Identity and Integration
Migrants in Western Europe

Edited by

ROSEMARIE SACKMANN
University of Bremen, Germany

BERNHARD PETERS
University of Bremen, Germany

THOMAS FAIST.
University of Applied Sciences, Bremen, Germany

ASHGATE
Chapter 7

Custom Tailored Islam?
Second Generation Female Students of Turko-Muslim Origin in Germany and Their Concept of Religiousness in the Light of Modernity and Education

Yasemin Karakaşoğlu

Introduction

This paper will present some observations on changing religious attitudes of young Turkish women with a Muslim family background. To some extent, young female Muslims of the second migrant generation apparently redefine an ethno-religious identity in a non-Muslim society vis-à-vis both the majority's concept of secularism and their parents' traditionalist Muslim beliefs. This process inevitably affects their views towards integration in the majority environment. A substantial part of the discussion will be devoted to individuals who, while adhering to Muslim orthodoxy, strive for increased visibility and recognition as an integral part of Germany’s public life. I will, however, also touch upon similarities and differences between Alevi and Sunni female students, as they represent two different strands of ethno-religious orientations from Anatolia.¹ The former consider themselves representatives of a truly modern version of Islam which does not require any change to blend with western life-style.²

¹ The Alevi can be described as a heterodox Islamic minority from Turkey, with strong Shi’i influence on the one hand, and non-Muslim Anatolian religious traditions on the other. Strong emphasis is laid on the esoteric meaning of the faith. Alevi feel themselves freed from observance of the formal religious laws and rites. The group includes 15 million Turkish and Kurdish-speaking members, i.e. approximately 20% of the citizens in Turkey and of the migrants in Germany with Turkish/Kurdish background (for further information see Kehl-Bodrogi 1988 and 2000).
² Kehl-Bodrogi characterizes this as ‘the new self-image of the Alevi, which represents a universally valid and modern form of faith’ (Kehl-Bodrogi, 2000, p. 25).
latter try to combine modern life with the Muslim faith, some of them through the discovery of 'true Islam' – which they regard as compatible with modern life. Nevertheless, my focus will be on the veiled students, because their struggle for public recognition earned them symbol status with both the majority and the Muslim minority activists alike. To the former they are perfect examples of the Muslims' unwillingness to integrate, while the latter see them as heroines of emerging Muslim presence in a secular public environment.

Turkish Islam in Germany

It may be useful to precede my research findings with a brief account of Islam in Germany. Social circumstances have been rather favourable to the development of Islam and the articulation of Muslim demands. In the early days of labour migration there was scarcely any Muslim infrastructure in Germany. Issues of culture seemed irrelevant when in 1961 representatives of the German and Turkish governments negotiated the recruitment of cheap and willing Gastarbeiter for a prospering German industry. Prior to this official beginning of Turkish migration to Germany only a few hundred Muslims lived in Germany. Their number increased quickly. Today about 3 million Muslims are living in Germany. They account for 3.4 per cent of the country's population. Almost 80 per cent of them are migrants from Turkey, mostly descendants from the 'guest-workers'. Turks (including Kurds) make up the largest non-German community in Germany. This is why the presence and image of Islam in Germany can be classified as (a) strongly dominated by traditional Turkish or Kurdish folk culture, and (b) the religion of an urban subproletariat. While more than 75 per cent of today's young migrant population from Turkey were born in Germany, the heritage of their families' status as former guest-workers more often than not still results in restricted access to education, political power, the labour market, housing, etc. Integration thus continues to be impeded. Evidence is readily provided by recent surveys done with Turks and other migrants in Germany. Even 40 years after the first wave of labour migration from the Mediterranean to post-war Germany, issues like the construction of mosques (especially if a dome and minaret are planned), halal slaughtering, establishing Muslim schools and kindergartens, veiling of female students and Muslim teachers, or devoting university chairs to Muslim theology seldom fail to raise emotions in both public debates and legal proceedings.

