my pious informants focused on what they believed got to the core of Islam's message, and that is, that Allah is one God and that Mohammed was his only prophet. The strength of their *iman* was determined by their connection to Islam (either in thought or practice). Thus, conventional and pious Muslim women held very different views about the concept of faith which sits at the core of Islamic lifestyle and identity.

Even though my informants shared a number of Islamic practices, I found that my conventional informants focused primarily on the preservation of *tradicija* and pious informants focused on prayer, fasting, and other duties prescribed by Islamic jurisprudence. *Tradicija* meant saying and believing in Allah and the prophet Muhammad, and that that was enough; while observations of Islamic duty (such as the daily prayer, fast, modest clothes, and other religious obligations expected of Muslims throughout the world) were a matter of choice. For my conventional informants *tradicija* focused on those beliefs and practices that were adopted during the communist period of Bosnia's history, as well as those that were preserved from pre-communist period. These women thus understood

tradicija as stable and unchanged by historical processes. Preservation of *Bosanska Muslimanska tradicija* (Bosnian Muslim traditions) was thus association primarily with making sure they observed the main holidays (such as *Ramazan* and *Kurban Bajram*) and rituals marking the death of a family member (*tevhid*). My conventional informants believed that observance and preservation of what they termed Islamic *tradicija* was more true and authentic to the experience of Islam in Bosnia. By upholding *tradicija*, many Muslim women believed they maintained a way of being and thinking that was respectful of their ancestors and their Islamic history. In this way, *tradicija* was an indispensable part of their connection to Islam as lived history and as part of their ethnic identity, tradition and culture. *Tradicija*, therefore, was an important way in which they understood being Bosnian and Muslim.

Tradicija thus occupied a central role in how my conventional informants understood their relationship to Islam. Conversely, my pious informants were firm in their conviction that to be a believer one had to observe all the necessary duties prescribed by the holy book and Islamic jurisprudence. Both conventional and pious women observe a number of the same Islamic traditional practices and holidays, but pious women have a set of practices expected of a good and true Muslim, namely daily prayer, the fast, and modest clothing for women). My research data suggests that pursuit of piety and its physical expressions (such as wearing the hijab) and going to places that are halal is a form of agency as understood and described by Mahmood (2005). Their pursuit of piety is also closely tied to achieving a life that is completely lived in Islam, most notably securing a husband that has the same moral and ethical code as themselves, meaning a pious Muslim man. They

want to identify such a man because if they do not, a man can take advantage of them prior to marriage, particularly in relation to the issues of intimacy. Identifying a pious man (in their minds) guaranteed (to a degree that they wanted it to) that they will not have to engage in sexual acts prior to marriage, not only because they believe they would be committing sin, but because having sex does not guarantee marriage. My analysis also revealed that pious Muslim women observed several additional practices unique in their combination of local and general Islamic customs. These new practices, most notably Sharia dating (*šerijatsko zabavljanje*) and trial marriages (*probni brak*), were important additions to the way in which pious Muslim women lived Islam in present day Bosnia. While Sharia dating was an answer to the absence of arranged marriages, trial marriages were a practice directly imported from the Middle East. My analysis suggested that while Sharia dating had a number of positive and empowering outcomes, the trial marriages were seen as another way that facilitated men taking sexual advantage of women. Nevertheless, living one's life as a pious Muslim in a primarily secular setting was a challenge. It is not surprising then that my pious informants devised various ways in which to meet their secular and religious obligations.

Examining the process of conversion was an important way in which I was able to ascertain how some women become pious, while others remained committed to preservation of Bosnia's Islamic tradition. All my pious informants came to live in Islam (*živjeti u Islamu*) through the process of conversion. However, not all the women started the process in the same way. Some women began the conversion after a life-changing event, while others started after exploring a series of philosophical questions about the

meaning of life and their purpose in this life. At the core of it conversion for my pious informants is a response to life changing issues and problems that all women face. However, although my conventional informants faced similar kinds of life crisis issues, they were able to resolve them on their own, through organizations, or through the help of their friends and family. In the majority of cases that I analyzed, conversion was not always a conscious act, yet, at one point or another, all the women realized that the answers to their questions originated in Islam and they actively began seeking living a life as pious Muslims. Through the conversion process, my pious informants actively created a new identity—self-defined and sanctioned by faith. For my pious informants, the conversion process was a life changing experience that not only transformed their worldview, but also their day-to-day activities. The quest for a life of piety forever changed their personal and professional relationships; the practices incorporated during conversion effectively disrupted, reorganized, and redefined these women's positions and status both within their families and society at large. In the end, analyzing conversion narratives provided good ethnographic detail that helped me discern the differences between conventional and pious Muslim women.

Conversion is a very personal and individual experience and is very much outside the official reislamization efforts by the Islamic Community. As I state in Chapter 1, the Islamic Community officially promotes an idea of European Islam that is distinctly different from Islam practiced in the Middle East. However, although my converted informants did not directly follow the Islamic Community in their efforts to live a more meaningful life in Islam, they did seek out other institutions to help them through this process, and through them

were influenced by their policies and interpretations of Islam. For my informants these institutions were women-centered organizations like Nahla, which had a very close relationship with the Islamic Community, or a small faith-based group. Furthermore, many of them attended local mosques and lectures which were sanctioned and supported by the Islamic Community. Both pious and conventional women compared themselves to the other Muslims and in that way offered a counter to the identity that was endorsed by the Islamic Community (i.e. the European Muslim). My informants chose how they want to practice and live Islam and although the Islamic Community has power, their identities are largely self-informed and constructed and are continuously engaged through a comparison to other Muslims or non-Muslims.

