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POLITICS AND RELIGION

POLITIQUE DES RELIGIONS
ПОЛИТИКОЛОГИЈА РЕЛИГИЈЕ
POLITICS AND RELIGION
POLITOLOGIE DES RELIGIONS

ПОЛИТИКОЛОГИЈА РЕЛИГИЈЕ је публикација научног карактера. Сви радови пролазе научну рецензију од најмање два квалификована рецензента. Објављује научне чланке, научну критику и полемику и приказе књига. Радове објављене у овој публикацији није дозвољено прештампавати било у деловима било у целини без изричите сагласности издавача. Ставови изнети у текстовима изражавају личне ставове аутора и нису ставови уредништва нити институција у којима су они напословани.

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РЕЧ ГОСТУЂЕГ УРЕДНИКА:

„ЈЕРУСАЛИМ: РЕЛИГИЈЕ И ПОЛИТИКА“

Када смо одлучили да отпочнемо авантуру припремања специјалног издања о Јерусалиму, нисмо знали где ће нас ово искуство одвести. Али отпочели смо ово путовање верујући да Јерусалим заслужује више од једног специјалног издања... Јерусалим заслужује сво наше поштовање и енергију, заједно са свим нашим академским и научним доприносима.

Увек смо изненађени када видимо различите приступе теми „Јерусалима“, али исто тако и зачуђени да није пуно простора дато за елаборацију и фокусирање на академски и научни приступ који може да доведе до открића заједништва у „Светом граду“. Ово специјално издање жели да буде знак који ће подсећати сваког истраживача и миротворца да је овај град свет, управо зато што окупља заједно сва наша различита наслеђа и традиције. Зове се Јерусалим (al - quods) јер дубоко у својој традицији садржи све наше традиције: јеврејску, хришћанску и исламску.

У јудаизму, Јерусалим је најсветији град јер га је, према Старом завету, израелски краљ Давид основао као престоницу Краљевине Израел приближно 1000. године пре нове ере. А краљ Соломон, његов син, наручио је изградњу првог храма у граду. Централни положај Јерусалима у јеврејској вери и традицији огледа се у 2000. години дугој молитви "догодине у Јерусалиму". Ниједан други град није играо тако доминантну улогу у историји, политици, култури, религији, националном животу и свести једног народа као што је то улога Јерусалима у животу сваког Јеврејина. Верујемо да ће нам рад који је послао рабин Адам Розенвасер помоћи да откријемо део светости овог града. Прелазак из рата у мир и светост је путовање живота и Јерусалим управо симболизује тај процес.

У хришћанству, Јерусалим је свети град, јер, по Јеванђељу, Исус је овде разапет, а 300 година касније Света Јелена установила је ходочашће на местима која су везана за Исусов живот. Јерусалим је то место важних догађања у Исусовом животу. То је место где је Исус умро и васкрсао из мртвих, а то је и место које симболизује први мисионарски покрет када су Христови ученици напустили Галилеју и отишли у Јерусалим. Др Ели Ал Хинди из своје оријенталне, хришћанске перспективе поново је у свом раду, како је рекао, ревидирао контроверзног питање Јерусалима из нове перспективе. Он је увео духовно разумевање „Новог Јерусалима“, које је потпуно физички одвојено од Јерусалима као града, а које баца светло на хришћански приступ конфликтима у целини. Затим је проценивао политичке, техничке и људске изазове са којима се сусретају садашњи проговори и сва могућа будућа решења, на основу анализе литературе и изнетих ставова. Г-ђа Лаури Хајтајан истражује у свом раду присуство Јермена у Јерусалиму у последњих 1700 година. Ова историјска процена баца светло на значај Јерусалима за Јермене, посебно за јерменску цркву која је добила овлашћење да заштити света места у Светој Земљи заједно са грчком и латинском Црквом.
У исламу, Јерусалим је трећи најсветији град. Први је постао кибла, кључна тачка за муслиманске молитве 610. године нове ере и, према исламској традицији, божј посланик Мухамед га је посетио десет година касније на свом Ноћном Путовању. Др Фатима Хусеин описала је у свом раду ставове индонежанских, муслиманских студентских активиста, који студирају на два различита смера на универзитету, односно на световним и верским студијама, на тему Јерусалима и Јевреја. У свом раду, она нам је понудила гледишта студената о овој теми.

Сви ови радови имају за циљ да нам дају заједнички простор за размишљање о томе колико је важна мисија Јерусалима. Они су нас подсетили и на наше сопствене мисије, позивајући нас да користимо све могућности како би се успоставио дијалог и критичко размишљање, као пут ка процесу изградње мира унутар религија које верују да је мир могућ на Земљи. Јерусалим као свети град не може бити испуњен цртањем линија и изградњом зидова, као ни стварањем деоба и граница. Јерусалим не може преузети своју мисију стварањем још више подела. Решења се могу наћи умножавањем наших истраживања и стварањем више могућности које нуде заједничку основу за разраду научних истраживања усмерених ка изградњи града толеранције и суживота... града у коме сви верници могу да удруже своје гласове и да се моле и славе Бога.

Зиад Фахед¹

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When we decided to start the journey of writing a special edition about Jerusalem we did not know where this experience will lead us. But we started this journey believing that Jerusalem deserves more than one edition… Jerusalem deserves all our venerations and energies along with our academic and scientific contributions.

We are always surprised to see that different perspectives approach the topic of “Jerusalem” but amazed to witness that not a lot of space is given to elaborate and focus on the academic and scientific approach that can lead to the discovery of the communality and the holiness of the City. This edition wants to be a sign that reminds every researcher and peace builder that this holy city is holy because it assembles or withholds all our different heritages and traditions together. It is called Jerusalem (al – quods) because it contains deep inside its own tradition all our traditions: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic.

In Judaism, Jerusalem has been the holiest city since, according to the Biblical Old Testament, King David of Israel first established it as the capital of the kingdom of Israel in c. 1000 BCE. And King Salomon, his son, commissioned the building of the First Temple in the city. The centrality of Jerusalem in Jewish faith and tradition are reflected in the 2000 year old prayer “next year in Jerusalem”. No other city has played such a dominant role in the history, politics, culture, religion, national life and consciousness of a people as has Jerusalem in the life of any single Jew. We do believe that the paper submitted by Rabbi Adam Rosenwasser will help us to discover part of the holiness of this city. Moving from war to peace to holiness is a journey of life and Jerusalem symbolize such process.

In Christianity, Jerusalem has been a holy city since, according to the Gospel, Jesus was crucified, and 300 years later Saint Helena identified the pilgrimage sites of Jesus’ life. Jerusalem is that place of important events in the life of Jesus happened. It is the place where Christ died and raised and it is the place that symbolizes the first missionary movement when the Disciples of Christ left Galilee and went to Jerusalem. Dr. Elie Al Hindy from his Christian Oriental perspective revisited in his paper what he called the controversial issue of Jerusalem from a new perspective. He included the spiritual understanding of the “new Jerusalem” that is completely separate from the physical city of Jerusalem but that sheds light on the Christian approach to conflicts in general. Then he reviewed the political, technical, and human challenges that are facing the current negotiations and any possible future solutions, based on the analysis of the literature and declared positions; An exciting and challenging invitation. Ms. Laury Hatyan examines in her paper the presence of the Armenians in Jerusalem for the past 1700 years. This historical account sheds the light on the importance of Jerusalem for the Armenians, especially for the Armenian Church that was granted the authority to safeguard the Holy Places in the Holy Land with the Greek and Latin Churches.
In Islam, Jerusalem is the third holiest city. It became the first Quibla, the focal point for Muslim prayer in 610 CE, and, according to Islamic tradition, the prophet made his Night Journey there ten years after. Dr. Fatimah Husein described on her paper the views of Indonesian Muslim student activists, who are studying in two different categories of university, namely secular and religious-based, on Jerusalem and the Jews. In her paper she offered us the students’ points of view regarding this topic.

All the papers aim to offer us a common space to think on how important the mission of Jerusalem is. They reminded us also of our own mission, inviting us to use all the opportunities to establish a deep dialogue and a critical thinking journey toward the peace building process within the religions who believe that peace is possible on earth. Jerusalem as a holy city cannot be fulfilled by drawing lines and building walls and creating separations and boundaries. Jerusalem cannot assume its mission by creating more divisions. Solutions can be found by multiplying our researches and creating more opportunities and offering common ground to elaborate scientific researches oriented toward building a city of tolerance and coexistence… a city where all believers can join their voices to pray and glorify God.

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TOPIC OF THE ISSUE
JERUSALEM: RELIGIONS AND POLITICS
JERUSALEM A CITY OF WAR AND PEACE AND HOLINESS... A SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

Rabbi Adam Rosenwasser, enlighten in this paper the place of Jerusalem as a city of war and peace and holiness from a Scriptural perspective. The Rabbinic midrashim support the biblical text and explain the holiness of the City of Jerusalem from a Judaic perspectives. The readers of this paper will discover the different Jewish images of Jerusalem and will understand how Jews have related to this very special place throughout the ages.

Key words: Jerusalem, Rabbinic midrashim, Jerusalem City of war and peace, Jerusalem City of Holiness, Jerusalem in the Jewish tradition.

Introduction

Jerusalem holds a beloved and complicated place in Jewish tradition. Of the many different images of this awesome city which exist, four are especially noteworthy: Jerusalem as a city of war and peace, a city of holiness, a city of mourning, and a city at the center of the world. Each image appears in an early form in the Hebrew Bible and is then reinforced in later Rabbinic midrashim, stories which serve to explain and expand upon the biblical text. By examining these different Jewish images of Jerusalem, the reader will understand how Jews have related to this very special place throughout the ages.

Jerusalem a City of War and Peace

An early mention of the city in the book of Jerusalem lists the city along with many cities which are to be conquered by Joshua and the Israelites as they enter the land of Canaan after their forty years of wandering.

“And Tzela, Elef, and the Jebusite (city)- it is Jerusalem, Givat, K’riat, fourteen towns...
and their villages, this is the portion of Benjamin by their families”.²

Jerusalem, along with other cities, is scouted out by a leader of the tribe of Benjamin. It is not given any special meaning or status. Its name simply appears alongside the other cities as a target of conquest.

By the time of King David however, Jerusalem has taken on a much greater role than simply as a city to be conquered. The book of Second Samuel describes the Davidic Monarchy. Chief among its descriptions of King David is his conquering of Jerusalem and the relocation of his capitol from Hebron to Jerusalem.

David was thirty years old during his reign (when he became king) and for forty years he reigned. In Hebron he was the king of Judah for seven years and six months and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty three years over all of Israel and Judah. The king and his men went to Jerusalem to the Jebusites the dwellers of the land. And they said to David, “Do not come here because the blind and the lame will make you go back saying, “Do not come here, David.” And David captured the fortress of Zion which is the City of David. And David said on that day, “All shall strike the Jebusites and approach the water-channel. The lame and the blind are the haters of David. That is why they say the blind and lame don’t come to the House.” And David resided in the fortress and called it the City of David and David built around it from the Milo toward the house. And David was strengthened, and Adonai the God of Hosts was with him.³

A question which this text does not answer is why David wished to move the monarchy from Hebron to Jerusalem. The biblical text does not give insight into David’s decision, but one possibility, solidified by the assertion in Joshua that Jerusalem was situated in the tribe of Benjamin’s territory, is that by David conquering Jerusalem, he became not only the ruler of Judah, but also the ruler of Benjamin or the House of Israel in general. Moving from Hebron to Jerusalem gave the king and the monarchy more power. This text asserts that notion, stating that David now reigned “over all of Israel and Judah”.

Joshua begins the process of conquering the city, invoking fear in the local leaders. However, it is David who makes Jerusalem the capitol city of both kingdoms and it is during his time that the king and the city gain in power and stature.

It is known that Jerusalem is a city with a long history of war and strife. However, the Rabbis, in certain midrashim, prefer to focus on Jerusalem as a place with potential for peace. In fact, they point to the strange etymology of the place to attempt and define it as a place where peace is entirely possible.

“And Melchitzedek, King of Salem, brought forth bread and wine (Gen 14:18).” Melchitzedek means that this place caused its inhabitants to be righteous. Another

² Joshua 18:28
³ 2 Samuel 4:4-10.
interpretation: “And the King of Tzdeek (Joshua 10:1). Jerusalem is called “tzedek,” as it is written, “Tzdeek (righteousness) lodged within her (Isaiah 1:21)”.

This one small explanation of the origin of the city’s name is rather complex. Jerusalem is clearly identified with Salem, the city named in Genesis. As a result, Salem becomes one half of the city’s name. Beyond that, however, Melchitzedek, as the gift-bearing King who goes out to greet Abraham in peace, is portrayed as a righteous resident of Jerusalem. Melchitzedek’s name connects righteousness and a peaceful offering with the city. In the second part of the midrash Jerusalem itself is known as zzedek, as the place of righteousness, and the proof text used is from Isaiah. So this one text both claims that Jerusalem makes people righteous, and also that Jerusalem is the epitome of righteousness itself. What becomes clear from this text is that according to this particular author, Jerusalem is the “righteous city”.

A second Genesis Rabbah text attempts to figure out the origins of the naming of the city, but does so in a very different manner. The previous midrash plays with linguistic commonalities, while this next midrash takes two episodes from the Bible and pulls them together into one coherent narrative:

“Abraham called the place appointed for the Temple “yi’reh” because he knew it would be the abiding place for the fear of God. But Shem gave it the name “shalem,” or place of peace. God did not want to offend either Abraham or Shem, so the Holy One, Blessed be He, united the two names, calling the city “yireh-shalem,” or Jerusalem”.

This text seems to be a Divine compromise between two different visions of the city. Shem, one of Noah’s sons, sees it as a place of peace. Perhaps it also represents to him a new place of wholeness, following the destruction wrecked by the flood. Abraham, traumatized by the experience he has just gone through on the mountain, believes that this place represents fear. Clearly, the texts on the naming of Mount Moriah demonstrate that the Rabbis believe contradictory things about its naming and perhaps its very essence. Jerusalem can represent opposing ideas; a place of wholeness but at the same time, a place of fear. God names the city Jerusalem, and in doing so, establishes this city as a place both of peace and of fear and war. Both exist and both elements find their way into many other midrashim about the city.

4  Genesis Rabbah 43:2.
5  Genesis Rabbah is a religious text from Judaism’s classical period. It is a midrash comprising a collection of ancient rabbinical homiletical interpretations of the Book of Genesis (B’reshith in Hebrew).
7  Mount Moriah is the name given to a mountain range by the book of Genesis, in which context it is given as the location of the sacrifice of Isaac.
Jerusalem a City of Holiness

Jerusalem has always been the holy city of the Jewish people. In Judaism, holiness is often equated with something separate, set apart, or different. In a previously analyzed midrash on King David, for example, the monarch declares that the blind and the lame may not enter the city because of its special status. This theme occurs elsewhere in the Bible, in the Book of Isaiah, equating holiness with uniqueness.