Contrary to what several sociologists and educators expected in the 1980s, the significance of religion among the youth of Muslim origin in Germany has obviously not declined. The Muslims' call for public representation, their wish to be visible amidst the Christian majority, seems to become stronger as new generations of Muslims are growing up who include a rising minority of well educated elites. Rather than fading away through assimilation in the course of three generations, Islam as a factor of identity for Mediterranean Muslim migrants has developed new approaches. Today 80 per cent of the Turkish population, but only 45 per cent of the Germans, regard religion as being very important for a meaningful life. At the same time 90 per cent of both Muslim and non-Muslim believers consider religion as a matter of privacy that should not be interfered with by the state. It is particularly second-generation Turkish Muslims in Germany among whom Islam appears to loom large as a constituent of personal identity. These Muslims are, however, strongly inclined to develop their own approach to religion – an approach which is often quite different from the traditional popular Islam their parents adhered to. We can see a process of rising self-consciousness in every field of public life and the struggle for access to public space, articulated both individually and collectively. Recent surveys showed that young Muslims are more affiliated to their religion than their Christian peers in Germany (Shell Jugendstudie 2000; pp. 157-80; Waidacher, 2000, pp. 125-27).

Students – the New Muslim Elite

On the fringes of this framework a small but steadily rising group of socially successful Muslim Turks, these are the 24,000 university students of Turkish origin, have worked their way through the institutions and found access to higher education. They have begun to voice their own demands and the needs of their community in a more elaborate way than their parents and grandparents were able to. Some of them do so in the name of Islam. When veiled and unveiled Muslim students of this ethnic origin enrolled in German universities, the discussion of Islam's religious and

---

3 Esser pointedly characterizes the Turks in Germany as an 'ethno-religious subnation' (Esser, 1998, p. 8).

5 For more details about the development of Turkish Islam in Germany see Karakaşoğlu, 1996.
6 For an example of those predictions see Thomä-Venske, 1981, p. 130.
social impact gained fresh momentum and a different quality. In search of a reason why the Turkish community seems to be less integrated than other migrant communities in Germany, Islam is often described as a segregative factor. The following chapters will outline some of these new Muslim actors’ concepts of the relationship between religion and modernity, education and integration.

Findings have been taken from my own study of students of education. From 1996 to 1999 I conducted research on the religious orientations and educational attitudes of both Sunni and Alevi female students of education, mostly involved in teacher-training. My research was based on 26 in-depth interviews with ten veiled, nine unveiled and seven Alevi female students at universities in the Ruhr area. My aim was to show that obvious attributes like outward appearance, the use of religious symbols, or formal affiliation with a certain denomination fail to reveal the actual diversity of religious orientations and practices. In fact religious orientations among Turkish student teachers, or, more generally, Turkish students of education, who have Sunni or Alevi backgrounds, appeared far from homogeneous. Personal views and attitudes rather than formal denominations provided the key concepts of classification. From Glock’s five dimensions of religiousness (religious faith, religious knowledge, social consequences of religion, religious practice, religious experience, see Glock, 1969) four general types of religious disposition could be derived to categorise my sample: atheists, spiritualists, secularists and ritualists (see Table 6.1). Two of these include subtypes: the secularists can be divided into Alevi and Sunni secularists, while the ritualists seem to favour either a pragmatic or an idealistic outlook. Alevi students are either spiritualists or secularists. Sunni students were represented in all categories, with all the veiled ones, however, appearing among the ritualists.

---

7 Esser (1998) stresses that the most important investment for access to key positions in the majority-society is investment into higher education. For an ethnic or religious minority, higher education is the only means to gain access to the core culture of the majority-society, and thus to key positions (p. 10). From this point of view integration is seen as constituting an equal likelihood of benefiting from the opportunities which the society is offering to its members (Esser, 1998, p. 14).