I also drew several significant conclusions about the importance of NGOs and small faith-based networks in the lives of Muslim women. I examined two women-centered organizations that support and empower women. Empowerment in the context of my research happens through two avenues, institutions (most notably NGOs) and through the individual. NGOs utilize two methods in which to empower women of Bosnia, namely a) economic and professional development and, b) personal development. NGOs have become the panaceas of women's empowerment in modern period and distinct feminization of NGOs has occurred. For these NGOs, such as Medica Zenica, the challenge has thus been to involve women in the political process on the local level. Without a doubt, NGOs have been particularly successful in helping women.

While Medica Zenica had no religious orientation, Nahla was explicitly focused on promoting and advancing Islam. Both organizations had received funding from foreign

agencies and donors in the beginning, but in recent years had become dependent on local funding. With a focus on women's overall well-being and empowerment, these two organizations offered my informants a chance to develop and advance their professional skills, as well as address any emotional and philosophical issues they encountered in their day-to-day lives. Both of the organizations had a very special place in the lives of women who belonged to them. For women in Medica Zenica the connection was often rooted in personal commitment to the prevention of violence against women. In addition, many of the women at Medica were former recipients of Medica's services, which made their connection to the organization intimate and personal. Many of my informants said that Medica saved their lives. In this way, Medica played a significant role in helping women deal with inequality, subordination, violence, and other problems they faced at home and in public. In addition, Medica¹ focused on educating Bosnia's public on women's situation, and in this way worked towards bettering the situation of all women in Bosnia.

On the other hand, members of Nahla also had a very deep connection to the mission and goals of the organization. For many of my pious informants Nahla was the only place where they felt comfortable enough to express and share their feelings and beliefs, and where they can be themselves. In addition, for many pious Muslim women Nahla was a place where they felt safe and where they found a place they could call home. Finally, Nahla attempted to empower women through professional development and training necessary for successful competition in a new market economy. My ultimate conclusion is

¹ I would like to note that since I left the field in 2008, Medica Zenica and Infoteka (the information and documentation arm of the organizations) have parted ways. This is in part due to the ideological differences and missions of the two centers. Infoteka wanted to focus solely on promotion and execution of feminism and feminist issues. The two organizations became independent of each other in 2009.

that NGOs can serve as important spaces where women can feel protected and cared for. The trials these women face at home, work, school and in general society can be challenging, and NGOs provide spaces where their worth and skill is not devalued simply because they are women. NGOs were an important place where conventional and pious women could carve out a space for themselves. Those women whom I met at the organizations had already done so, and acquired additional skills with which to gain agency.

At both organizations women were open to talk about the discrimination they faced either as women, or just as citizens of Bosnia. Their comfort in being able to discuss issues of support, women's position and their relationship to Islam, was in part due to the fact that all the women I encountered in these organizations were in solely female spaces. Both of the organizations provided a space where there was an absence of patriarchy, and this, to a degree, made women more conscious about the struggles they faced as women. Nevertheless, whether or not the efforts made by these organizations to educate women and give them additional skills to compete in the new market economy (including vocational and professional training programs) were successful in actually secure jobs was somewhat irrelevant to my informants. Whether or not these organizations were successful is not really up for debate, but my informants' feelings about their ability to choose and exert control over their lives was undeniable.

My pious informants utilized a small faith-based network in their quest towards living as a pious Muslim. I focused on one such network as a case study in Chapter V. The majority of my pious informants felt that in order for them to make the transition into a life as a pious Muslim (*osvješčena Muslimanka*), they needed support and guidance. For many

young women of my generation (*moja generacija*)—who grew up in a traditional Bosniak home (*tradicionalna Muslimanska kuća*)—making this transition was a difficult task since their family members and friends did not understand their choices to incorporate Islam into their daily lives. In addition to the women in the case study network, many of my other pious informants had a group of pious women to whom they could relate and with whom they could discuss nuances of making the transition to a more pious life.

SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS

Reflecting on Islamic scholarship that examines the lives of pious Muslim women, this dissertation provides concrete ethnographic examples of the ways in which women live in piety. While there are many discussions of Muslim women, only a handful of ethnographies provide the actual recounted experiences of the ways in which piety can be empowering and an example of agency. Sherine Hafez (2011) and Saba Mahmood (2005) demonstrate important ideas about the importance of piety movement and the ways in which these movements can involve agency. However, what I offer is ethnographic richness and individual stories that demonstrate the theoretical conclusions through real life experience. Mahmood (2005) primarily focuses on mosque leaders, while my ethnography gives voice to ordinary women with no or little public presence.

Social scientists and Islamic feminist scholars argue that agency must be understood in a different way when we are talking about Muslim women. Agency as it is understood in western feminist scholarship today implicitly excludes the experiences of Muslim women. Saba Mahmood, Fatima Mernissi, Sherine Hafez, and others question making agency dependent on resistance to patriarchal structures. Instead, they offer a definition of agency

that extends beyond resistance to include passivity and docility, as well as living within patriarchal structures. In particular, Mahmood argues that veiling and piety present an interesting point of inquiry in regards to the importance of resisting or inhabiting forms as an example of agency and says that,

...the most interesting features of this debate lie not so much in whether the norm of modesty is subverted, but in the radically different ways in the norm is supposed to be lived and inhabited. Notably, each view posits a very different conceptualization of the relationship between embodied behavior and the virtue or norm of modesty: for the pietists, bodily behavior is at the core of the proper realization of the norm, and for their opponents, it is a contingent and unnecessary element of modesty's enactment. [Mahmood 2005: 24]

Subversion of norms must be reconfigured to address the experiences of Muslim women. Thus, following Mahmood's conclusions, my informants became empowered and gained agency through belonging and operating within the patriarchal structures of family and the home. My research indicates that for my pious informants wearing modest clothing has two outcomes: first they gain agency by resisting sexualization of their bodies and therefore expectations placed upon them to act in a way that further supports exploitation of female body, and second they are able to head off (and put up barriers to) men's sexual advances. By choosing to wear the hijab and modest clothing, and control their daily activities through prayer and pursuit of piety, my pious informants support Mahmood's conclusions that upholding norms can be an autonomous and agentic experience. Similar to Mahmood's informants in Egypt, my pious informants challenged the norm (that saw female bodies as sexual objects) by wearing the veil (or headscarf), thus making the veiled body a means through which modesty was expressed and created (Mahmood 2005: 23). Finally, their pursuit of piety is in itself resisting the dominant

secular norms. Therefore, my pious informants experience agency in two ways, by resisting and inhabiting norms, an experience that is essential in understanding agency beyond its commonly understood definition.