Awake awake!/ Dress in your strength, Zion/ Dress in the clothing of your splendor/ Jerusalem the Holy City/ For no more will they come to you again/ uncircumcised and impure. Arise from the dust, rise/ sit Jerusalem/ Open the bonds from your neck/ captive daughter of Zion.8

Here, Jerusalem is personified and told to garb herself in robes of splendor. There is also an allusion to the Second Samuel text describing David’s conquering of the city. Just as King David would not let the lame or blind into the city, now it is the uncircumcised and impure who cannot come. Isaiah’s vision of the city here seems to be that she should be a place of purity where every person follows the particular laws set out in Torah and which the prophets demanded must be observed. Another interesting point in the text is that Jerusalem is directly referred to here as, ir ha-kodesh9, the Holy City. The descriptions of David’s conquering and Solomon’s building the city certainly allude to Jerusalem being a special and unique place, but this text makes it abundantly clear that Jerusalem carries with it a status seemingly unlike any other city in the world.

This idea of Jerusalem as ir ha kodesh, the Holy City, is carried out in a particular midrash which determines that the city is holy because it rests upon two sacred mountains which gain their special status due to the sojourning of the Jewish people as well as the path of the Torah.

The foundation of the world is Jerusalem on the merit of two holy mountains: Mount Sinai and Mount Moriah. Rabbi Pinchas in the name of Rabbi Reuven said, “In the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will bring together Sinai and Tavor and Carmel and place Jerusalem on top of them, as it is written, “In the days to come, the Mount of the LORD’s House shall stand firm above the mountains.” (Isa. 2:2).10

Jerusalem here is linked to being the foundation of the world because of two holy mountains, Sinai and Moriah, which are associated with one another even though this is a geographical impossibility. This demonstrates that the Rabbis are not concerned with geography. It stresses the importance of Jerusalem as the place where God and the Torah rest. The Torah begins its journey on Sinai and then makes its way to Moriah, Zion, and Jerusalem. Thus the mountains,

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8 Isaiah 52:1-2.
9 City of Holy place/holiness.
10 Midrash to Psalms 87:3.
created facing one another in Jubilees, are now physically brought together in Rabbinic Literature, making Jerusalem worthy of being the foundation of the entire world. Here, neither mountain is made more important, but both, as critical aspects of the people’s journey, are needed to support the city. The mention of additional mountains in the future perhaps points to the author’s feeling that the journey needs to be continued; that there are other holy mountains worthy of supporting Jerusalem.

**Jerusalem as Navel: The City at the Center of the World**

The idea of holiness is also developed through the perceptions that Jerusalem’s location is the geographical center of the planet, at its navel. This idea first appears explicitly in the book of Ezekiel. “To turn you against repopulated wastes, and against a people gathered from among the nations, acquiring livestock and possessions, living at the center of the earth.”11 In the previous chapter of this first, Ezekiel gives the people what is commonly referred to as the “Dry Bones Prophecy,” where the Prophet reassures the people that they will be resurrected and returned to the Land of Israel. The next text serves as a warning to the people that after they have returned to their land, they will still be in danger. In later, *tibbur haaretz* becomes linked to Jerusalem as the city located at the center of the earth.

Three major themes involving the navel emerge. The first theme is anthropomorphic: just as a human being has a navel, so, too, does the world. The second theme is that of “foundation:” the navel of the world is in Jerusalem because this is also the location of the *even shettiyah*, best translated as “the foundation stone of the entire world.” The third is of the navel as Torah, which is life-giving; the navel of the world is in Jerusalem because Jerusalem is the home of the Torah which gives life to humanity.12 All of these texts demonstrate the clear association in the Rabbinic mind of Jerusalem as the navel of the world, as a place of utmost importance.

An early text to compare man’s anatomy with the land’s anatomy is Ecclesiastes Rabbah. This particular text is notable for its brevity and its simple, list-like comparisons. There is no mistaking the author’s intent here; whatever a man possesses, so, too, does the land.

*Man has hands and the land has hands, as it is written, “And the land behold! It has wide hands.”*(Gen 34:21)  *Man has thighs and the land has thighs, as it is written, “I will gather them from the thighs of the land”* (Jer 31:8). *Man has a navel and the land has a navel, as it is written, “They who dwell on the navel of the land.”*(Ezek

11  Ezekiel 38:12, New JPS translation.
12  Isaiah 2:2-3.
The comparison is clear here and it moves in an interesting manner. Hands are considered an extremity of the human body and along with feet, they are the body part which is located farthest away from the center of the body. Next comes the comparison of thighs, which are located closer to the center of the body and finally the navel which is more or less in the center of the body. The text here moves spatially from outer to inner, a pattern which will be followed throughout comparisons to Jerusalem’s position at the center of the earth.

The Ecclesiastes Rabbah text has a close parallel in Midrash Tanhuma Buber. The difference, however, is that the Tanhuma text compares the land to a woman. The “feminization” of this comparison adds some unique elements that would be impossible to use in the comparison of a man to the land. The Tanhuma text moves from both woman and land having a mouth and then, like in the Ecclesiastes Rabbah text, states that both woman and land have hands, using the same proof text from Genesis Chapter Thirty-four. The thigh comparison between man and land is missing here, and the navel comparison, nearly identical to the Ecclesiastes Rabbah text, follows directly after the verse about hands. What comes next is fascinating. The text reads,

“Just as a woman swells and gives birth, so, too, does the land as it is written, “Can a land pass through travail in a single day? Or is a nation born all at once?” (Isaiah 66:8) This is Israel, who the Holy One, Blessed be He, brought them and let them enter into Jerusalem for the first time”.15

Here, the meaning of navel is connected to a woman’s ability to give birth. A woman has a navel which is her center. The people Israel are brought to the center, Jerusalem, by God, after they have been born. So center means the place which creates and sustains life. According to the Midrash Tanhuma Buber author, the nation, born in the Isaiah text, becomes the people of Israel who are then brought to the navel of the land, to Jerusalem, in order that they may live. Thus, the notion of woman having much in common with the land adds an element of nurturing and the ability to procreate that is missing from the initial text of Ecclesiastes Rabbah.

Other midrashim follow the pattern established by the Ecclesiastes Rabbah text, but they add additional elements to their comparisons. In the Midrash on Psalms, the text reads as follows:

“The heavens have a heart before the Holy One Blessed be He, as it is written, “The mountain was ablaze on fire unto the heart of the sky.” (Deut 4:11) And likewise
is a heart to the sea, as it is written, “The deeps froze in the heart of the sea.” (Ex 15:8) The land has a navel before the Holy One Blessed be He, as it is written, “They who dwell on the navel of the land.” (Ezek 38:12) And it has a mouth before the Holy One Blessed be He as it is written, “And the earth opened its mouth.” (Num 16:32) And it has legs before the Holy One Blessed be He, as it is written, “And the earth forever stands”. (Eccl 1:4)

The comparisons between man and earth now shift to comparisons between man and heavens, man and sea, and then man and land. Depending on one’s perception, one could see the heavens as most important followed by sea and then land, or if one follows the sequence set by the Ecclesiastes Rabban text, then one would find the land to be most important as it comes after heavens and sea. The evidence for the land as being the most important of the three is strengthened by the fact that whereas the heavens and sky have a heart, the land has a navel, a mouth, and legs. Additionally, the words “navel,” “mouth,” and “legs” are preceded by the phrase lifnay ha-kadosh baruh hu, before the Holy One, Blessed be He. It is as if the land is given its navel, mouth, and legs directly by God. God’s name here, repeated three times, adds sanctity. As a human being dwelling exclusively on the land, it fits that the author of Midrash Tehilim would consider the land to be the most important of the three. Here, navel is one of three major features of the land. The proof texts are virtually indistinguishable from the texts already studied, but the addition and supposed supersession of land over sky and sea forms the impression that the land, and especially its navel, could be considered even holier than the heavens above or the seas below.

A text in the midrashic collection Yalkut Shimoni adds a nuanced but important interpretation of the idea of the land having a navel. It begins by basically using a pattern that the skies and seas do not have hearts, and it is only through God’s will that the skies and seas are given hearts. This pattern then includes the land and its navel. The text reads, “The land does not have a navel or thighs, but before the Holy One Blessed be He for they dwell on the navel of the earth. The earth stands forever and He gathered them from the thighs of the earth.” The text does not cite the proof texts, but it clearly has brought together the common text used for navel from Ezekiel 38:12 along with Ecclesiastes 1:4 and Jeremiah 31:8. Basically, the text attributes the land’s navel directly to God. The land, like the heavens and the seas, does not have any human attributes until God grants them. Although the land is important, the author of this particular text wants there to be no confusion. It is God who gives the land its navel and then, similar to the Tanhuma Buber text, allows the people to dwell on the land and assures

16 The Midrash on Psalms 19:3.
17 The “Yalkut” of Simeon of Frankfurt the best known and most comprehensive midrashic anthology, covering the whole Bible.
18 Yalkut Shimoni vol. II, remez 672.
them that the land will stand forever. Thus, while v’haaretz ein tibbur, and the land has no navel, may be linguistically the opposite from the very first text of Ecclesiastes Rabbah, it is here where God and the navel are most closely connected; without God there can be no navel and therefore no human habitation in Jerusalem, the city located at the navel of the world.

**Conclusion**

Jerusalem is a fascinating place which has captured the imagination of the Jewish people for thousands of years. Its mentions in the bible show it as a city of war and peace, a city of holiness, and a city located geographically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually at the heart of everything. Perhaps that is why the psalms state, “If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let me forget my right hand.” For Jews, Jerusalem is as precious and sacred as a part of the body. Its centrality to Judaism is quite simply, undeniable. One important invitation remain how can Jerusalem keep assuming its centrality and mission of being the light to the nations and to the new generations? A challenging and exciting invitation.

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Рабин Адам Розенвасер

ЈЕРУСАЛИМ, ГРАД РАТА, МИРА И СВЕТОСТИ...
БИБЛИЈСКА ПЕРСПЕКТИВА

Резиме

Рабин Адам Розенвасер у овом раду осветљава место Јерусалима као града рата, мира и светости из перспективе Светог писма. Рабински мидраши подржавају библијски текст и објашњавају светост града Јерусалима из угла јудаизма. Читаоци овог рада откриће различите јеврејске представе и разумеће како су Јевреји кроз векове повезани са овим посебним местом.

Кључне речи: Јерусалим, Рабински мидрашим, Јерусалим град рата и мира, Јерусалим град светости, Јерусалим у јеврејској традицији.

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THE NEW JERUSALEM: 
AN ORIENTAL CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

The paper is an attempt to revisit the controversial issue of the City of Jerusalem from a new perspective. The author will benefit from his experience and background to present the view of Oriental Christians toward the issue. This view will include the spiritual understanding of the “new Jerusalem” that is completely separate from the physical city of Jerusalem but that sheds light on the Christian approach to conflicts in general. Then the paper will review the political, technical, and human challenges that are facing the current negotiations and any possible future solutions, based on the analysis of the literature and declared positions. Finally, the paper presents the specific view and concerns of the Oriental Christians and the role they ought to play, concluding with some reflections and personal remarks. In all, this paper adds to the literature a new oriental Christian spiritual and academic perspective that has been shyly presented so far.

Key words: New Jerusalem; Oriental Christians; Peace Process; Vatican-Israeli Relations; Heavenly Kingdom

“I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband”
Revelation 3: 12

It is a known fact that the city of Jerusalem is a common Holy site for all three monotheistic religions and that makes it from a political science perspective, one of the most difficult hurdles to be overcome in the “final stage” negotiation between the Israelis and the Palestinians that are supposed to end one of the longest conflicts of our present times. However, what increases the complexity of the negotiation is that the two parties in conflict are not the only stakeholders that have declared interest in the status of Jerusalem but also a wide range of religious institutions and countries that encompass majorities of Christians
and Muslim and obviously the Vatican. Jerusalem has a special sacred image in
the heart of every Jewish, Christian and Muslim individual believer including me
as Melkite Catholic Lebanese Political Scientists, which gives it and its resulting
status a very important moral and ethical symbolism in addition to the political
one. Thus, in this paper, I will present my view of the Jerusalem issue, based on
the official position of the Catholic Church, to the heritage of Oriental Christian
Churches, and on a political science approach culminating from my previous
studies on the self determination rights for minorities, accommodation systems,
human rights and conflict resolution.

Old vs. New Jerusalem

In the bible both old and new testament, Jerusalem has a very central role in
the salvation plan of God. It is the Promised Land in which God is worshiped and
his kingdom is built. It is the place where Jesus will be received as king and savior.
It is also the place where he will be crucified, killed and on the third day resur-
rected. After Christ, Jerusalem will be the incubator of the first Church and the
center of Christianity from which the disciples will go around the world spread-
ing the Good News. Jerusalem will also host the first Council of the Church in
which the disciples with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with
Christ’s teaching will declare the universal nature of the Church and its detach-
ment from any material, human, ethnic or political limitation.

With this the religious significance of Jerusalem was officially ended, and the
physical city after that had no religious significance beyond being a place for
pilgrimage honoring the sights where Jesus, lived, walked, preached, was tort-
tured, was crucified, died and was resurrected. Christ’s teachings made it clear
that no physical places, no particular people and no political arrangements are
imperative to his salvation plan, or to the church’s work and continuity, nor in
his second coming. Therefore all theories and fantasies about the Church’s need
to control the holy sites of Jerusalem and establish a specific setting to prepare
the second coming of Christ are mere fantasies of people who missed the whole
message of Jesus and the whole bases of his salvation plan.

With Christ, all earth and every human being are the aim of his salvation and
the home of the Holy Spirit. Christians and their Church are not linked with any
mundane settings because they are in mere passage here and their aim, their
aspiration and their only home is Heaven. Thus, the Church tradition and teach-
ings based on Christ’s Teaching, the Book of Revelation, the work of the Apostles
and the heritage of all the Saints talk no longer about the physical city of Jerusa-
lem but about “The New Jerusalem”.

Far from claiming to be a theologian, my understanding of the New Jeru-
salem makes it not linked in any way to the physical city of Jerusalem. In comp-
parison to the church teaching on Virgin Mary being the New Eve who replace
the Old Eve and was the exact antithetic. The Old Eve was a full partner in the original sin and the dooming of the human kind, while Mary the New Eve was a full partner in the restoration of the bond with God and in the salvation human-kind. Similarly, in complete antithetic of the Old Jerusalem that rejected Jesus and killed him, the New Jerusalem is the symbol of every city, land, house, family and soul that will accept Jesus and embrace his love and salvation.