8 For more details of my research see Karakasoğlu-Aydin, 2000.
Why do They Wear Headscarves?

One of my main points of interest was the question of why some of these young academics have taken to wearing the headscarf. At first sight, at least, wishing to share in important social functions such as teaching is not easily reconciled with the use of a symbol which the majority regards as a concealment of the woman behind. In the discussion of my findings I will show how such religious orientations interact with the young women’s educational ideals, i.e. with their concepts of contemporary education in general, and of their own roles as future educators in schools and similar institutions. Conclusions which perhaps contribute to this volume’s overall concern may be summarised in the following three paragraphs. Wherever appropriate I will use quotations from the interviews to illustrate my suggestions.

Religious orientations of people with a Muslim family background are not limited to the kind of ‘visible’ religiousness indicated by a headscarf. There are in fact many different nuances which also include variants of spiritualism and even a sort of atheism based on Muslim culture. Boundaries between the different orientations are fluid: some believers have left their Muslim roots behind (these are the ‘spiritualists’, most of whom come from an Alevi background), whereas secularism does not necessarily preclude the wearing of a headscarf. The symbolic garment in these latter cases seems to serve as a token of ‘externalised’ religiousness. It does not affect the wearers’ fundamentally secular ideas of religion as a private individual matter, and of religious freedom as a basic human right. The decision to wear a headscarf thus does not always reflect a desire to gain a reputation for personal religiousness in all areas of life. It may also express completely different and quite individual views of what makes up an Islamic way of life.

Though religious orientation stresses an allegedly Muslim style of clothing, it is still not necessarily related to a conservative and dogmatic world-view. The religious orientation of the veiled young women is quite different from that of their parents (see also Nökel, 1996, 2002; Karakaşoğlu-Aydın, 1998; Klinkhammer, 1999; Swietlik, 2000). The religious orientation of the ritualists in my sample can be characterised as an intellectual approach through cognition. It is important for them to claim that their way of life complies with the rules of the one and only ‘true’ Islam, as opposed to traditional Turkish Islam, which they regard as a culturally estranged religious hybrid. I quote from one of my interviews to demonstrate how the young women put it:

I try to see everything in terms of my religion. Although when I say that, I
know that a lot of what we've been taught as religion is wrong. For example, that men and women must be separated from each other, are not allowed to sit in the same room. Anyway, I've found out for myself that there's no harm in it when a woman dresses in a particular _esentepe_ [Turkish for a certain kind of correct Islamic costume, YK]. I mean, real Islam would have it that way. Or, the case of sex education. That's forbidden in Islam, it's really indecent, how can anyone just teach it? That's what we were taught. But in fact it isn't like that, in Islam it is given very high status, it is a necessity, that is what our religion teaches us. I believe that, making allowances for this false knowledge, I can learn everything through my religion, of course from the true correct religion that hasn't got so much to do with tradition (...). Culture, customs and usage change, but religion doesn't. In Turkey, lots of cultural matters are considered to be linked to religion, but they aren't, it's just wrong (Nermin).

No Break With the Parents' Generation

I follow Olivier Roy's statement (ISIM-Newsletter 5, 2000, p. 1) that in the context of immigration 'there are no social constraints or even inducements to behave as a good Muslim; praying, fasting, eating _halal_ require personal involvement'. One has to re-create an individual basis, the patterns of an everyday life for a Muslim. My findings, however, do not entirely support his conclusion that 'to be a 'true' Muslim is an individual choice, because it usually means a double break; with a too traditional familial environment and with the dominant secular society'. My own research seems to suggest a different interpretation. Claiming to live according to 'true' Islam means sticking to the common - religious - basis of the family while trying to reconcile it with more modern life styles. This is achieved by re-interpreting religious norms in terms of a more intellectual approach to the Islamic sources. The desired outcome is to be able to live in Germany as a believing Muslim who plays an important role in the secular public sphere. So while this brand of 'true' Islam avoids abandoning the tradition, it does not shun secular society either. It is a synthesis of both.9