Mahmood further argues that the act of veiling (or in the case of my informants wearing the hijab) is in itself an act of agency and becomes so by creating a strong bond “between the norm (modesty) and the bodily form it takes (the veil) such that the veiled body becomes the necessary means through which the virtue of modesty is both created and expressed” (Mahmood 2005: 23). Furthermore, through repetition and practice of humility and shyness, Mahmood argues that veiling (and pious lifestyle) is a way through which women cultivate the sense of the self. Utilizing complete submission to their faith (through discipline in daily prayer and modest clothing) women experience agency. Through control of the body by prayer and what they wear, my pious informants all claimed they experienced a sense of liberation from the normative ideas of femininity and womanliness. In the western context, female bodies have become sexualized, objects through which a market-economy can sell and buy products. The effect of this is very poignant in my informants’ narratives. Many of my pious informants claimed that once they controlled what they wore they no longer felt burdened by the challenge of having to prove oneself as a good woman. Being pious automatically told the world what they wanted, how they behaved and what they would and wouldn’t do. My informants felt less objectified and because they did not focus on their external appearances, they could focus more on who they were on the inside.

In Bosnia, Muslim women's experiences resemble those of their counterparts in the Middle East. However, the ways in which agency plays out is somewhat different because Bosnia has the combined experiences of war, ethnic cleansing and genocide, and finally, nearly half a century of communist political and economic system. This means that my pious informants have a history of access to education (including secondary and post-secondary), have been active and relatively equal participants in the workforce, and have experienced some aspects of the feminist movement (including limited political participation, access to birth control and socialized child care). Therefore, my pious informants provide a unique setting for how Islamic agency and empowerment play out.

In addition to making a strong contribution to ethnography of piety, I also provide an important analysis of the pious revitalization and the process of conversion. My analysis supports theoretical conclusions that see conversion as a protracted process, rather than a single event (Buckser and Glazier 2003). Furthermore, focusing on young women seeking to live their lives as pious Muslims further supports Pelkmans (2009) conclusion that societies going through modernization and global capitalism experience higher levels of conversion.

The process of conversion was closely tied to the growing reislamization movement presently observed in Bosnia. *Povratak Islamu* (return to Islam or reislamization) was undeniably underway among the women I encountered. In this, my findings support Bougarel's (2003) conclusions that the institutional-level (i.e., Muslim nationalist party [SDA] and Islamic Community) reislamization project aimed at promoting an image of a European Muslim has failed. My pious informants gave little heed these notions of the Bosnian Muslim promoted by the Islamic Community because they saw it as too political

and trying to please western leadership. However, on an individual level I have found that reislamization is underway.

Finally, my findings in Bosnia support the argument that post-socialist countries with large Muslim populations were experiencing a resurgence of Islamic revitalization. My own findings contribute to the research findings by Kuehnast, Ghodsee, and Abramson, which demonstrated the success of Islam (as a set of beliefs and practices) in providing people with an alternative to the chaos and corruption that has come to dominate the post-socialist landscape (Abramson 2004; Ghodsee 2010a; Kuehnast 2004). My conversion chapter is particularly relevant to this discussion because it provides concrete examples of the effects of religion in people's day-to-day life. My pious informants shared with me specific benefits of Islam in giving them purpose, meaning of life and strength they needed to deal with the unpredictability of Bosnia's day-to-day life.

FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Although women of Bosnia have been relatively well-studied over the past two decades, religious experiences of these women, particularly Muslim women, remained relatively unexplored until recently, most notably Zilka Spahić-Šiljak's *Contesting Female, Feminist and Muslim Identities* (2012). However, while my study makes a significant contribution to the study of Muslim women, a large gap remains in our understanding of Muslim men. Considering how men believe and practice Islam and the extent to which religion plays an important part in their life was outside the scope of my research. Men's points of view and what being a Muslim man is like are important and necessary points of exploration. What it means to be a Bosnian Muslim cannot be fully explained without the other half of

population; I am keenly aware of the necessity for the male point of view in this area of research.

Furthermore, I recommend a thorough study of conventional Muslim belief, practice, and ways in which Muslim women and men preserve what they consider a true Bosnian's Islamic belief and practice. There is a need for more research that focuses solely on the conventional Muslim experiences in contemporary Bosnia that would be useful. My own research data is limited in terms of the experiences of these women, and since they make up the overwhelming majority of Bosnia's Muslim experience, a study that addresses these issues is much needed. I suggest that these questions be addressed and explored as I believe they will give a more complete picture of the Muslim experience in present-day Bosnia.

I think that my findings regarding reislamization processes in contemporary Bosnia would be further complimented by a study that looks at the relationship between the Middle East and Bosnia. This is a particularly interesting question in relation to the promotion of European Muslim identity by the Islamic Community of Bosnia. Specifically, it would be interesting to see if reislamization continues to expand and grow, or whether this phenomenon will plateau in the coming years.