The Political Challenge

Saying that the New Jerusalem of the revelation (i.e. of the second coming of Christ) has nothing to do with the city of Jerusalem does not mean that the later doesn’t have any significance to Christians and to the Vatican. On the contrary, the city of Jerusalem has a very special status described by Pope John Paul II in a 1984 Apostolic letter entitled “Redemptionis Anno” by saying “Christians honor her with a religious and intent concern because there the words of Christ so often resounded, there the great events of the Redemption were accomplished: the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord”. Furthermore, the Vatican recognized the universal significance of the city beyond the Christian believers to include all the Abrahamic descendants and that has a great moral spiritual value for Christians, Jews and Muslims at the same time, which gives it a sacred character for all humankind. Thus, and based on this sacred character of the city the Vatican sought over the past 2000 years to have a presence in the city, a share in its management and full political/military control when possible. The latest arrangement was with the Ottoman authorities in 1757 and it was known of the “Status Quo”. The Status Quo of 1757 organized the relation of the church with the official authorities but also the relations among the different Christian churches and communities to avoid frequent clashes (Stevens 1981, p.105).

The current complex situation in Jerusalem that causes daily clashes, violence, and death first arouse when one of the three monotheistic religions to whom the city has great value decided to have exclusive control over it. The deterioration of the situation in Jerusalem has been negatively related to the development of the Zionist plan to establish the Jewish State of Israel. Since the beginnings of the Zionist movement in the middle of the 19th century, the Zionist position on Jerusalem has ascended in toughness, rigidity and complexity based on the policy of “fact on the ground” and changing the status quo by force. On the other hand, the church’s position has remained constant with some minor fluctuation adapting to the political realities on the ground.

The position of the church formulated gradually over the past 150 years is very clear on the theoretical level: Not only should Jerusalem due to its sacred character to the three monotheistic religions be outside any political arrangements and division, it should be playing the exact opposite role of an arena for meeting, reconciliation, peaceful co-existence and shared values. As for the
practical policy to preserve this character and make this view of the city feasible, there was many attempts and many suggestions that had to be adapted to the realities on the ground. Stevens (1981) identifies three stages of Vatican policy towards the status of Jerusalem since the early developments of the Zionist theory and first settlements. The first phase (pre-WWII) being expressing concern that the implementation of the Belfour Declaration encouraging Jewish settlement and giving them a predominant status would inflict a change of character of the Holy Places and an uprooting of the local Christian community. The second phase according to Stevens (1945-1967) is the Vatican’s insistence and lobbying through the newly established United Nations on the internationalization of Jerusalem as the only possible way to preserve the city’s special character.

The third phase according to Stevens is after the 1967 war as the Vatican realized more and more everyday that the “facts on the ground” are not going to be easy to change and that no solution for Jerusalem can be achieved without the consent of Israel. Thus the third tactical change of the Vatican position (post-1967) was to admit the existence of Israel and work on with it to insure some form of special status for the Holy City. The Vatican had to confine itself to a functional internationalization while keeping to criticize the unilateral Israeli moves creating new facts and pre-empting any further discussion of the issue.

After the end of the Cold War and the launching of peace process, and with the signature of many peace agreements with Israel, hopes were revived about finding a reasonable solution for the issue of Jerusalem. During that period the relations between Israel and the Holy See took a more formal aspect and this development culminated to a official recognition and exchange of diplomatic relations in 1993. Many people suggest that there was some kind of a political deal in which the Vatican would recognize the state of Israel in return of Israel’s acceptance of a Catholic special status in Jerusalem and a place at the negotiation table for the “final status” of the city as one of the stakeholders (Magister 2003; Bainerman 2006; Paulson 2009).

Lamdan, once the Israeli Ambassador to the Holy See, criticized the position of the Vatican for being restricted to four words: “internationally guaranteed special statute” without any further clarifications, details or modalities (Magister 2003). However, with the fall apart of peaceful negotiations and the deterioration of the situation on the ground, the cleavage between Israel and the Holy See grew wider, in spite of Papal visits and many meetings. The Vatican could not remain silent toward the atrocities committed by both parties and the serious aggres-

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2 In fact the UN partition plan of 1947 included an international administration of Jerusalem. Another resolution by the UN General Assembly was adopted in 1949 calling for the placement of Jerusalem under a permanent international regime as a “Corpus Separatum”, administered by the UN for ten years. However these efforts and plans remained ideas on papers as they were rejected by the Arab states and overridden by the Jewish occupation of greater lands during the consecutive wars.

3 The Vatican was one of the major supporter and promoter of UN Security Council Resolution 478 (adopted on 20 April 1980) which declared the Israeli “Basic Law” on Jerusalem to be “null and void” (Kobti 1997).
sion of Israel aiming at changing the nature and identity of Jerusalem and claiming its Jewishness and exclusive control over it. Today negotiations on Jerusalem are completely blocked, and Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem (occupied by force during the 1967 war) which is illegal under international law is still going on uninterruptedly. Hopes for a peaceful settlement that is conforming to the persistent Vatican view seem fading away and the process a very long way to go.

Beyond the Vatican position is the position of the different Christian communities living in the region is very much similar. This position was reflected in a very important memorandum issued in 1994 by the leaders of the communities that have a presence in Jerusalem. In this document the leaders expressed their position in: rejecting all exclusivity claims, the need to preserve the Christian existence with the existing rights and privileges, confirming the right of free movement and access to all pilgrims from all different religions, and a special status for Jerusalem that assures all of the above with International guarantees. (Memorandum 1994)

The Technical Challenge

Without going in to the details of the different proposed projects, as this is not the aim or approach of this article, it is important to mention what are the basic challenges that are facing a possible solution from a technical dimension after exploring the political challenges. Kollek the Jewish ex-mayor of Jerusalem, expressed frequently his moral and emotional attachment to the unity of the city and he argues for its acceptance as an open city for all pilgrims but definitely under Israeli control (1981). Practically speaking and in both discourses of Palestinians and Israelis Jerusalem is claimed as a capital city. It is claimed to be the capital of both political entities, while the Vatican as mentioned calls for the internationalization of the Holy Places. Looking realistically at these claims especially with the drop in enthusiasm about forming one state with both people as equal citizens, produced a conviction of the international community for many years that the city should be divided into two parts, where each part would be a symbolic capital for the respective states. But is this feasible? And who will control the Holy Places in the old city? And what will happen with the growing settlements in east Jerusalem?

These technical questions are big hurdles that will be very difficult to overcome in any future negotiations and therefore this paper will not claim to present

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4 Population settlement in occupied territory intended to change the popular identity of the land is rejected by several international laws including the Hague Convention of 1907, Geneva IV convention. Settlement in Jerusalem specifically violates the related UN resolutions 194, 242 and 338. (Kobti 2001).

5 The signatories of the document include: Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Latin Patriarch, Armenian Patriarch, Custos or the Holy Land, Coptic Archbishop, Syriac Archbishop, Ethiopian Archbishop, Anglican Bishop, Greek-Catholic Patriarchal-Vicar, Lutheran Bishop, Maronite Patriarchal-Vicar and the Cath. Syriac Patriarchal-Vicar (Memorandum, 1994).
a solution but just to shed light on some related issues. The only possible division line will have to be based on the 1948 demarcation line with minor adjustments. This will put western Jerusalem under Israeli control and eastern Jerusalem under Palestinian control. This will also mean that all added Israeli settlements in east Jerusalem will have to be treated like the settlements in the west bank and suffer the same consequences. Emmett (1996) presents a good academic approach to the meaning and function of a “capital”. He argues that Jerusalem does not need to be a capital in the traditional sense of having preeminence, wealth, protected stronghold and center of power, because it is not and cannot be so for either parties due to its geographic, demographic and political status. However, with the new trend of creating and building new capitals like (Canberra, Brasilia, New Delhi, Washington DC, Ottawa, etc...) in order to fulfill a specific duty or give a specific symbolism, Emmett argues Jerusalem can be such a symbolic capital for both states. Jerusalem can be a centre of decision making and organizational function without having the traditional nature of capitals, but more importantly it can play the very important role of a symbol of national identity and unity of the people, which is already true and valid description for both peoples. Whether an untied Jerusalem will be the capital for a united country or the two parts of Jerusalem will be two capital cities for two independent countries, Jerusalem can and does fulfill this modern role of capital cities.

As for the Holy Places or the Old city per say, it’s too small and too complex to be divided and the sanctuaries are too interconnected and may be of value to more than one religion in the same time. This reality, among other factors contributed in shaping the Vatican position (constant since 1922) calling for the internationalization of the Holy Places and removing them from the political turmoil, based mainly on the idea that:

“the Holy See is not involved in knowing if the city has to be the capital of one or two states… [it] wants to preserve the uniqueness of the most sacred parts of the city… so that in the future neither of the parties and none of the three religions can claim them exclusively of themselves, because they are part of the patrimony which belongs to the whole world” (Tauran 1999)

The Israeli position however, rejects not only questioning the settlements but also any division of the city in the first place and it has passed many laws in the Knesset considering the unified Jerusalem as the final, eternal and undivided capital of the state.

**The Human Challenge**

Regardless of how feasible is a political solution for Jerusalem and whether the Vatican’s vision would be achieved or not, a Christian approach must have a greater concern than the control over the church buildings, museums, lands and stones. The center of Christianity and the main focus is the human and his
wellbeing before anything else. All the efforts of the Church are supposed to be aimed at the betterment of the status of people. Thus, the expressed concern of the Holy See is the people of Jerusalem of all three monotheistic religions and both nationalities and their peaceful coexistence. Vatican official have frequently articulated their view of Jerusalem as a “universal symbol of fraternity and peace… a sign of encounter between peoples” (Tauran 1999). Msgr Tauran explains further: “The Holy places are not museums and monuments for the tourists, they are places where communities of believers live, with their schools, cultures, charitable institutions, etc… and they have to be safeguarded in their sacrality and permanence”. Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Sabah also focuses on this approach of the problem by saying in a national convention in 1997:

“Despite its political and military unification, Jerusalem today is divided. The two people are deeply separated by the conflict [and this is] obvious in the faces and hearts of both peoples… Jerusalem is important, but the living people in it, are just as important. Its geographic unity is important, but the human unity of its two peoples is just as important… every political formulation, if it is to last and take effect for a long future, must take the living people into consideration…” (cited in Kobti 1997)

When approaching this particular view of Jerusalem some serious issues seem to be blocking the way. The first issue that must be taken into consideration is that “age-old and deeply felt emotions are encrusted over the rationality necessary to find solutions” (Kollek 1981). Two people and three monotheistic religions consider Jerusalem as a place of great emotional, spiritual and divine value that cannot be compromised and thus it is difficult for all stakeholders to accept losing control over their Holy Places. Secondly, although the suffering has been disproportional in favor of Palestinians, both peoples have suffered tremendous pain and frustration over long years, and the longer are the years of bad experience the more difficult it will be to overcome the resulting feelings, grudges and divisions. Moreover, whichever political solution may be reached will not be applicable or will not solve the problem if it did not give enough attention and focus to the issue of reconciliation among the different communities living in the city. Both of these problems and realities are severely exacerbated by the claim of exclusivity that parties are using concerning the ownership of Jerusalem. Dropping this “exclusivity” claim may actually be the first pre-requisite for any negotiations, and all parties need to admit that the other has some kind of rights in the city. A third issue of great concern is the decrease in the Christian population of Palestine in general and of Jerusalemites in particular that is taking a dramatic rate (Stevens 1981, pp.109-110; Tauran 1999). This is a really alarming issue for the Vatican and for every Christian believer around the world because the Christian Holy Places without the Christians are mere museums with no life or meaning to them.
Oriental Christians’ Vocation

For Oriental Christians or members of native local churches also view the existence of the Christian community from a broader more existential point. For them Jerusalem “is not only a Holy City, but also their native city where they live…” (memorandum 1994) which makes them special Christians with a special vocation of witnesses to Christ in the land of Christian origin and to be messenger of peaceful co-existence, love, sharing and cooperation to achieve justice and righteousness. The letter of the Catholic Patriarchs of the East of 1991 cited and adopted by the Maronite Synod (2008, p.73) clearly reflects this position by saying: “the Christians of the East are an integral part of the cultural identity of Muslims, just as Muslims in the East are an integral part of the cultural identity of the Christians. Therefore, we are responsible for each other before God and history”. Which means that, an Oriental Christian living outside his original home as well as an east without its Christians, both have a very serious handicap that hinders them from fulfilling their vocation and God’s plan for them (Fahed 2008, pp. 46-47).

The same applies to Jerusalem that is called upon by the fathers of the Christian Churches to be like the rest of the region to reject exclusivist positions and be welcoming and open to all, shared by all who are fondly attached to it. Whoever governs Jerusalem is called to make it the capital of humankind base don the Holy Scripture describing it as “the city of Justice, faithful city” (Is. 1,26-27) “a house of prayer for all peoples” (Is. 2,2) whose “gates are always open” (Is. 11) with “peace as magistrate and justice as government” (Is, 17). The scripture also presents Jerusalem as a city that God will put in the middle of the nations (Ez 5,5) and whoever tries to conquer it for himself shall be defeated (Zech 12:3). (Memorandum 1994).

The vocation of Oriental Christians and their whole raison d’être is to be messengers of peace, reconciliation, coexistence and the culture of life, sanctifiers of their space and time which is in most need of this. This must be, is today and should continue to be their positions and their stand in the different conflict, and any convergence from this will be fatal to them and to their brethren. Such a position is the antithesis of all exclusivity claims, apartheid style separation policies and searching for solutions by force and thus its continuity is necessary not only for the survivor of Christians but also to keep the chance of peace in the region alive.

Final Reflections

After this quick overview, some basic principles come up as pre-requisite conditions for any settlement of the issue of Jerusalem, and these seem to be
common among many authors (Wilson 1969; Stevens 1981; Ferrari 1985; Tauran 1999; Kobti 2000).

First, the following actions are completely rejected and will lead to the deterioration of the situation rather than pushing for a solution: all forceful action aiming to change the demography and the identity of the land; all attacks and aggressions against civilians whoever is the perpetrator; exclusivity claim or excluding one or more of the stakeholders are also rejected; closing the city in front of people and/or pilgrims based on security excuses; closing the economic and social prospective in a way that leads to emigration and consequently demographic changes; putting restriction on religious expression of traditions and rituals. Unfortunately, it is clear that the current de-facto authority and whose responsibility is to avoid all of the above is in reality the one that is initiating all these problem and putting all these hurdles in front of peace.

Second, the city has an important significance for two peoples and three monotheistic religions and thus all five entities should be equal partners in developing a solution. Including all these in the administration of the city is a necessity and noting the first point mentioned above, giving the city a special legal status internationally guaranteed. This special status may include the whole city of Jerusalem but if this turns out to be unfeasible, it should include the Old City and the Holy Places.

Third, serious attention should be given to the living people of the city and major efforts should target the reconciliation and the brotherly coexistence of the different communities because the Holy Places without their people are mere empty, cold museums that have lost their life and significance. Pope John Paul II explains that the Holy See has done all what is has done: “because it is concerned with peace among peoples no less than for spiritual, historical and cultural reasons… not only the monuments or the sacred places, but the whole historical Jerusalem and the existence of religious communities”.