To illustrate this combination of the parent generations' religious tradition and concepts of modern urban ways of life I would again like to quote from one of my interviews. In the following sequence we listen to a veiled student of education who tries to explain why at the end of her school career she decided to wear a headscarf. Along with religious motives, her reasoning shows similarity to feminist arguments on equal career-opportunities for women:

My mother considers clothing very important, she always wanted us to be well-dressed so that the teacher would say, you come from a modern family! But when my mother came to the parents' visiting day the teacher made a 180 degrees turn around because my mother had her head covered. Afterwards the teacher treated me somewhat differently, or at least I had the impression she did. That was when I began to understand what it was all about, and that's what made me finally decide to wear a headscarf. Of course the prime reason was that I am firm in my beliefs, and that they are right. But it was also because I believed that women who wear headscarves should never take second place. And that a woman with a headscarf can be at least as modern as one without, and can have a career just the same. This I believed from the bottom of my heart, and I wanted to prove it. That's another reason (Fatma).

Ethnic Revival Among the Young Alevi

These developments within the Sunni section of my sample are somewhat distortedly mirrored among the young Alevi women. It is not only the struggle for recognition by both their parents and the non-Muslim majority which shapes the Alevi's personal approach to religiousness. Their reconstruction of Alevi identity also reflects Sunni prejudice against the Alevi's 'lack of religious practice' and 'lack of morality between the sexes'.

As I grew older, particularly when I started further education and entered the Gymnasium, but also now at the university, I realised these, well, religious wars. And this of course changed my attitude. I wanted to get to know more about Alevism because I had heard these prejudices like 'They do such and such, and they are unbelievers' and this really changed my personal attitude. But I must say I'm still not a fanatic Alevi, because I am against this - from both sides. I sometimes think I still don't know enough about all that, I still have to deepen my knowledge. But in doing so I know I changed myself very much so that I know now I am Alevi, and how Alevi behave, what our tradition is, and how Alevi worship is supposed to be performed. And I know all this is good for me (Yeşim).

In arguing against these prejudices they draw a clear line between their understanding of Islam and that of the Sunni. This clear distinction is an important means of fostering their ethno-religious identity. On the sample students the 'ethnic revival' established in Alevi literature, which is characterised by a marked dissociation from orthodox Islam, was certainly

9 These findings about the development of Islamic identities in the turko-Muslim communities in Germany correspond to those undertaken by the Muslims-Pakistani communities in Britain which Modood presents in several articles. Modood, 1997, pp. 157-58.
not lost. However, they also have something in common with the Sunni, although this is not immediately apparent. The lay Alevi and the ritualists agree on distinguishing between the Turkish tradition, which to them has been a predominantly negative experience, and the 'genuine' nature of their acquired religion. Thus both groups manage to rid themselves of what they perceive as the traditional religious orientation of their parents. They confront their parents' traditionalism with the 'true religion' they discover in the specialist literature, in lectures and in their further education. Both groups also dissociate themselves from what they depict as the 'typically Turkish' education of their parents. The lay Alevi tend to claim so-called Western 'modern' ideas such as tolerance, sexual equality, non-aggression and humanism as genuine Alevi values. It is not German society but their own religious background which therefore entitles the Alevi students to present themselves as representatives of 'modern' values. Since their own religio-cultural background demands no outward signs of religious affiliation, the Alevi can step forward as representatives of a view of religion which is compatible with Western ideas on women's emancipation, thereby emphasising their religious orientation's independence from the Sunni framework.

**Intellectual Approach to the 'True' Religion**

With the exception of the atheists, each of the different orientations relies on an internalised ethico-religious model to guide social behaviour. These models have precedence over ritual practice, since for all of the groups ritual practice is inconceivable without the internalisation of its inherent ethics, moral intention and social meaning. The emphasis is again on the difference from the parents' generation, which lack comparable intellectual access to religion. The intellectual approach to religion as a prerequisite of 'true' religiousness emerges as the most conspicuous common characteristic of the (Sunni) ritualists – of pragmatic and idealistic outlook alike – with the lay Alevi. To all of them, the acquisition of knowledge about the fundamental principles of their religion constitutes a crucial factor in strengthening both their religious sense of belonging and their personal religious identity. In both cases the acquisition of knowledge has become associated with ritual practice. The underlying meaning is, however, not the same.