Finally, there is virtually no research data available on the topic of atheists in post-war Bosnia, and consequently all of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav experience was characterized by communist ideology and thousands of people were self-proclaimed atheists. However, the question of what happened to all those atheists has yet to be addressed. Thousands of self-proclaimed atheists headed and occupied all facets of Yugoslav society between 1945

and 1991. On the surface, it would seem all the atheists magically disappeared with the collapse of Yugoslavia and its socialist regimes; however, I suspect this is not the case. The fact is there are no studies addressing this now invisible body of atheists or their belief systems before or after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and subsequent wars of independence. I cannot think of a more interesting study than one that examines the successes and failures of the communist party in their attempt to create a generation of Marxist-communists who were raised without religious consciousness or influence and therefore it does not play any part in their daily lives.

CONCLUSION

The primary questions I address in this dissertation focus on the changing state of Islam and its female Muslim followers in present-day Bosnia. This study, focused on what it means to be a Bosnian Muslim woman, make a new addition to the growing body of literature on Islam in Bosnia. Collectively, women are one of the more economically vulnerable and socially marginalized groups in Bosnia. Therefore, documenting their experiences within civil society, NGOs and small faith-based networks, and finally, their relationship to Islam were important ways in which I was able to ascertain some of the ways in which Muslim women in Bosnia live Islam and understand their Muslim-ness. This dissertation elucidates that being Muslim in Bosnia has changed and has come to incorporate aspects of Islamic revitalization movements observed throughout the post-socialist countries.

Whether conventional or pious, these women are unconsciously, and to some degree consciously, resisting the dominant order and redefining what constitutes a Bosnian woman in general, and a Bosnian Muslim woman in particular. Whichever lifestyle they

choose, these women are exerting a sense of self that is resistant to the spaces and identities that society has imposed upon them. Muslim women, whether conventional or pious, are exploring the contours of the secular and religious dominant ideologies and discovering where they can assert power in reshaping and redefining the boundaries of these ideological systems and accommodate their presence within a post-war and post-socialist environment.

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APPENDIX I: LOCAL TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

In this dissertation I use a number of local terms in order to narrate both conventional and pious Muslim women's experiences. In order to allow for a best understanding of the main concepts used by my informants when talking about their relationship to Islam I will refer to seven main concepts.

vjernica: believer, used by both conventional and pious Muslim women to refer to those men and women who consider and identify themselves as Muslims. On one hand, for conventional Muslim women this meaning is closely associated with believing that Allah is the one God. On the other hand, pious Muslim women refer to *vjernica/vjernik* as those women and men who not only believe in Allah, but also observe the practices and duties prescribed by the holy book. Mostly *vjernica* is used by pious Muslim women to refer to other women and men who they consider pious.

vjera: used to refer to both one's faith and religion.

vjerovati: to believe, to have faith. Used by both conventional and pious women to refer to their faith in one god (Allah) and prophet as his messenger.

namaz: ritual prayer observed five times a day.

tradicija: translates to tradition for conventional Muslims, and refers to nominal observance of Islamic duty that became common during communist period. The communist period was devoid of any public display of religion. This meant that such Islamic duties and practices as the veil for women was banned in 1948. Furthermore, *tradicija* refers to a number of rituals and holidays that have some root in Islamic tradition but came to be during the communist period as a way of preserving people's Muslim identity, namely

tevhid and *mevlud*. All of my informants referred to tradition when discussing how Islam is lived and experienced in present day Bosnia.

The current interpretation and definition of *tradicija* used by my conventional informants, while rooted in communist period, has shaped what conventional women consider *tradicija* today. This definition has come to include celebration of the end of Ramadan, observance of *tevhid* and *mevlud*, and there is little attention to what pious women believe is important, namely daily prayer, knowledge of the holy text and the fast. *Tradicija* for conventional Muslim women includes little knowledge of and no daily prayers, except on special occasions such as the Ramadan. *Tradicija* also implies occasional observance of the Ramadan and the fast (usually few times during the month), no public displays of religious belief such as the hijab for women or white cap for men. Furthermore, *tradicija* for conventional Muslim women also means that they have little or no knowledge of the holy books, no intention of attending the Hajj and occasional paying of dues to *Islamska Zajednica* and alms for the poor. For many women *tradicija* implies keeping a lifestyle that was common during communist period. Finally, Muslim women have come to use *tradicija* to talk about the pre-communist period, but only in few instances, and always as a criticism of the ways in which conventional Muslims practice and live Islam.

***iman*:** Arabic word for faith, commonly used by pious informants to refer to their relationship to god. It is a term used only by pious women.

***prava Muslimanka*:** literally translated to real or correct Muslim. It is used by pious Muslim women to describe what they are working towards and others they admire or want to

immolate in relation to religious life. In this dissertation *prava Muslimanka* is interchangeable with pious Muslim woman.

veliki Musliman/Muslimanka: translates to great Muslim, the term is used in two ways depending on the context of the conversation. The term is used by both conventional and pious Muslim women to refer to a correct or authentic practice of Islam in line with the holy book and Islamic jurisprudence. In my dissertation I sometimes use great Muslim to refer to those women I have identified as pious. It is often coupled with the use of term *vjernica/vjernik* to refer to people who are deeply in faith and committed to pursuit of piety.

pobožna/pobožan: pious, used by both pious and conventional Muslim men and women to refer to those who are actively in faith and perform the duties as prescribed by the holy text.

novi Muslimani: term used specifically by my conventional informants to refer to a new generation of observant Muslims who incorporate Islamic duty in their daily lives and traditions outside of Bosnia's Islamic traditions (such as the burqa, face veils, Shi'ia and Wahhabi interpretations of Islam).

Mahrma: hijab or headscarf.

Ramazan: Ramadan.