Eventually, if Jerusalem is ever to regain its special status that all stakeholders believe in, it must embrace its destiny and re-become a place for convergence of a pluralism of historical and religious rights, preserving the legitimate aspirations of the people of the three monotheistic. The adopted solution must take account of “the exigencies of this special character of the city, unique in all the world, as a crossroad of conciliation and peace”.

Finally and most importantly, it is the understanding of the great majority of Christian and the clear position of the Catholic church that the return of the Jews, the re-establishment of Israel and the re-conquest of Jerusalem “have no special theological significance… they are not to be seen as signs pointing forward to the second coming of Christ” (Chapman 2010). The anticipation of the New Heavenly Jerusalem proclaimed in the revelation is a spiritual event to which every Christian should prepare himself not through war, conquests and separations but through redemption, reconciliation bringing him closer to God.
and to our fellow human beings.

The New Jerusalem, the Jerusalem that I as Christian Catholic Melkite believer aim for and aspire to is the fulfillment of the vision of peace, the image of the new creation and the aspirations of all peoples. It is the sanctification of every space and time I am living in and make it ready to embrace the heavenly kingdom where “God will wipe away all tears… [and] there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away” (Rev 21,4).

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Нови Јерусалим: Једна оријентална хришћанска перспектива

Резиме

Овај рад је покушај преиспитивања контроверзних питања града Јерусалима из нове перспективе. Аутор има прилику да служећи се сопственим искуством прикаже поглед оријенталних хришћана на ово питање. Овај поглед укључује духовно схватање „новог Јерусалима” које је у потпуности одвојено од града Јерусалима у физичком смислу, али које расветљава хришћански приступ конфликтима уопште. Затим ћемо пружити преглед политичких, техничких и људских изазова са којима се сукавају текући преговори и свако могуће решење у будућности, заснованих на анализи литературе и декларисаних позиција. Коначно, рад представља специфичан поглед и место и улогу оријенталних хришћана, те бива завршен неким размишљањима и личним закључцима. Све у свему, литературе додаје једну нову, до сада стидаљиво приказивану, оријентално хришћанску и академску перспективу.

Кључне речи: Нови Јерусалим, оријентални хришћани, мировни процес, Ватиканско-израелски односи, Царство Божје.

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ARMENIAN CHRISTIANS IN JERUSALEM:
1700 YEARS OF PEACEFUL PRESENCE*

Abstract

This paper examines the presence of the Armenians in Jerusalem for the past 1700 years. This historical account sheds the light on the importance of Jerusalem for the Armenians, especially for the Armenian Church that was granted the authority to safeguard the Holy Places in the Holy Land with the Greek and Latin Churches. During the centuries, the Armenians survived all the conquests and were able to find all sorts of compromises with all the different powers that conquered Jerusalem. This study shows that the permanent presence is due to the wise religious authorities and the entire Armenian community who had no backing from super powers but they had their religious beliefs and their persistence in safeguarding the Holy Places of Christianity. The author takes the reader back in History by stopping at important events that shaped the history of the Armenians in the Holy Land.

Key words: Jerusalem, Armenians, Crusaders, Holy Land, St James Monastery, Old City, Armenian Quarter.

Introduction

This paper comes at a time when Christians in Iraq and Egypt are being massacred in their churches, Christians in Nazareth are being forbidden to decorate a Christmas tree in public space, and Christians in Lebanon are seeking to preserve their political rights to safeguard their presence in their Homeland. At a time, when the Palestinian Authority is alerting the International Community of the danger of the continuous and ferocious settlement construction in East Jerusalem by the State of Israel, and at a time when Christians of the East are being silent on the fate of Jerusalem by leaving it in the hands of the Palestinian and Israeli negotiators, hoping that the Unites States will be the caretaker of the Christians of Jerusalem.

The Christians of the East are not unwelcomed guests in the Middle East.

* In memory of Ardashes Kouyoumdjian
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They are an inseparable part of the East. However, they are facing many challenges to maintain their presence in the land of their ancestors.

This article on the Armenian presence in the Holy Land aims to contribute positively in the debate and discourse over the legitimacy and importance of the Christian presence in the Middle East, in a region where the line between politics and religion is blurry and almost non-existent.

The Armenians of the Middle East form a minority within a Christian Minority in the Arab World. Their presence does not date back to 1915, the year of the great genocide as some people believe. Armenians have been living in the Middle East for 1700 years especially in Jerusalem as it will be shown through this paper. Armenians nowadays are scattered all over the Middle East. They are present in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian Territories and Egypt. The majority of these Armenians are Orthodox, while the rest are Catholics and Protestants. Armenians have had a positive impact in their societies for centuries. They are known to be hard workers, excellent craftsmen, and loyal citizens who are well integrated into the societies where they live. In addition they are active members of governmental institutions without causing conflict to these political systems.

The Armenian Presence in Jerusalem

East Jerusalem, precisely the Old City of Jerusalem is divided into four quarters: Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Armenian. The Armenian quarter is the smallest quarter; it represents one sixth of the city. In the South-west part of the Old City, it can be accessed through the Zion gate and Jaffa gate. The Armenian Quarter is made up of two distinct sections: the Monastery of St. James, which covers roughly two-thirds of the quarter, and the residential quarters of the native Armenians. In 1998, it was estimated that there were 2500 Armenians left in Jerusalem. The large majority of the community lives in the Old City and almost two-thirds in the monastery itself. They are called the Vanketsi. They pay symbolic rentals for apartments to the patriarchate. Armenians have always preferred to stay within the monastery walls, where secular life was well organized and many cultural and social services were provided in the compound of the Patriarchate itself. Moreover, life inside the walls of the Monastery gave the Armenians a feeling of security. “Twenty percent of the Jerusalemite Armenians live outside the walls of the monastery but still within the Armenian quarter.”

St Tarkmanchatz School is the first co-educational (mixed school for boys and girls) school in the Old City of Jerusalem, and is attended by most of the Arme-

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3 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
Armenian children (around 200). The languages of instruction are Armenian, English, Hebrew and French. “The school is funded by Armenian philanthropists abroad as well as by local community contributions”⁴. Also, during the years, Armenians established their own social and cultural clubs in the quarter.

The Armenian Church in Jerusalem enjoys a special status as one of the three major guardians of the Christian Holy Places in the Holy Land, along with the Greek Orthodox and Latin-Roman Catholic Churches. The Armenian Church has sole jurisdiction over St James cathedral and the houses of Annas and Caiaphas and shares with other Christian churches control over the Holy Sepulcher, St Mary’s Tome in Gethsemane, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Armenia: the First Christian Nation

The presence and consolidation of an Armenian community and Church in Jerusalem have taken years of hardship, religious beliefs and political compromises. The adoption of Christianity by Armenia as a State religion was the turning point in the attachment of Armenians to the Holy Land.

In 301 AD, King Trdat declared Christianity as the state religion of Armenia. As a result the first Christian State was born. This move gave the necessary momentum for the new Christians to head towards Jerusalem, to the City of Christ as fervent pilgrims.

During the Byzantine period, Armenian monks were among the most active in the desert of Palestine and Jerusalem to establish their presence. Among the most prominent monks was the Armenian monk Euthymius the pioneer Armenian monk who had “founded about fifteen monasteries in spectacular locations between Masada and Bethlehem. His career was thought to have launched a new era of humanity. In these monasteries, the monks planted gardens and fruit trees, making the desert bloom”⁵. “Armenian monks and pilgrims figured prominently among the inhabitants of this desert”⁶. Armenian pilgrimages flocked to Jerusalem and the Holy sites in “caravans of 400-500 people”⁷. Many of these pilgrims decided to stay in Jerusalem rather than returning home. These monks and pilgrims of the ⁴th Century formed the nucleus of the Armenian community of Jerusalem.

Since early Christian history, Armenians played an important role in influencing the rulers in their faith and imposing it in the political arena. For exam-

⁴ Ibid., pp. 20.
⁵ Armstrong Karen, Jerusalem One City, Three Faiths, Ballantine Books, New York, 2005, pp. 205
ple, Karen Armstrong in her book *Jerusalem* mentions that in 444 AD, Empress Eudokia, the wife of Theodosius II of Constantinople, a convert to Christianity became the ruler of Jerusalem. During her rule, Eudokia was heavily involved in the doctrinal debate about the person and nature of Christ, and she was witnessing the confusion of the Church and the many interpretations that were spreading among the people. “In 457 AD she asked advice of the famous Syrian ascetic Simeon Stylites. He told her to consult Euthymius, the Armenian monastic leader, and Eudokia was so impressed by his teaching that she submitted to Orthodox doctrine. Jerusalem was to become a center of Nicene Orthodoxy.”

This episode gives a sense of the privileges the Armenians were gaining in this holiest city of Christians. However, the development of the Community and Church was not always smooth. The Greek Church supported by the Roman emperors was gaining more power and influence in Jerusalem while the Armenian Church with no backing (and Armenia losing its battles) was relegated to a secondary position.

It is only with the Muslim reign of the Second caliph Omar who conquered Jerusalem in 637 AD that the Armenians could come back as major players in the Holy Land. The caliph, who fought the Byzantine emperors, distrusted the Greeks. It “seemed to him that he could rely on the loyalty of the Armenians.” In return for the Armenian support, the Caliph issued a charter in 640 AD, elevating Bishop Abraham I to the position of Patriarch of Armenians of Jerusalem. Since then there have been uninterrupted successive regimes of patriarchs. In this same charter, Caliph Omar highlighted the rights and privileges of the Armenian Patriarchate over certain Holy Places which were crucial to maintain the integrity and to guaranty the safety of the properties and lives of the Armenians in Jerusalem. As a result of the tolerant nature of the Islamic rulers towards the Armenians and the apolitical nature of Armenians; Armenians gained the trust of the Arab rulers and developed close ties in several regions of the Arab empire.

They were granted special status in Egypt as well as in Jerusalem. Armenians settled in Egypt early in the Roman era. However, their numbers increased during the Fatimid rule, where it was known that many high ranking officials in the military and in the government were from Armenian descent.

It is said that during this period the Armenian population in Egypt numbered more than 30,000. It is believed that this was due to the fact that Armenians who were in key positions of leadership encouraged their countrymen to settle in countries ruled by the Fatimid Caliphs. This fact obviously enhanced the position of Armenians in the Holy Land. There is tangible evidence that the Armenian community had begun to congregate around the original site of the St. James Church and several churches and monasteries in the immediate vicinity

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on Mount Zion, which constituted the core of the Armenian Quarter as we know it today.\(^{10}\)

In almost 700 years the Armenians were able to transform their presence in the Holy Land from a few hundred enthusiastic pilgrims to legitimate inhabitants with a well protected and well-respected Patriarchate despite the continuous political changes in the region. Despite all regimes, Armenians were able to expand and consolidate their presence in the Holy Land.

The coming 1000 years in the history of Armenians in Jerusalem is full of challenges and victories which says a lot about this community.

**Armenians, Crusaders and Jerusalem**

In 1095, Pope Urban II declared the Holy War of Liberation, urging the European knights to march towards Jerusalem to rescue the tomb of Christ from the Muslims. In 1096, “five armies of sixty thousand soldiers set off on the road to Jerusalem”\(^{11}\) In 1080, the Cilician Armenia was founded, and established very close relations with European countries and later on it was to play “an important role during the Crusades, providing the Christian armies a safe heaven and provision on their way towards Jerusalem”\(^{12}\). The Armenians saw in the Frankish Crusaders, the adequate allies against the Greeks and Muslims who had brought the defeat of historical Armenia. They greeted the Franks as liberators. At that time, the Armenians in Cilicia were not aware that their alliance with the Crusaders would positively affect the Armenian community in the Holy Land.

**The county of Edessa, the first Crusader State**

The first Crusader State was established in the Armenian County of Edessa in 1098, a year before the fall of Jerusalem in 1099 in the hands of the Crusaders. “Edessa was one of the largest of the Crusader states in terms of territory. However, it was one of the smallest by population. Edessa itself had about 10000 inhabitants, but the rest of the county consisted of fortresses.”\(^{13}\) The county’s borders started from Antioch in the west to the Euphrates in the east; it extended in the north as far as Armenia proper, and to the south and east it bordered the Muslim cities of Aleppo and Mosul, and the Jazira. Edessa was a city with an ancient history and an early tradition of Christianity. Thoros the Armenian prince of Edessa, who did not have the power to withstand a Turkish attack on his own,


\(^{11}\) Armstrong Karen, Jerusalem One City, Three Faiths, Ballantine Books, New York, 2005, pp. 271-272


\(^{13}\) Tate Georges, Noble Titles of the County of Edessa: Counts of Edessa, Baldwin I of Jerusalem, Baldwin II of Jerusalem, County of Edessa, Books LLC, USA, 2010, p 13.
appealed to the crusader Baldwin of Boulogne for help. Having no male children himself Thoros adopted Baldwin as his son, making him both heir and joint ruler. Baldwin married the prince’s daughter Arda. After the suspicious death of Thoros, “Baldwin proclaimed himself count of Edessa in March 1098, founding the first crusader state.” He ruled the county until 1100 acting as an ambassador between the crusaders and Armenians”. 

Later on Baldwin I, count of Edessa, became the first king of the kingdom of Jerusalem in December 25, 1100 after the death of his brother Godfrey, who was ruling Jerusalem but refused to be appointed as King. “The Armenians were especially favored since there were now Armenian members of the royal family. Baldwin had created a special link with Armenia, and the community and Convent of St James prospered. Important Armenian dignitaries and notables came to Jerusalem as pilgrims, bearing rich gifts: embroidered vestments, golden crosses, chalices, and crucifixes encrusted with precious stones, which are still used on major feast days, and illuminated manuscripts for the convent library. The Armenians were also given the custody of the Chapel of St. Mary in the Holy Sepulcher Church.”

The privileged position of the Armenians in Jerusalem increased during the whole period of the Crusaders. Till the fall of Jerusalem in the hands of Saladin, the rulers of the Kingdom of Jerusalem had close family ties with the Armenians, which facilitated and increased the travel of Armenians from and to Jerusalem.

Baldwin II, the cousin of Baldwin I was nominated count of Edessa when the latter was crowned King of Jerusalem. “As count, in 1101, Baldwin married Morphia of Melitene, the daughter of the Armenian prince Gabriel of Melitene.” and in 14 April 1118, Baldwin of Edessa “was crowned king of Jerusalem as Baldwin II on Easter Sunday”. Baldwin and Morphia had four daughters, and “in 1129, Baldwin named Melisende (the eldest of his four daughters) as his heir. And Melisende, by law the heir of the kingdom, succeeded her father with Fulk (her husband) as co-ruler. The new queen and king were crowned on 14 Sep 1131”.

Baldwin II and his daughter Melisende continued supporting the Armenian community and church in the Holy Land. They were their natural allies. The Armenian Church continued buying land and properties. They acquired much of the land in today’s Armenian quarter and by 1165, they finished constructing St James Cathedral which was to become the most important building of the quarter. And it was during this same time that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher

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18 Ibid., pp 3.
19 Ibid., pp 4.
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acquired its modern shape.