For the ritualists, acquisition of knowledge opens a 'new' approach to ritual practice, because knowledge of its essential religious intention is the only means of its deliberate and 'true' reinterpretation. This group shows characteristics of the 'scriptualism' that Geertz described as a reaction to the demands of Western 'modernism'.

For the lay Alevi, acquisition of religious knowledge does not derive from an obligation to strictly observe religious practice, since their attitude towards the formal aspects of religion is a much more flexible one. The students themselves report that in fact even their parents would perform the rites but rarely, and not expect the children to do otherwise. The gap was instead filled by an increased emphasis on 'internalisation'. Besides, my interviews confirm certain tendencies towards 'erosion' and 'ethnic revival' inside the Alevi community, which have been described in the literature. Whereas the religious orientation of the spiritualists illustrates the effect of 'erosion', the lay Alevi women's interest in the Alevilik's approach to religious ritual and religious knowledge certainly comes with an 'ethnic revival' flavour. Equipped with thorough knowledge the students would feel more capable to represent the religious community-spirit in the outside world and, if necessary, to defend it. From a more practical point of view, in-depth knowledge of the fundamental principles of the Alevilik is, of course, also useful to reject Sunni criticism. For most of the interviewed Alevi women, ritual practice consists of acquiring knowledge.

**What is Modern, What is Contemporary Religious Education?**

If 'modernisation' implies an agreement on basic concepts such as social pluralism, democracy, tolerance and individual freedom, then my findings confirm what the literature reports on other sections of the Turkish Muslim community: even an individual whose religious orientation has the strongest intensity and widest scope in all dimensions may feel quite at ease sharing 'modern' views. According to earlier research, migrant Muslims' religious beliefs are remarkably changeable and not necessarily opposed to social integration (Diehl, Urban and Esser, 1998, pp. 30-32). Apparently female students of education are no exceptions. In addition, the present conclusions suggest that for members of the second migrant generation religious belief can be a resource which they rely on to actively shape their process of integration.

As we could see with the group of Alevi students, the young women's educational ideals reveal similarities to western concepts of individual freedom, tolerance and acceptance of social pluralism. On the other hand, some of the Sunni students, notably among the 'ritualist' subgroup, seem to cling to 'older' ideas of education. Their understanding of education diverts from the common dichotomies of individualism vs. collectivism,
independence vs. family ties, ritualism vs. internalisation. In their concept of family education seemingly contradictory ideals are merged to inform new ones.

As future educators, however, more than anything else they expect to be professional mediators of knowledge and general concepts of contemporary education. Although ‘education’ for Muslims – and especially Islamists in Germany – is one of the main issues they have to deal with, nothing in my interviews suggested that this group of more or less ‘Islamist’ young women might cherish a specific view of Islamic pedagogy or style of education. The recent call of Nimat Hafez Barazangi and other Islamic pedagogues for a contemporary approach to an Islamic theory of education still seems to go unheeded with the newly emerging group of Muslim pedagogues in Germany. Although one group of orthodox students – the ‘idealistic ritualists’ as I called them because of the role religious rites play in their everyday life – prefer religious values and norms as a framework for the education of their own children, they do not transfer this concept of Islamic education onto their professional life as teachers. They make a clear distinction between the family, where Islam rules the whole of life, and the public sphere where they are supposed to act as teachers in secular institutions. I could not find evidence in their statements of a missionary orientation as far as their pupils are concerned (see Karakaşoğlu-Aydan, 2000). But they make it perfectly clear that within their own families, and for their children in particular, conversion to other religions or opposing the religious life style of the family will not be accepted. As one of my interviewees put it when asked if she would grant her children the right for self-determination and independence:

In some respects yes, they should be open minded, they should be able to care for themselves and do as they please, but only as long as all this is kept within the borders of Islam (Aynur).