Kurban Bajram: Eid Mubarak, celebration marking the end of Hajj.

Hodža: imam, or religious leader, usually trained at the madrassa or at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, or other universities throughout the Muslim world.

Mekteb: Islamic school for children between the ages of kindergarten and pre-puberty.

They are usually conducted and lead by the local *hodža*, and include systematic education about history of Islam, familiarity with the basic tenets of Islam and some knowledge of the holy text. Many children here would learn how to pray and memorize a number of verses in Arabic.

moja generacija: These are women whose life experiences are defined by both pre-war and post-war experiences. For these women history matters and their individual domains of actualization are heavily influenced by the particular context in which they grew up and became adults. They are women born after 1975.

Zekat: giving alms to the poor.

Throughout my dissertation I use these terms in place of their English translations because their significance is deeply tied to their meaning and use in Bosnian language. I further describe each term as I introduce them in each individual chapter.

APPENDIX II: MAPS



Map of Former Yugoslavia



Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina

APPENDIX III: INFORMANT TABLES

Conventional Muslim Women (no NGO affiliation)								
	Name	DOB	Geography	Family	Education	Work	Marital Status	How we met?
1	Alija	1960	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	High School	Foreign Bank	Married	Through Alija
2	Amela	1982	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	BA	Amela	1982	Sarajevo
3	Fuada	1980	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Bosnian Language and Literature	Foreign Agency	Single	Ex-Pat Contact: Kirsten
4	Jasmina	1977	Sarajevo (6 yrs. in Slovenia)	Parents (TBI)	MA European Studies	Communication Agency	Single	Ex-Pat Contact: Bronwyn
5	Sabiha	1985	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Information Technology	English Teacher at a private language school	Engaged (Married since I left field)	Ex-Pat Contact: Bronwyn
6	Zlata	1961	Sarajevo >Saudi Arabia >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	Ph.D. Biological Sciences	Faculty at the University	Married Son and daughter	Through Ex-Pat Contact: Bronwyn
Conventional Muslim Women (NGO affiliation)								
	Name	DOB	Geography	Family	Education	Work	Marital Status	How we met?
1	Azra	1966	Zenica	Parents (HR)	High School	Medica Zenica	Married	Medica Zenica
2	Hajra	1975	Zenica	Parents (TBI)	College	Medica Zenica	Single	Medica Zenica
3	Halida	1955	Doboj >Zenica	Mother (HR)	High School	Medica Zenica	Married	Medica Zenica
4	Hasiba	1973	Višegrad			Hasiba	1973	Visegrad
5	Ismeta	1986	Zenica	Mother (HR) (HS)	At University	Ismeta	1986	Zenica
6	Jasminka	1954	Zenica	Parents (TBI)	High School	Medica Zenica	Married	Jasminka
7	Mediha	1964	Prijedor >Zenica	Mother (Z) (HS)	High School	Medica Zenica	Single Son	Medica Zenica
8	Mirsada	1943	Livnjak	Parents (TBI)		Mirsada	1943	Livnjak
9	Nermina	1955	Montenegro	Father (TBI) Mother (HR)	1955	Montenegro	Nermina	1955
10	Zineta	1970	Foča >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Engineering	State Institutions	Married Daughter	Nahla

HS-headscarf **TBI**-traditional Bosnian Islam **HR**-highly religious
Z-her mother, born in 1927, wore zar (face veil) which was outlawed in 1948 by the Communist party.

Pious Muslim Women (NGO affiliation)								
	Name	DOB	Geography	Family	Education	Work	Marital Status	How we met?
1	Adila	1972	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	Some University Literature	Unemployed	Single	Nahla
2	Ajla	1987	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Sociology	Student Teaches at Mekteb	Single	Nahla
3	Aldina(HS)	1990	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Medicine	Student	Single	Nahla
4	Alma (HS)	1981	Sarajevo >Malaysia >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	BA Computer Science	Staff at Nahla	Single	Nahla
5	Amira	1982	Mostar >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Pedagogy	Student	Single	Nahla
6	Badema (HS)	1982	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	BA Law	Non-Governmental Organization	Single Married since I returned from Field	Nahla Small Faith Based Network
7	Belkisa	1983	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	BA Law	Research and Documentation Center	Single	Nahla Small Faith Based Network
8	Biba (HS)	1971	Sarajevo >Zenica	Parents (TBI)	MA Islamic Studies	Staff at Medica Zenica	Married Daughter	Medica Zenica
9	Devla (HS)	1982	Bugojno >Mostar >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Bosnian Language and Literature	Student	Married	Nahla
10	Elma	1980	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	BA Law	State Institution	Single	Nahla
11	Esma	1955	Zenica	Parents (TBI)	High School	Staff at Medica Zenica	Married Son	Medica Zenica
12	Fata	1978	Han Pjesak >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Engineering	Student	Single	Nahla
13	Fatima (HS)	1983	Vogošća >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	BA Law	Father's Law Firm	Single Married since I returned from field	Small Faith Based Network
14	Fikreta	1984	Bihac >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Medicine	Student	Single	Nahla
15	Hana (HS)	1980	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University	Staff at Nahla	Single	Nahla
16	Hanka (HS)	1988	Jablanica >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University	Student	Single	Small Faith Based Group
17	Hasija	1984	Bihać	Parents (TBI)	At University	Student	Single	Nahla