**Saladin’s conquest of Jerusalem and the Armenians**

In 1187, Saladin entered Jerusalem. After almost 200 years of Christian reign, the Muslims re-entered the Holy City as conquerors. Post-Crusade Jerusalem was not a pleasant place for Christians to live in, especially for Latin Christians who were considered by Muslims the heirs of Crusaders. Saladin needed trusted allies in the Holy Land to secure its authority. The Latins were his number one enemies, and he was suspicious of Greeks, therefore, he found in the Armenians the trusted allies with which he could build relations. As Caliph Omar, Saladin extended the Armenians of the Holy Land with great privileges. And unlike the other Christians of the city, the Armenian population, monks and families, remained in their homes and were treated fairly. “Saladin granted the Armenian Patriarch a charter guaranteeing the security of all Armenians, the integrity of their possessions, the prerogative of keeping their Holy Places and the freedom to worship throughout his entire domain.”

The Mamluk Sultan Al-Zahir Jaqmaq, who ruled between 1438 and 1453, reinforced the privileged position of the Armenians by issuing a special decree forbidding the emir of Jerusalem to burden them with unnecessary taxation. And to allow no confusion or mistakes, this decision/decree was well engraved on a plaque at the western entrance to the Armenian Quarter to make it public to all.

Karen Armstrong, in her book Jerusalem, has been able to analyze accurately the reason why Armenians had been able to stand political and religious changes in the Holy Land, she writes:

“The Armenians had been closely involved with the Crusaders, but they had not followed them in uncritical and fanatical hatred of Islam. They had already learned not to take sides, and as a result, they were the only community that had remained in its own quarter without being dislodged during the upheavals of the previous three hundred years.”

Under Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-66), Jerusalem underwent great re-shaping and by 154, the city’s walls were rebuilt. Jerusalem was properly fortified again, and the walls still stand till our days. Armenians continued prospering and building their quarter, always under the protection of the rulers, the Ottomans.

Armenians believed that constantly guaranteeing privileged standings would secure and reinforce their presence in the Holy Land. Therefore, the Armenian Patriarchate worked tediously to reaffirm the rights of the Armenians in Jerusalem. In 1856, during the Paris Peace Conference after the Crimean War, the Armenian Patriarchate was able to confirm its rights in the Holy Land. Again,

during the Congress of Berlin in 1878, in the wake of the Russian-Ottoman war, the Armenian Patriarchate was able to obtain international support for its presence and influence in the Holy Land’s holy sites. The Patriarchate was the sole representative of the Armenian Church in Jerusalem and of the Armenian population. It was in constant search for safety and security for its monks and people. It used regional and international arenas to remind super-powers involved in the politics of the region of the privileges of the Armenians.

“Of particular and vital significance is the firman of 25 July 1888 that was issued by Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid to the Armenian Patriarch Harootiun Vehabedian (1885-1910). This document re-affirmed the supreme authority of the Armenian Patriarch once again, and his seat in Jerusalem was declared once more as the seat of the Armenian Patriarchate of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem, Gaza, Tripoli, Nablus, of the Abyssinians, the Copts and the other nationals’. This firman meant that the Patriarch was no longer relating directly to the local authorities but rather to the Sublime Porte. As such, the Patriarchate acquired its legal independence of any assembly in Constantinople or Jerusalem.”22

The Ottomans and Armenians of Jerusalem

Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, the Armenian community and church was confident and in a greatly privileged position. It had no constraints, nor pressures. The Church continued welcoming the thousands of pilgrims who had never stopped their holy visit to the Holy Land. Pilgrims came to Jerusalem in great numbers, “especially pilgrims from the Eastern Churches, of whom the Armenians were among the most enthusiastic”23. It was thanks to the pilgrims that the Armenian Church grew, it depended on them for its income. It was thanks to the concentrated efforts of Jerusalem’s Armenian Patriarch Grigor Paronter (1613-1645) that pilgrimage to Jerusalem by Armenians first became an organized business.”24 The Patriarch ordered the creation of stopover stations all along the major pilgrimage routes from the Ottoman and Persian Empires to Jerusalem. He sent delegates to the different Armenian communities, to encourage them to travel to the Holy Land during Easter and Christmas. These delegates were in charge of organizing the caravans' trips into Jerusalem. He opened the Monastery of St James and trained the personnel to accommodate, to cater and to offer good services to the pilgrims. The Patriarch Krikor, the Chainbearer, between the years 1719 and 1749 “turned Sts James into

22  Ibid.
24  Ibid., pp 82-83.
a self-sufficient institution with accommodation for over 300 pilgrims who, as in the previous century, would arrive at Easter or Christmas. Monastery personnel would take care of their needs for food, bedding, utensils, and housing during their stay.\textsuperscript{25} The Church had developed a sort of a guidebook intended to “persuade the faithful Armenian living in Central Anatolia or some other distant part of the Ottoman Empire that it was worthwhile to undertake the Jerusalem pilgrimage.”\textsuperscript{26}

According to the narratives of the bishop in his guidebook, he states clearly that the Armenian Patriarchate had concluded agreements with the “royal government” (i.e. the Ottoman government) to guarantee a “safe passage with military escort to Jerusalem”\textsuperscript{27} in return for a landing tax of seven ghurush collected in Jaffa.

**Improvements of St James Monastery**

Patriarch Hovanes, elected in 1850, worked for 10 years on improving the monastery. The below accounts for the shrewd nature of the Patriarchate leaders and it shows the attachment of the Armenians to their quarter and to their lives in the Holy Land:

He [Patriarch Hovanes] “had built the present Patriarchate building, with its remarkable arch across the road, joining the property within the monastery walls to the patriarchal garden and the property adjacent to the city ramparts. The preparation of for the building’s construction had taken three years; thanks to a civil regulation, which allowed any building that could be put up in one night to stand without a previous building permit, patriarch Hovanes had the structure carefully prefabricated in marked blocks, so that an exceptionally large crew of masons could put it together in a single night. It was a stroke of genius on his part, but the planning and the costs were very taxing to the nerves of the monastic community.”\textsuperscript{28}

Also, the Patriarch built “the area later known as the Cypress Quarter just inside the southwest corner of the monastery complex, whose forty-five rooms would house the students of the Jerusalem Armenian seminary until the 1960s. In 1856, he was laying the groundwork for the erection of a classroom building for the seminary, completed in 1857 and located just east of the Cypress Quarter. In the same year, the Patriarch purchased for the monastery the property lying between Mamilla and Jaffa road, as well as the area near Ein Kerem called

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., pp 84.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., pp 84.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., pp 85.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., pp 91.
Philip’s Well.”

Mid nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was in decline which affected tremendously the areas under its rule, and among the affected regions was Jerusalem. Poverty was getting more significant, pilgrims were becoming rare. Politics was changing, alliances were created and people’s perception towards their religion was distorted. They wanted the Church to provide help without giving back to the Church. The monastery had difficulties to accept this change in people’s mood. And so, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the Monastery stopped its involvement in catering and accommodating pilgrims. However, not long after, the Armenian Patriarchate had to open its doors again to Armenians who were desperately in need for shelter.

The Genocide and the Israeli-Arab conflict

In 1915, the Armenian Church of Jerusalem welcomed the Armenian refugees in its monastery to protect them from further persecution. After the end of World War I in 1918, once again, the Armenian Church in Jerusalem used the international arena to strengthen its presence in the region with the new rulers. They sent a delegation which included Archbishop Yeghishe Tourian, future Patriarch of Jerusalem, to the Versailles Treaty Conference in 1919 “to ensure recognition and acceptance of the Ottoman Status Quo, which they did. In 1922, the Palestine Order in Council again reaffirmed the Status Quo, adding: “It is well understood that no alteration can be made on the Status Quo of the Holy Places.”

By 1921, through the British Mandate, tension and violence were high. However, the Armenian community in the Holy Land enjoyed a period of rejuvenation and growth socially, culturally, and religiously. Armenians under the guidance of the Patriarchate continued their traditional way of living refusing to be involved in the struggles around them, retaining their age-old custom ofapolitical behavior by maintaining their neutrality, and avoiding participating in the political conflict between the Arab and Jewish communities.

“During 1948, out of a total of 10,000 residents left in the Old City, 6,000 were Armenians.” The Armenian Quarter suffered considerable damage from the shelling of the Old City. Forty civilians lost their lives and another 250 were wounded. “Just like the Palestinian Arabs of 1948, many Armenian families lost their homes to the advancing Israeli army in Jerusalem only to find themselves refugees once more. The church devoted much of its resources to accommo-

29 Ibid., pp 92.
date over 4,000 new refugees.”\textsuperscript{32} When Israel declared its independence in May 1948, those Armenians who stayed in Jaffa, Haifa, or Ramleh obtained the Israeli citizenship, while the Armenians of the Old City remained under the Jordanian administration. Peaceful coexistence with the Arabs alongside the preservation of cultural-linguistic identity was a model of success for the Christian Armenians.

In 1967, Israel occupied East Jerusalem. After 2000 years the Jews re-entered to the Holy City. It was a historic moment for the Jewish people but the hard times were to begin for the existing communities in the Old City. The Armenian Patriarchate had seen many conquerors, cooperated with different politics with great success for the past long centuries of its presence in the Holy Land. However, the church and the community are having difficulties dealing with the new rulers of Jerusalem. “The Armenian Patriarchate has lost several plots of land in Jerusalem through confiscation. All the land below the western side of the ramparts from outside the walls to the old Fast Hotel was confiscated for so-called public purposes. The Armenian Patriarchate, like other institutions, has great difficulty obtaining building permits. Work on the Armenian Church on Mt. Zion has been delayed for 20 years due to denial of building permits. In the Armenian Quarter settlers have tried several times to buy property, without success.”\textsuperscript{33}

However, due to its long and respected presence, and again because of the wisdom of the religious leaders, the Patriarchate managed to tie good working relationship with the Israeli government which made it possible to build “a new seminary complex within the Old City walls. It also allowed the patriarchate to restore All Saviours’ Church situated beyond the wall in the Armenian portion of the former no-man armistice land that divided at the time the Old City and the New City and marked the frontier between Israel and Jordan.”\textsuperscript{34}

“Every newly-elected Armenian Patriarch must obtain the formal and written approval of the Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian authorities.”\textsuperscript{35}

The Armenian Patriarchate has been affected by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It has to deal with its Israeli and Palestinian Armenian communities at the same time. While it has to make compromises with the Israeli government to preserve its stance in the Holy Land, it cannot stay neutral to the sufferings of its Armenian Palestinian community. Therefore, during the intifada and whenever needed, the Armenian Patriarchate takes firm positions on human rights and justice issues affecting the Palestinian people. “Before and during the intifada there were scores of Armenian youth arrested in Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Jerusalem. Haroutune Gulezian, an Armenian youth, was martyred while leading


\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.,

a demonstration in August 1991 in Ramallah. He is buried in the Armenian cemetery in Jerusalem.”

The Armenians arrived to Jerusalem 1700 years ago as fervent believers seeking to enforce their belief in the Holy Land. But nowadays, Jerusalem does not represent the spiritual interests of Armenians only. It also represents their physical interests since it houses a community with assets and properties all over the city. “Despite its small congregation, the Armenian church is the second largest landowner in the Old City with substantial holdings in the Israeli coastal city of Jaffa and in West Jerusalem where it owns much of the central shopping district. Hence the on-going Israeli-Palestinian negotiations over the status of the City, and particularly over the one-square-kilometer plot of land, have become of vital importance for Armenians.”

The Armenian quarter of Jerusalem survived for as long as 1700 years, witnessing different conquerors and various religions. It had to deal with powerful rulers. The latest battle of the Armenian Patriarchate was in the year 2000. During the Camp David negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians in July 2000 “Israel had insisted that it had the right to exercise full sovereignty over the whole area of the Old City. It was willing to grant administrative control to the Palestinians over the Muslim and Christian Quarters only, meaning that the Armenian Quarter would have been annexed with the Jewish Quarter under complete Israeli sovereignty and administration.” When the negotiation outcomes were publicized, the president of the Palestinian Authority at that time Yasser Arafat denounced the Israeli offer, rejecting it totally.

The Church leaders strongly repudiated the Israeli proposal “that would weaken the Christian presence in the city and asked to be involved in the future discussions impacting the Old City.”

And in 17 July 2000, the three Patriarchs of Jerusalem, namely Their Beatitudes Diodoros I (Greek Orthodox), Michael Sabbah (Latin) and Torkom II (Armenian Orthodox) addressed a letter to US president, Israeli Prime Minister and President of the Palestinian Authority suggesting a solution for the Holy Land:

“We appeal to you as foremost political leaders and negotiators to ensure that the Christian communities within the walls of the old city are not separated from each other”. As a possible solution the Church leaders suggested the creation of a system of international guarantees that will ensure to the three religious communities a quality of right of access to their respective holy places of

38 Ibid., pp 29.
39 Ibid., pp 29.
profession of faith and of development."^{40}

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40 Ibid., pp 31.
The Future of Armenians in Jerusalem: 
a quarter without people for a people without a quarter

Many Armenians fear that the Israeli territorial expansion in the Old City will be in the direction of the Armenian Quarter. While the author is writing these lines, Al Jazeera, the Qatari based television has been airing for days secret documents of ten years of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authorities. Conceding parts of the Armenian Quarter had been put on the table of negotiations and accepted by the Palestinian authorities (according to the leaked documents). Once again, The Armenian Church and Community are faced with vital issues related to their survival that they have to solve with their historic wisdom without the backing of a super power. For years the Armenians in Jerusalem fought their battles for their existence and survival with success. What they are facing nowadays, is the ferocious extremism of the Jewish inhabitants in the Old City who do proclaim that the Armenian quarter is a land without people for a people without land. The numbers of the Jews in the Jewish quarter is growing compared to the shrinking number of the Armenians in their quarter which is next to the Jewish quarter.

Armenians in East Jerusalem are Palestinian citizens and they are facing the same difficulties the Palestinians are facing in the Old City. The Palestinians are losing their battle against Israel because of the historical Arab mismanagement of the conflict. The fear of the Armenians is that if the case is left to the Palestinian or Arab negotiators, the whole of East Jerusalem will be lost soon.

The situation is critical, Israel has austere measures in East Jerusalem against the non-Jews and it is more relaxed towards its Jewish citizens. They are changing the demography of the Old City by encouraging Jewish settlement. Armenians are being pressured to move from their homes in East Jerusalem, the population has difficulties finding jobs and living in a tense situation is becoming unbearable, which is forcing them to leave their homeland to immigrate to Canada or the US just like their Christian counterparts in the rest of the Middle East.