Still most of them said they were not going to distinguish between the education of boys and girls:

I would treat them equally. For instance I wouldn’t allow my son or my daughter to go to the discotheque or to have sexual intercourse with the other sex before marriage.

In this case, equality in education of the sexes is seen as equality of restrictions. All these young women are convinced beyond doubt that their respective approaches to Muslim education will bring up their children to become good citizens and valuable members of society.

From the point of view of the ritualists, ‘Islamic education’ requires that the entire process be based on Muslim norms and values. The non-orthodox Muslim female students, on the other hand, would surely teach Islam, or at least its ‘basics’, but not accept it as an overall educational framework. Against this difference it seems striking that ritualists as well as secularists usually appreciate the establishment of private Muslim schools (in terms of equality with existing Christian ones) but do not want their children to attend them, since they fear disintegration from the non-Muslim German majority and, hence, slackening career options for their children.¹⁰

Individuality Through Religion

In wearing their Islamic dress in public the ritualists are demanding acceptance of a religious life-style as one among the many patterns a pluralist society deems admissible. The point was made perfectly clear by one of my interviewees who compared her headscarf to the green hair of punks: ‘Some people like to dye their hair green, and I’m wearing my headscarf, so what’s the difference?’. They want both their religious and their professional identities to be accepted at school without being suspected of infiltrating the secular German educational system with Islamist ideas. As one of the Secularists put it with a laugh, ‘And religion, well I’d like to be accepted the way I think, I mean with my religious views, which are not Christian, but Muslim. Still I don’t think it’ll matter all that much at school. I mean, I won’t teach Maths and Turkish as a Muslim theologian’ (Ayten).

One of the veiled orthodox interviewees stresses that for her, tolerance involves both sides alike. She definitely refuses to conform to the majority view as far as ethnic or religious orientation is concerned. She behaves as a self-confident individual, a full member of the surrounding society with equal rights and demands:

Yes, well I want to be accepted with my nationality and my religion. That is, I don’t want to adapt to their ideas at all, but to be accepted the way I am, because otherwise I wouldn’t feel accepted. Yes, just as I accept them, the way they are, that’s what I expect as well (Hidayet).

¹⁰ These findings correspond to those from a study on Pakistani Girls in British schools. In stressing the importance of integration with other cultures the girls interviewed disagreed with setting up Muslim schools. ‘They know that their futures are in Britain, and they do not want to be isolated from the rest of British society’, Shafik and Kelly, 1989, p. 18.
The Public Role of Religion in Germany and New Demands of Muslims

Perhaps it is useful to connect my research findings to a more general political discussion on the public role of Islam in Germany. A young Muslim teacher was at the centre of a controversy about whether Muslim women teachers should be allowed to wear an ‘Islamic dress’ in German schools. I am talking about the case of Fereshta Ludin, a young woman of Afghan origin who was trained as a teacher in Baden-Württemberg. It was the State Ministry of Cultural Affairs rather than the school’s headmaster who, at the beginning of her two years practical training (which follows the university examination), demanded she take off her headscarf. According to the ministry the headscarf was at variance with basic Christian values and constitutional secularism alike. As a symbol of backward, fundamentalist Islamic attitudes its message was opposition to the principles of freedom of thought and of the equality of the sexes. Against this image of the headscarf, Ludin emphasised in interviews that she would always defend those two principles of the society, that it was her own decision to wear it as a personal symbol of what Islam meant to her, and that she did not consider it a way of putting under pressure Muslim girls who did not wish to wear a headscarf. While public debate is still going on, the case has been brought before the Supreme Administrative Court (Bundesverwaltungsgericht) in Berlin. The final decision of the Supreme Administrative Court confirmed in 2002 the opinion of the State Ministry of Cultural affairs in Dade-Württemberg, so that Ludin is forbidden to work as a teacher at public schools if she insists in wearing her headscarf. Ludin now works as a part-time teacher of English at the Islamic Grammar School in Berlin (a private school with state support), the only one of its kind existing in Germany. Each of the federal states has its own approach to the issue of veiling. Whereas in Baden-Württemberg the headscarf is forbidden, in Northrhine-Westfalia (NRW) the Ministry leaves it up to the school directors to decide individually. So in the NRW city of Wuppertal, the veiled deputy head mistress of one of two neighbouring schools hopes for improved communication with Muslim pupils and their parents, while at the other teachers are not permitted to wear headscarves lest the children’s religious freedom should be impaired.