			>Sarajevo		Medicine			
18	Lejla(HS)	1987	Glamoc>Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University	Student	Single	Nahla
19	Mersija	1980	Sjenica (Serbia) >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Law	Student	Single	Nahla
20	Nadja	1956	Zenica	Parents (HR)	High School	Staff at Nahla	Married (children)	Medica Zenica
Pious Muslim Women (no NGO affiliation)								
	Name	DOB	Geography	Family	Education	Work	Marital Status	How we met?
1	Aida	1977	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI) Grandparents (HR)	At University Law	Student	Single	Through Badema
2	Alema	1982	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Bosnian Language and Literature	Student	Single	Through Badema
3	Alisa	1982	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Law	Student	Single	Through Badema
4	Almasa	1980	Modrica >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	High School	Unemployed	Single But married since I left field	Childhood Friend
5	Amina	1973	Gračanica >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University	Interior Designer	Single	Through Alma
6	Anesa (HS)	1984	Zenica >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University	Student	Single	Through Mina
7	Dina	1979	Sjenica (Serbia) >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	BA Law	Research- Documentation Center	Married Two daughters	Through Belkisa
8	Mina (HS)	1984	Zavidovići >Sarajevo	Aunts (HS) Father (HR)	At University Architecture	Student	Single	Small Faith Based Network
9	Nihada	1984	Sarajevo	Parents (HR)	BA Law	Ministry of Education	Single	Through Badema
10	Sabira	1982	Sarajevo	Parents (HR) Grandparents (HR)	At University Journalism	Student	Single	Small Faith Based Network
11	Selma (HS)	1955	Odžak >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	High School	Victims of War Retirement	Single	Through Vildana
12	Vahida	1981	Sanski Most >Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	MA Human Rights	Private Lawyer	Single	Through Badema
13	Vildana	1982	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	BA Law	Municipal Court	Single	Small Faith Based Network
14	Zehra	1983	Sarajevo	Parents (TBI)	At University Criminology	Student	Single	Through Selma

APPENDIX IV: CONVERSION PROCESS TABLE 1

Pious Muslim Women Conversion Process from Initial questions and concerns to what they identify as final step.

Informant Name	Initial Questions or Concerns	First steps towards answers	Second step towards answers	Final steps towards (full transition)
Adila	Struggled at school and the university and couldn't find a job.	Went to Nahla for computer classes. Found herself at Nahla spiritually.	Started School of Islam and going to local tekijas. Began reading more text, gaining knowledge.	Still working towards the hijab. Not ready to make the final transition.
Alema	Was always in faith. Started as a young child. Praying and fasting since 7 years old. Had surgeries and spent much time in hospital.	As an adult she began adopting more modest clothing.	Begins eliminating physical contact (handshakes) with men who are not family.	Working towards a hijab and completing her transformations.
Badema	Felt lost and without a purpose, needed something to hold on to.	Broke up with a boyfriend she believed she would marry. Began to read the Qur'an. Started attending aerobic classes at Nahla.	Enters School of Islam at Nahla and starts the small-faith based group.	Married a pious man after what they both termed Sharia dating. Had a child and put on the hijab.
Belkisa	Felt like she had no purpose and that she had to find something to hold on to.	Went to Nahla to attend School of Islam.	Joined small-faith based network.	Working towards a hijab and complete submission to life of Islam.
Devla	Always was in Islam and began praying at a young age.	As a young teenager she puts on the hijab.	Believed marriage to a pious man was going to help her make the full transition because being a wife is what Allah wants.	Continuously working on increasing her knowledge of Islam. It's a work in progress.
Dina	Wanted to learn more about Islam.	Went to a mosque that was run by Salafis. Put on the hijab only to remove it after some negative experiences.	Moved to Sarajevo to start university to get away from Salafi community in her small town.	Still working towards returning to hijab and a life of Islam. Attempting to relearn Islamic duty and practice.
Fata	Felt lost and alone at a male-dominated university.	Began coming to Nahla. Attended School of Qu'ran	Started to learn Arabic and Persian.	Still working towards being able to speak Arabic and be

	Had no purpose and felt depressed.	and School of Islam.		able to read the Qur'an in its original language.
Fatima	Couldn't find herself, felt lost and without a purpose.	Began to read the Qur'an and going to lectures.	Joined our small faith-based network through her cousin Badema.	Married a pious man, had a Sharia wedding, and within a year put on the hijab.
Fikreta	Depressed about where her life was going. Struggles at the University and with school.	Heard about Nahla through a friend and began attending School of Islam.	Gradually started to pray regularly and read more of the holy text.	Working towards improving living in Islam.
Selma	A victim of war time rape camp. While in Saudi Arabia for her son's therapy she started to learn more about Islam and proper Islamic life.	Went to Hajj while in Saudi Arabia. Decided to put on the headscarf permanently.	Lost a son to suicide and had to reevaluate strength of faith. Began to learn how to read and write Arabic.	Working towards complete memorization of Qur'an.

APPENDIX V: CONVERSION PROCESS TABLE 2
Pious Muslim Women Conversion Process Chart

Informant Name	Initial Questions or Concerns	First steps towards answers	Second step towards answers	Final step towards (full transition)
Aida	Grew up in a religious home. Went to mekteb as a child.	Celebrates the end of Ramazan, tries to fast. As a 15 year old went to religious classes and religious choir.	Working towards praying five times a day. In a dilemma or in times of stronger iman she prays.	
Ajla	Had three surgeries and during recovery began asking questions about meaning of life.	Started to read holy texts. Began going to religious institutions to gain more knowledge.	Started teaching at a local mosque. Joined Nahla and School of Islam.	Working towards wearing a hijab.
Aldina	Always was in Islam.	Parents allowed her to put on the hijab when she was in high school.	Wants to be a medical doctor. Islam helps her through discrimination and struggles.	Wants to marry and become a mother.
Alisa	Questions of purpose and meaning during early years of college.	Began reading on her own and asking friends she knew were more knowledgeable.	Began going to lectures, praying five times a day and wearing modest clothing.	In process towards hijab.
Alma	Was always in faith.	During teenage years began asking questions of worth and purpose.	Began reading holy texts, praying and put on the hijab. Went to Malaysia to study computers.	Working towards being a mother and a wife.
Almasa	Questions of purpose and why she was on this earth?	Began to read, go to lectures. Met a pious man, but it did not work out.	Began to seek out lectures and friends with similar purpose.	Working towards the hijab and being a mother and a wife.
Amina	Was always in Islam. Father attended Hajj and sister put on hijab.	Began spending time with pious women.	On and off praying for a while. About a year ago began praying five times a day.	Working towards the hijab.
Amira	Questions about the faith she knew nothing about?	Two of her sisters were becoming religious.	One of her sisters told her about Nahla and she began	In process.