Moreover, for years Palestinians in Jerusalem and in the Occupied Territories have been cut off from the rest of the Arab region. After the Khartoum Summit in 1967 which followed the six-day War, the Arab leaders adopted the Three No’s: No peace with Israel, No recognition of Israel, No negotiations with Israel. The direct consequence of these policies was to cut off the Palestinians from their Arab counterparts. The Armenians were also cut off from the Armenians in the Arab region. They had become imprisoned. The consequence of the “No Policy” on the Palestinians as a whole was disastrous. After more than sixty years, the facts on the ground show that these policies were not the best policies to ensure the rights of the Palestinian people and to regain the land. On the contrary the Palestinians have lost much of their land, and the refugees are still refugees and they might turn into eternal refugees.
Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Arabs declared war on Israel, they launched a resistance movement, the used diplomacy, they engaged themselves in a long and tiring peace process and the result is null, which is giving a certain feeling of incapacity, lassitude and pessimism that not much will change in the Middle East and the conflict will not be resolved very soon. In the meantime, many from all sides of the conflict are paying a high price; amongst these are the Christians in the Holy Land and in the rest of the Arab region. Therefore, to save the presence of the Christian minorities in the Middle East, in their historical homeland, the decision makers and leaders (religious and secular) have to think beyond the conflict, and think of unthinkable measures. The parameters of the past sixty years have become archaic. In that respect, the author of this article is proposing an option that is hard to be accepted by many at this time but it could be an opportunity for change, and for “doing things differently”. Bringing back the equation of destroying Israel to save the Palestinians, which is being promoted by many extremist groups in the region will lead to more disastrous consequences on the Palestinians. For years in the name of the safeguard of Palestinian rights, Arabs have shut down on the Palestinians of the “inside” which gave the Israelis the freedom to suppress and destroy the Palestinian population by confiscating the land, and denying the basic rights.

The author is proposing a plan to encourage the Armenians and the Christians in general to strengthen their presence in the Middle East. The attachment to the land is a primordial notion for the people of the Holy Land. Jews from around the world support Israel because of what the land of Israel means to them. Thousands of Jews decide to head back to settle in Israel because of their attachment to the land. The same applies to the Christians of the Middle East. The source of attachment of the Christians to this land will be strengthened when the idea of belonging to the land is empowered in them. Therefore, as long as the Christians of the Middle East are not able to enter Jerusalem and be in contact with the Holy Places, they will keep on losing faith in the importance of their presence in the region. They will find it more conducive to live in Canada or the Unites States. The feeling that the Christians of the Middle East are able to maintain the Holy Places in the Holy Land is a tremendous incentive to stay in their Land.

In that regard, the author is suggesting the endorsement of the “Passage of Faith” Operation by the Leaders of the Eastern Churches to keep the Christians of the Middle East in their homeland.

The goal of the “Passage of Faith” is to allow free access to the Holy Places in Jerusalem for the Christians of the Middle East. It is a long and ambitious endeavor, for some it might be insane. However, the path of faith is never rational. It is an ambitious process of advocacy that involves decision makers in the Middle East, Europe and the United States to convince them to endorse such a bold
move. This outreach to decision makers will take around two years of hard work and wise planning. After the consent of all parties involved, 1000 Christians should be able to visit Jerusalem’s Holy Sites during the first year of implementation, as a first step. If successful, the next stage would be to allow Christians to enter the Palestinian Territories to visit the Holy sites.

The “Passage of Faith Operation” is multi-leveled. It is a huge operation that involves a great number of human power, diplomatic skills, military awareness and most importantly faith; in helping Christians of the Middle East to re-connect with the land of Christ. The author has a detailed plan for execution and is more than willing to share with those interested in the matter. However, this goes beyond the scope of this article therefore, the author will not detail the “Passage of Faith” Operation phases.

Conclusion

This paper examined the presence of the Armenians in the Holy Land for the past 1700 years. Since the declaration of the Christian Nation in 301 AD, Armenians have been travelling and settling in Jerusalem. Over the years they have managed to consolidate their presence by establishing religious and secular community and building their Quarter with perseverance of a fervent believers and the wisdom of their leaders. They were recognized as one of the three custodians of the Holy Places in the Holy Land. Faith led them to Jerusalem, and socio-economic and political interests have driven them to fight for their deep-rooted presence and to refuse to surrender to mighty powers. Irrespective of the limited support from the power brokers in Jerusalem, Armenians have successfully co-existed with the other religious and ethnic communities because of their devout faith.
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Лаури Хајтајан

ЈЕРМЕНСКИ ХРИШЋАНИ У ЈЕРУСАЛИМУ: 1700 ГОДИНА МИРНОГ ПРИСУСТВА

Резиме

Овај рад испитује присуство Јермена у Јерусалиму током последњих 1700 година. Као историјско штиво, показује значај који Јерусалим има за Јермене, нарочито за јерменску цркву, којој је дато овлашћење да са латинском и грчком црквом штити света места у Светој земљи. Током векова, Јермени су преживели сва освајања и били кадри да пронађу све врсте компромиса са свим силама које су походиле Јерусалим. Ова студија показује да је њихово перманентно присуство последица мудрости верских власти и читаве јерменске заједнице која није имала потпору суперсила, али је имала своја религијска уверења и истрајност у очувању хришћанских светиња. Аутор читаоца води на путовање у прошлост заустављајући се код важних догађаја који су обликовали историју Јермена у Светој земљи.

Кључне речи: Јерусалим, Јермени, Крсташи, Света земља, Манастир Св. Јакова, стари град, јерменска четврт.

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JERUSALEM AND THE JEWS: 
THE VIEWS OF INDONESIAN MUSLIM STUDENT ACTIVISTS

Abstract

Jerusalem is a city of controversy. This paper attempts to describe the views of Indonesian Muslim student activists, who are studying in two different categories of university, namely secular and religious-based, on Jerusalem and the Jews. The choice of students of different organizations and universities is meant to give a more comprehensive perspective, and is based on the assumption that the students from the Islamic university will have different perspectives on these issues compared to those of secular universities. Five students from each category were interviewed. The interviews were not recorded but transcribed so that the interviewees could speak freely. These interviews however do not reflect the opinions of student organizations and the universities. It reflects the students’ own perspectives.

Key words: Jerusalem, Jews, Islamic perspective, Indonesian Muslim student activists, exclusivist approach, inclusive approach.

Introduction

Jerusalem is a very old and sacred city for the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The long history of this city was colored by conflicts. This city had been destroyed twice: first by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia (587 BCE) and second by Roman Emperor Titus (70 CE). These events were also recorded in the Qur’an (17: 4-8). Jerusalem is the capital of Israel with approximately 64% of Jews.
Muslims have different attitudes about Jerusalem. The media coverage about the city, especially in its relations to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, has invited various responses by Muslims. At this point the discussion on Jerusalem could not be separated from issues related to religion and politics. I am interested to study the attitudes of Indonesians regarding Jerusalem and the Jews for two main reasons: first, Indonesia is the biggest Muslim country in the world therefore it would be very interesting to know how they view this sacred city which no longer belongs to them. Second, from the perspective of inter-religious dialogue it would be interesting to know how Indonesian Muslims view themselves in relations to the religious “other”, namely the Jews.

In this article I focus on the perspectives of Indonesian Muslim students who are active in different Muslim student associations, as they are quite vocal in uttering their opinions on this issue. I chose to interview senior undergraduate activists aged 20-24 who study at secular universities (Universitas Gadjah Mada and Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta), and a religious-based university (Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga), all situated in Yogyakarta. Altogether ten students were interviewed, four women and six men. They were chosen based on their involvement at the organizations. They were interviewed separately. I hope to answer two questions: What does Jerusalem mean to a group of Indonesian Muslim student activists? What is the place of Jerusalem and the Jews in their Islamic understanding? Within that frame I raised eight questions: What is the image of Jerusalem? How did you form this image of Jerusalem? What is the history of Jerusalem? How important is Jerusalem in Islam? Is Jerusalem a sacred city for Jews and Christians? Do non-Muslims, especially Jews and Christians, have the rights to pray in the al-Aqsa Mosque? Do non-Muslims have the right to live in Jerusalem? Who has the right to govern Jerusalem?

The answers however do not reflect the opinions of the student organizations and the universities to which the students belong. It reflects the students’ own perspectives. The choice of students of different organizations and universities is meant to give a more comprehensive perspective, and is based on the assumption that the students from the Islamic university will have different perspectives on these issues compared to the views of the students from the secular universities.

This article has four sections. First, I describe some typical views of Indonesian Muslims on the question of Jerusalem which is often wrapped within the discussion of Judaism and the Jews. Second, I explain the place of the religious ‘other’ in the Islamic texts that are often consulted or referred to by some Indonesian Muslims in relations to the question of Jerusalem and the Jews. Third, I provide the questions and give a summary of the answers that describes the understanding of the Muslim student activists on Jerusalem and the Jews by. And finally, I end this article with an analysis of my findings during the interviews.
1. Indonesian Muslims’ Views on Jerusalem, Judaism, and the Jews

This section does not mean to give a comprehensive view of how Indonesian Muslims think about Jerusalem and the Jews. Rather it will highlight some typical Muslim perspectives that could be easily found in popular Indonesian media including books, journals, magazines and newspapers. It is not easy to find articles or publications dedicated exclusively to Jerusalem, and it is not surprising that in many instances Muslims’ perspectives on Jerusalem are often mixed with their views about the Jewish people as the majority population of the area, and about Judaism.

One example of a typical Muslim perspective can be found in the writings published at Hidayatullah.com:\(^4\) “the building of illegal housing complex in West Bank and in Jerusalem’s occupied areas was a proof of the Jews’ stubbornness. Even though the Israeli government issued a regulation to stop the housing development, some 3,000 new units were going to be built in the area.”\(^5\) A similar opinion published at Eramuslim.com:\(^6\) “It is our responsibility as Muslims to help the Palestinians to fight against the Israelis. If we do not help them we are not part of the Islamic community. I regret that we Muslims were only able to pray, cry, or send some donations and medicines but were not able to actively take part in joining the Hamas and Palestinians in order to fight against the Israelis.”\(^7\)

In a similar tone, M. Natsir\(^8\) argues that:

“Immigration of the Jewish people which has taken place since the end of the 19\(^{th}\) century without taking into account of many protests and objections from the Arab Palestinians until the establishment of Israel in 1948 had deprived Palestinian land and had forced them to migrate to many other countries. This has become the seed of continuous Arab-Israeli conflict and had largely influenced peace stability in the Middle East and in the world.”\(^9\)

Media Dakwah, a magazine published by Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Preaching Council/ DDII), is very active in publishing views about Jerusalem, Judaism, and the Jews. DDII is the oldest Muslim organi-

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4 Hidayatullah.com is an online media associated with exclusivist Muslim group which was published in 1996 under the Hidayatullah Media Group. It offers various news including national and international interviews, cover story, feature, and health issues.


6 Eramuslim.com claims itself to be the first online news on Islam that was launched on 1 August 2000. It is also associated with exclusivist Muslim group.


8 M. Natsir was the most influential leader within the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Preaching Council), an organization associated with the Indonesian exclusivist group.

sation to give priority to the question of Muslim–Christian relations and was established on 26 February 1967 partly to respond to the problems of Muslim–Christian relations. In “The Conspiracy of Jews: The Quest of Anti-Semitism in Media Dakwah” Burhanuddin argues that the magazine “has contributed to the creation and dissemination of Jewish conspiracy theories in the aftermath of September 11th.”

One example of writings published in this magazine is Didin Hafidhuddin’s “Yahudi dalam Sorotan Al-Qur’an” (The Jews in the Qur’anic Perspective). Hafidhuddin maintains that the Jews, who were mentioned with the Christians in the Qur’an as People of the Book, are the most frequent group of people mentioned by the Qur’an because of their nasty behaviour in disrespecting Islamic teachings. They were referred to by the Qur’an as “al-maghdub”, or those who are blamed. Hafidhuddin claims that the Jews are the followers of materialism, looking wealth, power, position, and seeking to dominate the world. They would use whatever means available to achieve that goal including cheating, colonizing, and even killing. Referring to the Qur’an 2:96, he underlines that the Jews wanted to live forever to achieve their goals and that whoever obstructed their efforts would be totally destroyed.

Hafidhuddin also argues that in their relations with the Muslims, the Jews have long preserved their hatred towards the followers of the Prophet Muhammad. The Jews killed Prophets Zakaria and Yahya and many other Muslims. He further adds that their act of killing would continue to take place using various means as this reflects their hatred towards Muslims as underlined in the Qur’an 3:186. In addition, Hafidhuddin believes that the Jews are trying very hard to force Muslims to leave their religion using various means such as movies, books, articles, and education. The hope was that Muslim youth would gradually doubt their religion and then follow Judaism. However, he argues that there is a minority group of Jews who could think clearly and honestly and are trying to read the Qur’an seriously, those were blessed by Allah. He gives some names as examples from the Prophet time, including Abdullah bin Salam, Tsa’labah bin Sai’yah, Asih bin Sa’iyyah, Asad bin Ubaid, and Tsa’labah bin Salam.

Another article published in Media Dakwah was about Nurcholish Madjid’s thought on the renewal of Islamic teachings which were perceived as resembling those of Annie Beasant’s. The late Nurcholish Madjid was a leading Indonesian Muslim scholar and Annie Beasant was a leading figure of Theosofische

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11 Hafidhuddin Didin, Yahudi dalam Sorotan Al-Qur’an (The Jews in the Qur’anic Perspective), Media Dakwah, Jakarta, December 1992, pp. 30–31. Hafidhuddin is one of important contributors to the journal, which is owned by the Indonesian Islamic Preaching Council. He was also the member of Partai Keadilan Sejahtera.
12 Hafidhuddin Didin, Yahudi dalam Sorotan Al-Qur’an, pp. 30.
Vereeniging (Theosophical Society) which was established in 1912 in Indonesia. In one article the research team of the magazine opined that the Theosophical Society was a branch of British Freemasonry and part of International Jewish networks. The research team severely criticized Nurcholish Madjid’s argument, which stated that the heart of Islamic teaching is submission and that all religions are the same. This was considered contradicted the Qur’an 4:3: “We have to be careful with whatever Nurcholish Madjid said because he could amazingly dodge the questions, which is the prominent character of the Jews.”

There are published books which are similarly very critical to the Israelis and against Jews. One example is M. Ilham Marzuq’s *Islam Yahudi?*. This book discusses the danger of male-female relationships and free sex, which are seen as not only growing in the West but also developing in other parts of the world. Marzuq argues that these phenomena are the result of Western culture which praises materialism and secularism. He further underlines that there is a Western conspiracy to demoralize Islam through various media including films, such as *Schindler’s List*, *True Lies*, and *Exodus*. In these films, Islam was portrayed as a violent and militant religion. He maintains that these films were produced by the United States under the dictation of the Jews, who are trying to propagate anti-Islamic sentiments.

2. The Religious “Other” in Islamic Texts

As seen above, Muslim perspectives on Jerusalem are mixed with their views about the Jewish people and Judaism. It is clear that some Indonesian Muslims have clear and strong sentiments against Jews but less clear views about Jerusalem and that they are more preoccupied with forming opinions about Jews rather than Jerusalem. At this point the issue of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially the Jews, becomes significant.