The Ludin case demonstrates that German state authorities, much like a considerable part of the population, still tend to regard the headscarf as evidence of an undemocratic, theocratic and thus dogmatic world view. Veiled teachers are suspected of imposing a backward world view on their pupils. They are considered a potential danger for a democratic and tolerant education. From this perspective it seems entirely impossible to be veiled and still meet the demands of secular professionalism.

My interviews include examples to the contrary. They illustrate the wish of young Muslims to play an important role in public life in Germany, to have a position in the community without neglecting their specific approach to Islam. It even seems that being visible as a Muslim in the secular non-Muslim environment is not only a matter of personal preference, of life style, or of searching for individual or collective identity, but perhaps also an important and effective way for members of a minority to be recognised with their special religious demands and their distinct identities, both individually and as a Muslim lobby. This is especially the case when, like in Germany, religion is not separated from the state as clearly as the term secularism would have us believe.

The German concept of secularism is not a radically lay one. It has never been effectively severed from the society’s Christian roots. Freedom of religion, as guaranteed by Article 4 of the German constitution, does not only imply the right to believe or not to believe, to practise or not to practise one’s faith in public and to maintain religious institutions and organisations, but religion may also interfere with individual and communal freedom. Religion is both a private and a public issue because it is free to act as a social power (Böckenförde, 1996, p. 93) or enter the field of politics. Very often the need for separation of religion and state in Western democracies is misunderstood to mean separation of religion and politics (Walzer, 1998, p. 304). In Germany there is no such strict separation between religion and politics. As a result the Christian churches and also the Jewish community have their own official representatives; they are entitled to membership of various social and even political committees like the Radio and Television Committee (an institution which serves as kind of a self-regulation body). As a result in some of the Länder the churches are a major provider of social services. A typical case is Northrhine-Westfalia, where 80 per cent of the kindergartens are run by the churches. In all Länder church taxes are collected by the state, and in most of them religious education is part of the state schools’ regular curriculum. Teachers of religious education are needed by both the state and their

---

11 It is not merely in the case of Germany where this view of Islam applies. Carens and Williams found a similar stereotyped image of Islam, which they consider dangerous to Western democracies (Carens and Williams, 1996, p. 158).
12 For more details of the ‘Ludin case’ see Karakaşoğlu-Aydın, 1999.
13 For a more detailed account of politicians’ and other public actors’ comments on this case see Karakaşoğlu-Aydın, 1999.
church. No such thing is possible for Muslims in Germany, because the immigrants' Islam lacks the hierarchy which is so characteristic of the churches' organisational structures.

Muslim immigrants and their increasing demands for equal participation in every realm of society have done much to revitalise the debate on the role of religion within the German state. Extremely controversial views are held concerning the way religion relates to modernity. In this respect the position of Islam in a basically Christian yet secularised society is one of the most crucial issues. One of the questions is, to what extent Islam will be offered the opportunity to achieve a social position similar to that of the Christian churches. At least we may safely expect that the churches, given their many social and economic ties with the German state, will not willingly surrender their privileges in favour of a radically laicist separation of state and religion.