	<p>Why were we persecuted? Why don't I know anything about Islam? Did not want advances from men who had questionable motives for wanting to get to know her.</p>	<p>What was the meaning of life?</p>	<p>coming to School of Islam.</p>	
Anesa	<p>Came to the university, new city, new friends, turned to faith for comfort.</p>	<p>Started to learn more about Islam, going to public lectures.</p>	<p>Had a good friend with whom she began exploring Islam. Surrounded herself with women pursuing piety.</p>	<p>Put on the hijab, the first in the family.</p>
Biba	<p>Always was in Islam.</p>	<p>Asked parents to let her to go to Medressa as a young teenager.</p>	<p>Went to Madrassa during high school. Put on the hijab.</p>	<p>Got married and became a mother.</p>
Elma	<p>Was looking for peace and a place where she could keep herself occupied outside regular duties and occupations.</p>	<p>Joined Nahla. Went on and off for several years.</p>	<p>School of Islam.</p>	<p>In process.</p>
Esma	<p>Wanted to help victims of war.</p>	<p>Got a job at Medica Zenica.</p>	<p>Asking questions after trauma and the war. Began reading Qur'an and Haddiths on her own.</p>	<p>In process towards greater knowledge and daily prayer.</p>
Hana	<p>Always in faith, but with varying iman.</p>	<p>In high school starts to worry about purpose and questions of meaning of life.</p>	<p>Starts reading Qur'an, adopting Islamic lifestyle and does the hijab. Joins several women's organizations, Kewser and Nahla. Maintained personal appearance from before the war, but incorporated prayer, fast and giving alms to the poor since the end of the war.</p>	<p>In process towards marriage and motherhood.</p>

Hanka	As a young teenager began asking questions of meaning and purpose.	Began reading Haddiths and Qur'an.	Started praying and observing all the necessary duties. Put on the hijab at 19.	Working towards being a good Muslim woman and a wife.
Hasija	Wanted to get more professional training while in Medical school.	Joined Nahla after she heard from other religious friends that it was a good organization.	Currently only doing professional development classes, but thinking about School of Islam.	
Lejla	Wanted to know more about Islam. Some struggles at the university and the demands.	Heard about Nahla from sister. Starting coming to school of Qur'an.	School of Islam.	In process towards becoming a better Muslim.
Mersija	Fell in love as a teenager and followed a young man into Wahhabi interpretation of Islam.	Veiled and began practicing as her boyfriend.	Ran away due to oppression and subjugation. Moved to Sarajevo.	Finding Islam through Nahla and school of Islam again.
Mina	What is the meaning of life?	Reading about Qur'an and Haddiths.	Spending time with other women in Islam. Organized a small faith-based network.	Puts on the hijab. Still seeking to be a wife and mother.
Nadja	Comes from a traditional Bosnian Muslim family. Went to mekteb as a child during the war.	Began to pray and live as a conscious Muslim during high school years.	Adopted five pillars of Islam in high school. Moved to Malaysia to study and donned the hijab permanently.	
Nihada	Grew up in a religious family. Father was an imam. Always in faith.	In teenage years she had a weakening of iman, started going out and dating.	With the start of college her iman stabilizes and she begins observing all the duties.	Working towards meeting a husband and putting on the hijab.
Sabira	Comes from a religious family and has been going to the mosque with her grandfather since she was 4 years old.	Iman varies. Never smoked, drank or ate pork. Always kept to basic tenets of Islam.	Wants to stabilize and begin praying every day.	In process, working towards stabilized iman where she feels like she can observe all her duties and put on the hijab.