The Qur’an repeatedly confirms previous revelations, in particular the Torah and *Injil* (Gospel). However, some Muslims have found it difficult to accept the Old and New Testaments because several key issues that are mentioned in the Qur’an contradict these Jewish and Christian Holy Books. Muslims’ doubt towards the validity of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures is supported by several Qur’anic verses that explicitly or implicitly accuse the *ahl al-kitab* of concealing some parts of their Scriptures such as in the Qur’an 4:44.

In discussing this, classical theological Islamic texts generally argued that

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both Scriptures were corrupted. Different theologians placed different emphases on the reason for this charge, but most centred on two main issues: the alleged alterations and changes in the Torah and Injil, and the concept of the Trinity. However in line with the theme of this paper only the first issue will be discussed here.

Two notable Muslim theologians of the classical period who wrote important treatises on the subject were Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and Ibn Hazm (d. 1064). Ibn Taymiyya wrote his Al-Jawab al-Sahih li man Baddala Din al-Masih (The Correct Reply to Those Who Have Altered the Religion of Christ) in response to some books which contained, among others, arguments that the Prophet Muhammad was not sent to the Christians but to those who were ignorant amongst the Arabs, that Christians were monotheists, and that the doctrine of the Trinity was consistent with reason and religious principles.\(^\text{18}\) The Syrian and Egyptian milieu within which Ibn Taymiyya lived was characterised by religious pluralism. Muslims, Christians and Jews lived together and their relationships were often marked with enmity. It was within such a milieu that his work was written.\(^\text{19}\)

Ibn Taymiyya maintained that the Torah and Injil had undergone some changes to their meanings (tahrif) and some alterations to their wordings (tabdil) before the time of Prophet Muhammad. For Ibn Taymiyya, the Torah and Injil had come down to their followers by non-valid transmission. He further stated that the Injil was not written by Isa (lam yaktubuhu al-masih ‘alaihi al-salam); instead it was composed by his two disciples Matthew and John. For him, the claim that Mark and Luke also transmitted the Injil to the community was not valid as these two persons did not meet Prophet Isa (or Jesus in Christian understanding).\(^\text{20}\)

In a similar line, Ibn Hazm severely criticised the Gospels. In his Al-Fisal fi al-Milal wa-al-Ahwa’ wa-al-Nihal, Ibn Hazm examined the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and different concepts of prophecy in Judaism and Christianity. He argued that the Torah and Injil contained contradictions (munaqadat) and untruths (akadhib) because some of their verses were in contradiction to Islamic belief as stated in the Qur’an. Ibn Hazm then listed some forty examples of these contradictions in the Torah including the wrong account of the length of stay of Bani Isra’il in Egypt, the statements that Adam was a deity (al-ilah), and that the Prophet Lot was accused of sleeping with his daughter.\(^\text{21}\)

Within the classical Islamic law the position of non-Muslim as protected mi-


norities (ahl al-dhimma or dhimmis) was clear in that the law had positioned Muslims above them in several key areas.\(^{22}\) There were obligations and rights for the dhimmis as outlined by the ‘ulama’. Al-Mawardi (d. 1058) listed six compulsory obligations for the dhimmis: they must respect the Qur’an; they must respect God’s prophets; they must not talk about Islam in insulting language; they must not commit adultery or marry Muslim women; they must not preach their religions to Muslims or assault Islam; and they must not help enemies of Islam. These points were included in a protection agreement between Muslim rulers and the dhimmis, who had to observe these requirements.\(^{23}\)

In addition, Al-Mawardi noted six desirable conditions that were expected from the dhimmis, even though these were not included in the protection agreement. The six points were: they should distinguish their appearance from Muslims by wearing different clothes; they should not build higher buildings than those of Muslims; they should not recite their Scripture or ring their church bells in such a tone that would be heard by Muslims; they should not display their drinking, crosses or pigs in front of Muslims; they should bury their dead discreetly; and they should not ride horses but could ride mules or donkeys.\(^{24}\)

On the question of social life, the issue of greetings between Muslims and non-Muslims needs to be highlighted. Greeting non-Muslims, which at first glance seem irrelevant for the discussion on Jerusalem, is in fact quite significant as this also becomes the concern of certain Indonesian Muslims preachers and writers which in turn are referred to by some Muslim student activists. The greeting assalamu ‘alaykum (May God bless your happiness and prosperity) in Islam was different from a mere greeting as it had religious connotation. Therefore, the issue of greetings was discussed within some Islamic law texts and concerned Muslim jurists, as it was important to decide whether Muslims were permitted or not permitted (haram) to greet non-Muslims, especially the Jews and Christians.

Al-San‘ani quoted a hadith from Abu Hurayra stating ‘la tabda’u al-yahuda wa al-nasara bi al-salam’ (Do not be first in greeting the Jews and the Christians). The hadith continued that if a Muslim met a Jew or Christian on the street, the Muslim should obstruct their way. Al-San‘ani, however, also reported that Ibn Abbas stated that it was permissible for Muslims to greet Jews and Christians, and that was also the opinion of some Shafiite ‘ulama’. They based their argument on the Qur’anic verse: ‘wa qulu li al-nasi husnun’ (and you shall speak unto


all people in a kindly way), and other hadiths that permitted such a greeting. Nevertheless, al-Sanʿani also stated that some ‘ulama’ argued that the permissibility of greeting Jews and Christians was only valid provided they were walking together with Muslims. If, however, they were not walking with Muslims, Jews and Christians were not allowed to be greeted. Al-Sanʿani also narrated that another hadith stated that if Muslims were greeted first by the ahl al-kitab they could respond with the expression wa ‘alaykum (and upon you too) and not wa ‘alaykum salam (may happiness and prosperity be blessed upon you too). However, Muslims could not initiate the greeting towards Jews and Christians.

In a similar line, Ibn Taymiyya stated that if a Jew or Christian greeted a Muslim, the latter should reply ‘and upon you’ without mentioning the word ‘peace’. This would countervail any intended curse that Jews and Christians might possess in their minds when they greeted Muslims. In addition, Imam Malik reported a hadith that the Prophet said ‘innal yahuda idha sallamu ‘alaykum yaqulu ahaduhum as-samu calaykum faqulu wa calayk’ (When a Jew greets you and says, ‘Poison to you’, say, ‘And to you’).

It is not easy to make a claim that the above views have directly affected the views of the present day Indonesian Muslims. However, it is safe to argue that the perspectives of some Indonesian Muslims on the religious “other” are to a significant extent related to the perceptions developed in some classical Islamic theology and legal texts cited above. This could be seen below.

3. Muslim Student Activists’ Understanding of Jerusalem and the Jews

This section consists of two parts. The first part will describe the views of Muslim student activists from the two secular universities in Yogyakarta, namely Universitas Gadjah Mada and Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. The views of Muslim student activists from a religious-based (an Islamic) university, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, will be described in the second part.

Jerusalem Seen by Students Attending Secular University

Five Muslim student activists of three men and two women, from the secular universities mentioned above, were interviewed. They were asked about their understanding of Jerusalem and the Jews. A topic guide I initially prepared was focussing more on theological aspects of the theme. However, as a lot of the answers given were connecting these theological notions to politics, some ques-

26  Al-Sanʿani, Subul al-Salam, Vol. 4, p. 1378.
28  Malik ibn Anas, Al-Muwatta, 404.
tions related to politics were also raised. In this section I first repeat the questions, then give a summary of the answers.

Q: What is the image of Jerusalem?
A: The respondents gave a mix answers for this question. Some argued that it is a sacred place; a place for continuous conflicts; a place where violations against human rights take place; it is a horror place to live. Other respondents gave a longer explanation: Jerusalem is a place where many innocent people were being killed, including women and children.

Q: How did you form this image of Jerusalem?
A: The image of Jerusalem was explained through pengajian (religious gathering) in the campus mosque; from television, and internet such as eraMuslim.com; from reading books on Jerusalem such as Palestina, Emang Gue Pikirin; and from Hidayatullah and Sabili magazines.

Q: What is the history of Jerusalem?
A: Some respondents explained that Jerusalem is a holy city because Prophet Muhammad had done his isra’ (ascention) there and because it was the first kiblah (direction for prayer) for Muslims. Yet others mentioned that they did not know exactly about its history. One respondent explained the history at length: “the Jews had a palace there but was destroyed by the Babylonians. The behaviour of the Jews is never changing: they are cruel, cunning, and snob. The land was inhabited by the Palestinians, who made it prosperous and this was also destroyed by the Jews.”

Q: How important is Jerusalem in Islam?
A: In general the interviewees argued that it is a very important place in Islam as mentioned in the Qur’an and hadith. Others said that because the place is very important according to Islam therefore the religion as well as Muslims in Jerusalem need to be protected. One respondent said that Jerusalem is not as important as Mecca and Madina but still very important because it used to be the first kiblah.

Q: Is Jerusalem a sacred city for Jews and Christians?
A: All five respondents said that the Jews and Christians do not have the right to claim Jerusalem as their sacred city because it belongs to Muslims. Most of them argued that this was because both religious groups had deviated from the teachings of their prophets. Another respondent claimed that the Jews cannot claim Jerusalem as a sacred place because they once wanted to bomb al-Aqsa mosque.

Q: Do non-Muslims, especially Jews and Christians, have the right to pray in the al-Aqsa Mosque?
A: All interviewees argued that Jews and Christians do not have the right to pray there but gave different reasons for that. Some said that al-Aqsa is a mosque therefore non-Muslims could not pray there. Some reasoned that if non-Muslims were allowed to pray in the mosque they would only cause de-
struction to the mosque as mentioned clearly in the Qur’an. Others argued that because Israel will monopolize the whole city of Jerusalem it would be too risky to allow the Jewish people to pray in the al-Aqsa mosque.

Q: Do non-Muslims have the right to live in Jerusalem?
A: Almost all respondents said that non-Muslims do not have the right to live in Jerusalem, and only one said that they could live there as long as they do not bother the Muslims. They gave various reasons for this. Some respondents argued that non-Muslims would only fuel the potential conflict that already exists. Another thought that there are many other prosperous places outside Jerusalem and that non-Muslims, especially the Jews, could not colonize Jerusalem.

Q: Who has the right to govern Jerusalem?
A: The respondents were divided into two different but actually very similar answers. Some said that Islamic countries or Islam has the right, without specifying who they mean by this. Some said that Palestinians have the right. The reasons given were quite diverse. One respondent gave a quite lengthy explanation to his argument: “Historically speaking it was true that Jerusalem belonged to the Jews and the Christian. However, it was the Muslims who rebuilt and developed the city, whereas the Jews and Christians have immoral behaviour and hated Islam. Their heart was locked.” The argument was based on the Qur’an, Surah al-Baqoroh 2: 18: “Deaf, dumb and blind – so they will not return [to thr right path].” Some argued that because the Palestinians were guided by the light of Islam therefore it was they who have the right.

Finally the Muslim student activists from the secular universities were asked to comment on who was responsible in this seemingly unceaseable conflict in Jerusalem. All of them agreed that Israel was the one responsible. The United States, United Nations, The United Kingdom, and France were also deemed responsible because they were seen as taking sides with Israel.

Jerusalem Seen by Students Attending the Islamic University

The five students of three men and two women from the Islamic university, were asked about their understanding of Jerusalem and the Jews. The same questions asked to the first group of students were asked to these students. In this section I first repeat the questions, then give a summary of the answers.

Q: What is the image of Jerusalem?
A: The answers given are also quite mixed. Some stated that Jerusalem is a city of three religions. Others said that it is a city of continuous conflict, especially between Muslims and Jews, as mentioned in the Qur’an. Another respondent gave a longer explanation arguing that the word “Jerusalem” connotes a complex image: politics, religion, and violence.

Q: How did you form this image of Jerusalem?
A: Most of them answered that they gained this image from the internet,
television, magazine, and books without being able to specify the names of the magazines and books. Another respondent said that the image was constructed from his lecturer at the university.

Q: What is the history of Jerusalem?
A: Various answers were given. Jerusalem is the land of the prophets, and therefore it is a sacred city. Prophets David, Solomon, and Moses had reigned in this land. The sacred al-Aqsa Mosque exists there also. Yet others mentioned that they were not sure about its history because they could not remember what the Qur’an said about this.

Q: How important is Jerusalem in Islam?
A: Some respondents said that it was only a historical city and not a religious city. It had its importance in the past but not as important as Mecca and Medina. It is not a safe place for praying anymore because it is a place of hatred. A female respondent gave a different perspective by arguing that Jerusalem is important because it is an example of a real jihad for Muslims who fight against their enemies.

Q: Is Jerusalem a sacred city for Jews and Christians?
A: Jerusalem is a sacred city of the three religions as written within the three Holy Books of Christians, Jews and Muslims. The historic sites in Jerusalem reflected the history of the three religions and the three religions shared the same historical roots. Two respondents said that it is no longer a sacred city for the Jews and Christians because Christianity and Judaism were corrected by Islam.

Q: Do non-Muslims, especially Jews and Christians, have the right to pray in the al-Aqsa Mosque?
A: The general tones of the respondents were positive by arguing that Jews and Christians have the right to pray there because they shared a religious history in that place. However, two of them were worried that if non-Muslims were given the right to pray in the mosque they would cause harm to Muslims. Therefore, they argued that non-Muslims should not be given permission to pray there. “Moreover, they (non-Muslims) have left the right path (Islam) and are following the wrong path, so they could not pray in the al-Aqsa Mosque.”

Q: Do non-Muslims have the right to live in Jerusalem?
A: Most respondents argued that non-Muslims have the right to live there provided they meet certain requirements. “Non-Muslims have the right to live in Jerusalem only if they meet the juridical regulations and administrative requirements,” they said. “Non-Muslims have the right to live in Jerusalem without disturbing and spying on the Islamic community.” Or: “They are allowed to live there insofar as they do not destroy historical sites.” Only one respondent firmly held that non-Muslims should not be given the right to live there: “I learned from the Christians who lived in my remote village in Yogyakarta. They were allowed to live there but then they proselytized the Muslims. So, non-Muslims should not be given the right to live in a Muslim community because they will
cause harm to the Muslims.”

Q: Who has the right to govern Jerusalem?

A: The respondents seemed to be undecided. “I could not say who has the right because I do not know its exact history. I think it is Palestinians who have the right but it has nothing to do with religion. This is very much related to the issue of sovereignty,” one respondent said. “If we are talking about ‘right’ I am not sure, but what is happening in Jerusalem at the moment is not intended by the civil societies of Palestine nor Israel. It is only a very few politicians, eager to gain power, who have caused the terrible situation in Jerusalem at the moment.” Another respondent said that it is the Palestinians who have the right to govern Jerusalem because they are the native inhabitants over there.”