It is this special German secularism of sorts which encourages officials, lawyers, managers of welfare organisations and church authorities to ask for 'the spokesman', 'the one and only top representative of Islam', when Muslims call for recognition of their special religious demands. By doing so, German officials force the migrant Islam to present itself – for all its internal diversity, which my interviews amply demonstrate – as a homogeneous unit which to deal with seems sufficiently easy. In the long run this approach is, of course, almost bound to encourage fundamentalist claims of speaking on behalf of the 'very truth' of Islam. I agree with Walzer's conclusion that 'within constitutional limits, religious and ideological movements can mobilise whatever passion they can mobilise: democratic politics can and should be permissive in this regard' (Walzer, 1998, p. 305).

In this process only those groups which are successful in presenting themselves as a powerful unit, as an effective pressure group or as visible individuals can expect recognition of their particular needs and demands. An effective and powerful strategy is to make sure those demands and needs are a permanent issue of public debate. The use of symbols and of symbolic legal proceedings are important tools for young Muslim activists to gain visibility and recognition as a new religious, political and cultural element in society. Muslim university students, especially the female ones, are key figures in the struggle for recognition of Islam as a social factor in Germany because they combine visibility, intellectuality and institutional knowledge of German society. According to Esser's sociological dimensions of integration (Esser, 1999, p. 24) their academic status is an additional advantage. They are culturally integrated because of their knowledge of the German language and their level of education, they are structurally integrated because of their knowledge of German institutions, and they are socially integrated because of their interaction with the mainstream society. Their emotional integration – as reflected in feeling alike with Germans or being proud of Germany – is ambiguous. They wish to be considered equal and permanent citizens of Germany and still preserve their distinct religious identity.

Conclusion

Young women who follow their ideals of an Islamic life style are not inclined to hide away from the public, or to be submerged in an anti-modernist ethnic community. To them an Islamic life style is a means of developing an independent self inside Western society. A good example of this intention is the following statement by one of my veiled interviewees:

What does my religion give me? First of all an identity. It gives me an answer to 'where am I, who am I?'. How can I put it? I'm not just anybody, I have a personality, I have standards, a style. And since I do all this consciously, I feel safer and more secure (Niküt).

This attitude is connected to a concept of integration as opposed to assimilation. The latter is equated with losing one's ethnic, cultural and religious roots, and thus with losing an integral part of one's personality. Integration and assimilation are two key concepts of the Muslim discourse on how to relate to the non-Muslim majority. Even the most recent annual congress of the youth organisation of the Islamic Community of Milli Görüş (IGMG)¹⁴ which was held at Essen in November 2000 had a decoration of posters on which the IGMG proclaimed 'Integration yes, Assimilation no' and 'We are Muslims, and we are Europeans'. These slogans seem quite defiant expressions of not wishing one's identity to be tampered with, even if it includes belonging to a common European culture. The following statement shows that, to some extent at least, this defiance might derive from a fear of losing one's identity at the end of a forced process of assimilation. This is expressed by the interviewee as the fear of having to give up her name, a very important part of the modern individual's self-identification:

¹⁴ According to official reports of the German secret service Milli Görüş is an extremist and Islamist organization which aims at preventing young muslims from social and cultural integration into the German society (Verfassungsschutzbericht 1999, p.164, Verfassungs- schutzbericht 2000, p. 207).
Identity and Integration

No doubt integration is a must, but assimilation means total Germanisation, in appearance too, as far as clothing and so on are concerned, behaving completely like a German. But then it’s no longer multicultural but pure German, maybe you’ll even have to change your name (Fatma).

Policy makers in Germany still need to develop a code of practice for religious equality that will meet the challenge of religious pluralism which de facto already exists. Such efforts are, however, bound to fail as long as the Muslims themselves are not regarded as equal partners in the discussion. Thus in Germany the acceptance of Islam and of Muslim claims will depend on the extent to which these young academics will be able to enter key positions inside the German democratic system. If they succeed they might develop and articulate fresh approaches to Islam as an integral instead of an alien element of German society.

References


Custom Tailored Islam?