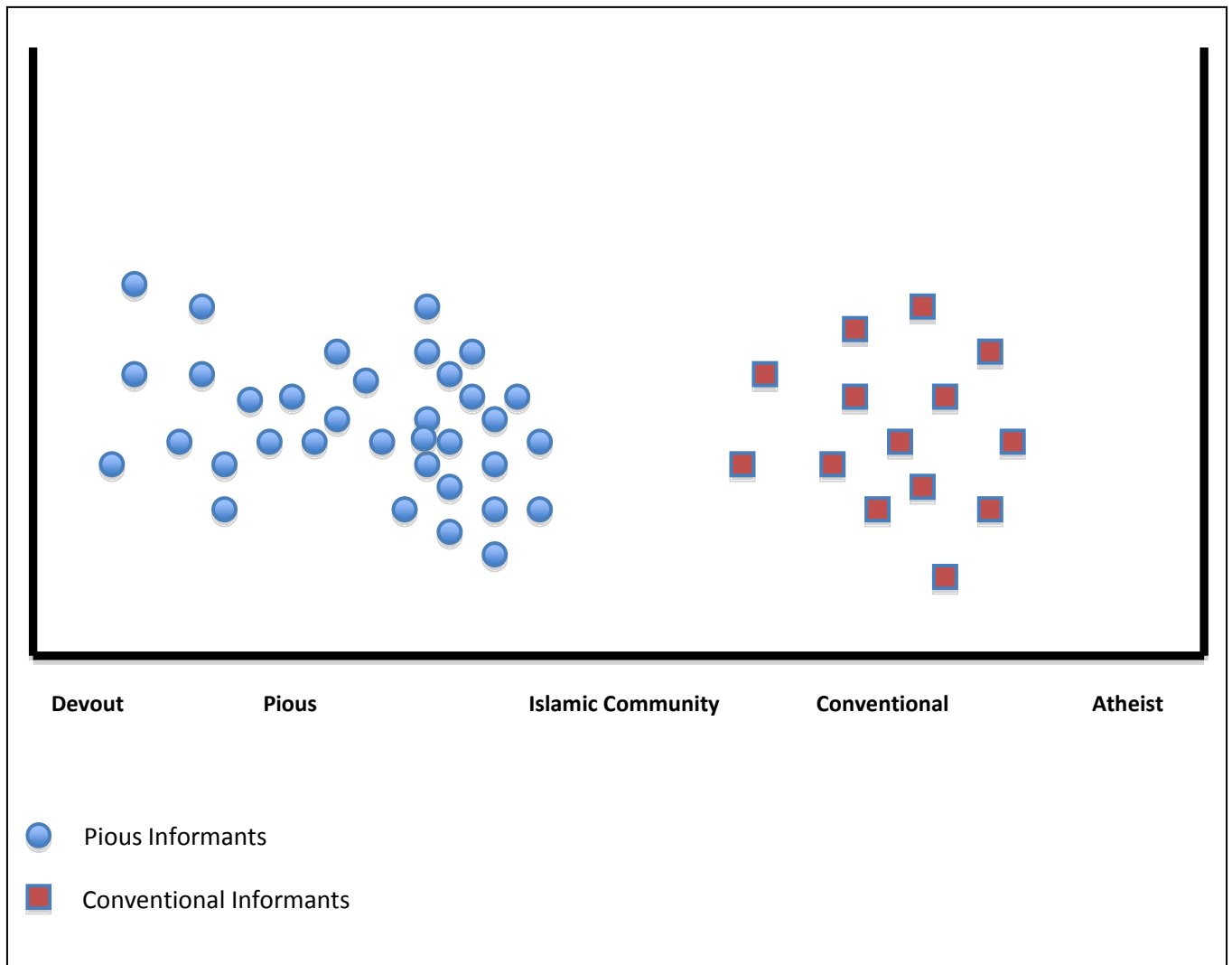
Vahida	Refugee, moved around Bosnia several times before settling in Sarajevo. Went to Mekteb as a child.	Questions of multi-religious existence and cooperation. Had been praying and fasting consistently since she was seven years old.	Questions about existence, her belonging to Islam. Different experiences in life have convinced her that Islam is her path.	In process towards the hijab.
Vildana	Questions about meaning of life and purpose.	Attended Mekteb as a child. Started going to Nahla to learn more about Islam.	Started praying every day and observing modest clothing.	In process towards the hijab.
Zehra	Comes from a religious family. But in high school after dating, going out to discos and too much socializing she began asking about her purpose and meaning of life.	Began reading Qur'an and Haddiths.	Became friends with Selma who is very pious and through her she started observing the fast, Ramazan and other duties (nearly three years earlier).	In process towards the hijab.

APPENDIX VI: CONVENTIONAL INFORMANT LIFE PROCESS CHART

Informant Name	Initial Questions or Concerns	First steps towards answers	Second step towards answers
Alija	How to get through war and trauma?	Has another child right after the war.	Secures a good job at a local bank. Financial sources are secured.
Amela	Am I Muslim or Croat? How do I finish my degree?	Goes to England for a year (during college) but returns to Bosnia as she realizes that is where is the home.	Marries a Muslim man and settles in a good successful job.
Fuada	Will I ever meet a husband? How will I get through my disease?	Reads some religious text, but ultimately finds a successful career.	
Hajra	How can I cope with trauma and loss of home during the war?	Patient at Medica Zenica.	Becomes an employee of Medica Zenica.
Halida	How will I get through the war?	Volunteers and is later employed at Medica Zenica in order to give back.	
Hasiba	How can I cope with trauma, exile and loss of brother and father?	Patient at Medica Zenica.	Becomes an employee of Medica Zenica and helps other women with similar backgrounds.
Ismeta	How do I increase my competitiveness in a corrupt system?	Volunteers at Medica Zenica for experience.	
Jasmina	Growing up outside Bosnia, issues of belonging.	Finished an advanced degree in Sarajevo. Successful Career.	
Mediha	How can I help other women victims of war?	Volunteers at Medica Zenica and later becomes an employee.	
Mirsada	How can I take care of my daughter alone? After her husband passes away.	Goes to Medica Zenica for help during the war.	Gets a job at Medica Zenica which allows her to support her daughter and put her through college.
Nermina	What is my religious identity as a young woman growing up in a Serb-dominated area?	Reads the Qur'an and finds necessary answers.	Becomes a successful therapist. Has several positions, one at Medica Zenica.

Sabiha	Can I marry a man who is not from a Muslim family?	Can I have a life that is not like my parents? Wanted respect from husband.	Married her fiancée who is not a Muslim.
Zineta	How can I get through a male-dominated department at the University?	Joins Nahla for professional courses to expand her knowledge and experience.	
Zlata	Living in Saudi Arabia she is forced to put on the hijab.	Returns to Bosnia, takes off the veil because it is a political statement.	Deals with sexual discrimination at work. Successful career.

APPENDIX VII: SPECTRUM OF RELIGIOUS COMMITTTMENT



APPENDIX VIII: PHOTOS



Emperor's Mosque (Careva Džamija)



Nahla Opening Ceremony (2007)



Bey's Mosque (Begova Džamija)



Baščaršijska Mosque



Emperor's Mosque (Careva Džamija)



Neighborhood Mosque