Finally the Muslim student activists from the Islamic university were asked to comment on who was responsible in this seemingly unceaseable conflict in Jerusalem. It is quite interesting to note that only one respondent directly pointed at Israel because it does not obey international law. The rest of them said, because both Israeli and Palestinian communities are divided in their opinions, one could not blame any of those parties. They argued that only those who supported violence are the ones to be blamed. Some noted though that the Palestinians are in a worse condition because of the imbalance of power compared to the Israelis.

4. Analysis

As mentioned above, the interviews conducted for this paper do not reflect the opinions of student organizations and the universities. The choice of students from various student organizations and universities is meant to give a wide picture of how a Muslim student thinks about Jerusalem and the Jews, and is based on the assumption that the students from the Islamic university will have different perspectives on these issues compared to those of secular universities. Therefore, I need to briefly explain these different perspectives. I realize I am making some generalization here, but I want to give a general picture of their different characters.

There is a general assumption that in relations to non-Muslims, Muslim students of secular universities in Indonesia have the tendency of being more exclusivist compared to the students of Islamic universities. What I mean by exclusivist is those who have the tendency of applying a literal approach in understanding Qur’an and hadith, and are past-oriented. These people would also hold the view that salvation can only be achieved through the religion of Islam. For them Islam is the final religion, which came to correct other religions. On the other hand, Muslim students of the Islamic universities tend to be more inclusive by perceiving Islam as an evolving religion and applying a contextual reading to the Qur’an and hadith. They also hold that salvation is also possible
outside Islam, and therefore tend to be more tolerant of the faith of the ‘other.’

The above assumption could be explained by, among others, understanding the methods of teaching Islam in those universities. In Islamic universities, especially at State Islamic University Yogyakarta, Islam is taught using historical approach. This allows the students to critically discuss Islam and Islamic teachings. In contrast, the teaching of Islam at secular universities applies the normative approach which sets the limits to critically discussing the religion. At this point, it is important to note that even though the opinions of the Muslim students interviewed here are not representing the views of their institutions, there might be a strong connection between the students’ views and their respective universities’ visions or ways of teaching.

Drawing from the above explanation about different characters of the universities, one might assume that students of secular universities would tend to be more exclusive in their views about Jerusalem, especially in its relations to the religious other. This is generally true. The interviews showed that these students were very firm in arguing that Jerusalem belongs to the Muslims and that non-Muslims have no rights to govern the city. Most of the respondents also stated their negative image about the Jews, who were seen as those who have deviated from the teachings of their prophet.

In contrast, one might assume that students of the Islamic university would have a more positive thought of Jerusalem and the Jews. However, this is not totally true. As could be seen from the above interviews, while it is true that some students from the Islamic university gave a more academic explanation about Jerusalem and offered a more balanced view about the city, some of them became quite harsh in uttering their criticism of the Jews. As shown above some of the respondents from this university argued that Judaism was no longer valid because it was corrected by Islam, and doubted the good will of the Jews when they were given access to pray in the al-Aqsa Mosque.

To conclude, Jerusalem means different things for Indonesian Muslim student activists. While some of them gave a more academic view about the city, many of them gave an ideological explanation by arguing that it is a place where violations against human rights take place, and that it is a place where many innocent people were being killed, including women and children. The same case is true in regards to the question of the religious ‘other,’ namely the Jews. Certain muslim student activists who often been labeled as inclusivists were in fact quite exclusivists. It needs a futher study to explain why this happens.
References


Фатима Хусеин

ЈЕРУСАЛИМ И ЈЕВРЕЈИ: ПОГЛЕД ИНДОНЕЖАНСКИХ МУСЛИМАНСКИХ СТУДЕНТСКИХ АКТИВИСТА

Резиме

Јерусалим је град контроверзи. Овај рад настоји да опише погледе на Јерусалим и Јевреје индонежанских муслиманских студентских активиста који студирају у две различите категорије универзитета – у световној и религиозној. Избор студената из различитих организација и универзитета имао је за циљ да пружи бољу библиотеку перспективе и заснован је на претпоставци да студенти са исламског универзитета имају значајнију перспективу о овим питањима од оних са секуларног универзитета. Интервјуисано по пет људи из сваке категории. Интервјуи нису снимани већ записани, тако да су испитаници могли да говоре слободно. Ови интервјуи, у сваком случају, не одражавају мишљења студентских организација и универзитета. Они одражавају сопствене погледе студентата.

Кључне речи: Јерусалим, Јевреји, исламска перспектива, индонежански муслимански студентски активисти, ексклузивистички приступ, инклузивни приступ.

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As those of other Western countries, Italian media often employ the term “clash of civilisation” [conflitto di civiltà] to refer to the relationship between “Islam” and the “West”. The Muslim world is simplistically described, and perceived, as a monolithic reality. Its representation by media ranges from that of an irrational to that of an intolerant religion.

The expression “clash of civilization” was especially used in September 2006, after the Pope’s lectio magistralis at Regensburg University caused vigorous protests to take place in the Muslim world. Benedict XVI seemed to present the Christian God as the only rational divinity, and Islam as an irrational religion. After international Muslim communities asked for an official apology, the Pope held a meeting with the ambassadors from Islamic States to the Holy See, and the representatives of the Italian Muslim communities, to explain his words.

This paper analyzes the way in which this event was presented by the Italian media – including right-wing, mainstream and Catholic media - with the aim of understanding the official reaction of the Vatican (as reported by the Osservatore Romano), the Italian Catholic Church (as reported by Avvenire), and the Italian public opinion.

Key words: Islam, Media, Politics, Newspapers, Religion.

Introduction

„Objectivity does not exist, but honesty does“
„Faithful as it might be, a piece of news is never the exact reproduction of reality – it is a registration, a narration, an evaluation or interpretation of reality“.

1 martiambro@hotmail.it;
3 Papuzzi Alberto, Professione Giornalista, Donzelli, Roma, 2003, p. 11.
The media play a crucial role in helping to maintain good relationships between Islam and the West. A precise and clear knowledge of the events is necessary to enable the public to understand different ideas, and to reach reciprocal knowledge; conversely, an inexact and unfaithful description of an event could lead to the formation of inaccurate ideas about a dispute, and about the parties involved.

Using this approach, it is interesting to analyze the role Italian media played in a precise historical moment: when Pope Benedict XVI gave a lectio magistralis at the University of Regensburg, Germany in September 2006. The Pope dealt with topics concerning the relationship between reason and faith, and talked about the necessity of entertaining a dialogue with other religions. In expressing his ideas, Benedict XVI cited Koranic verses and excerpts from the work of Theodore Koury, a scholar in religious studies, which referred to the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleolog.

These expressions triggered protests in several Muslim communities around the world. The media played a decisive role in this situation, because the polemic discourse about the Pope’s statements centred on the impact they had in mass communication. This paper analyzes the ways in which this lecture was presented by the Italian media – including right-wing, mainstream, and Catholic media - with the aim of understanding the official reaction of the Vatican (as reported by the newspaper Osservatore Romano), the Italian Catholic Church (as reported by Avvenire), and the Italian public opinion. For this research, Catholic newspapers were used, in addition to three other Italian mainstream papers: Il Corriere della Sera (the most widely spread newspaper in Italy), La Repubblica (more left-wing oriented) and Il Giornale (the newspaper which most closely reflects the views of the current right-wing government). This paper does not aim to express any form of judgement concerning the events that transpired, but aims to highlight the inconsistency of the subsequent reports of the events, and to link these references to the construction of an Islamophobic discourse.

1. The Pope in Munich: the first discourse

In September 2006, Pope Benedict XVI travelled to Germany to visit the local Catholic communities, and, on September 10th, he delivered a speech in Munich. In this speech, he focused on Asian and African populations, who admire the technological innovations of West but are scared of the West’s lack of religion. Even if in the Pope’s speech there was no reference to the so called “clash of civilisations”, an analysis of the different reports published by Italian newspapers reveals that some of them construed the Pope’s argumentations as referring to a „clash of civilizations“.

The *Corriere della Sera* published two articles on the comparison between Islam and Christianity that can be defined as Christian-centred. One of these two articles was written by the famous journalist Magdi Allam. Referring to 9/11, Magdi Allam describes Islam as a potential threat to the West and uses the word “hate preachers” to identify people who use Islam with the aim of inflicting violence. The other article, written by Vittorio Messori, refers to Muslims as people who want to remove Christian symbols, such as the crucifix, from schools and public buildings.\(^5\)

If we analyze the articles published in *Il Giornale* about the Munich speech, we see that there are no strong attacks on Islam, though there are some references to Islam as a religion that does not find it easy to accept criticisms\(^6\). The newspaper respected the nature of the Pope’s speech, as did *La Repubblica*, which presented the speech as promoting dialogue in an area that religions often overlook. The *Osservatore Romano* – the Holy See’s newspaper – simply published the entire speech, without editorial or columnist comments, while *Avvenire* published articles on the relationship between faith and reason. This newspaper also informed its readers of the enthusiastic welcome on behalf of the German people given to Benedict XVI, with other articles respecting the Pope’s intentions and making no reference to the clash of civilisation\(^7\). In conclusion, it seems that the *Corriere della Sera* was the only newspaper, among those analysed, that published articles offering a particular image of the Muslim world. In doing so, it seemed to be using the Pope’s words to reinforce the idea of a clash between Islam and Christianity and to introduce an Islamophobic discourse.

### 2. September 12th 2006: the lectio magistralis in Regensburg

On 12th September 2006, Pope Benedict XVI gave a lecture at the University of Regensburg. The lecture dealt mainly with the role of theology in modern knowledge, and with the relationship between faith and science, religion and culture, and Christianity and modernity. In presenting his arguments, the Pope referred to Professor Theodore Koury, a German Lebanese theologian. He quoted from Koury’s reflections on the byzantine emperor Manuel II „the Paleo-logue“ and used a passage that caused intense reactions in parts of the Islamic

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5 “Islam is also united by the horror for the crucifix that, in the West, immigrants want to take off from the wall of schools and public buildings”. (Messori Vittorio, Musulmani, le prove da superare, *Corriere della Sera*, 11 September 2006, p. 30, Milano). To be correct, yet on the 26th of July 1996, some Italian Mps – Mele, De Zulueta, and Debenedetti – posed a question time to the interior ministry and the ministry of coordination of civil rescue, against the exposition of crucifixes in public buildings. Many other question times on this argument will be posed in the next years.


world. Benedict XVI insisted that surely the emperor knew that in the sura 2, 256, you can read: «no obligation of faith». According to the experts, this is a sura of the early period, when Mohamed was without power and under threat. But of course the emperor also knew the dispositions that were developed subsequently and fixed in the Koran, about the holy war. Without dwelling on particulars, such as the difference of the treatment between the ones that have the «Book», and the «unfaithful», in a surprisingly offhanded way that astonishes us, he said to his interlocutor: „Show me what is new about Mohammed’s teachings, and you will find only bad and inhuman things, such as his instructions to spread the faith he preaches by using the sword”.

If these phrases are quoted out of context, they turn out to be particularly controversial and open to manipulative interpretations. It is precisely on these phrases that the newspapers based their articles in following days, giving rise to a polemic that continued until the end of September. The Pope was thus forced to provide further explanations to Islamic communities around the world.

A comparison of the newspapers selected shows great differences in the treatment of the Pope’s arguments on the day after the conference. The Pope’s speech appeared in its entirety only in the two Catholic newspapers, and was not published in the Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica and Il Giornale. In the latter newspapers, journalists reposted the lectio magistralis, but these newspapers only supplied fragments of the Pope’s argumentation, and gave particular relevance to the sentences on the comparison between the West and Islam and on the Koranic sura. In particular, Avvenire and Corriere della Sera were the only two newspapers that immediately alluded to the paradigm of the so-called clash of civilisation.

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8 The Pope used this dialogue to analyze the Jihad, and the relationship between faith and reason:

„The emperor, after having expressed himself so forcefully, goes on to explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is in contrast with God’s nature and soul’s nature (…). „God - he says - is not pleased by blood - and not acting reasonably is contrary to God’s nature (…)To convince a reasonable soul, one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind, or any other means of threatening a person with death“. The decisive statement in this argument against violent conversion is this: not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God’s nature. The editor, Theodore Khoury, observes: „For the emperor, as a Byzantine shaped by Greek philosophy, this statement is self-evident. But for Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality (…)”.

Then, the Pope continued his argumentation talking about the relationship between faith and reason, and he reconstructed the three phases in which there would have been the three “de-Hellenization” of the Christian culture. He underlined that there is only a possible way to fight the menaces come from a wrong use of scientific conquests: „We reach the target only if faith and reason are united in a new way (…)“. Therefore, the theology, seen as “a question of faith on reason”, must have his importance in university and in the wide science discourse (…). Only acting like this we become able to hold a real cultural and religious dialogue – of which we have a very urgent need (…)” (Pope Benedict XVI’s speech, published on Osservatore Romano on September 14th, pp. 6-7).

9 The day after the speech, and days before Islamic protests, Avvenire published the clarification of Padre Lombardi, with the intention to avoid possible incorrect interpretation of Benedict XVI words about Islam. This choice seems to recognize the possibility to have misunderstandings and protests coming from Muslims (Muolo Mimmo, La precisazione, Avvenire, 13
It is also important to highlight that one of the first commentary articles by a Muslim appeared in the first page of La Repubblica. The article, written by Khaled Fouad Allam, professor of Islamology at the Universities of Urbino and Trieste, emphasized that the sura quoted by the Pope is a medinese sura and not a meccan one. Once again, and moreover before news arrived of protests in Muslim countries, La Repubblica stressed the importance of using correct sources and appropriate words. The Corriere della Sera approached the dispute from a different point of view, i.e. the difficulties that journalists face in dealing with Benedict XVI’s statements. Thus the article explains that it is impossible to summarize the Pope’s speech without altering its meaning. This complexity, and the necessity of avoiding superficial treatments; do not seem to apply to the Islamic religion, as articles published in the following days revealed.

3. The analysis of the Regensburg speech and the Islamic protests

The Pope’s words triggered significant protests from sectors of the Islamic world. All the analysed newspapers except Avvenire and Il Giornale talked about this and in several articles in Corriere della Sera, the priority seemed to have been that of demonizing the so-called “opponents”, who simply do not accept any criticisms from the West. The publication of these articles seemed to stress the difference between the two faiths and the impossibility of undertaking interreligious dialogue. Therefore, while newspapers pointed out how important it is to comprehend the various nuances of the Pope’s statements, and how wrong it is to offer partial and marginal understandings of his speech, the same newspapers referred to the Islamic religion through stereotypes and without considering its multiple aspects. They used a “metonymic” approach, considering “a part of the whole”, holding the entire Muslim community responsible for actions that were perpetrated by a specific minority.

Examining the newspapers, one can note that, while the Osservatore Romano limited itself to reproducing the Pope’s speech and the Vatican Secretary of State’s clarifications, the other newspapers supplied reports and editorial arti-

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10 This argument, which for non-Islamic public could seem a minor detail, is extremely significant: the so-called Meccan suras correspond to the beginning of a Koran revelation, and „they paint a prophet which has not yet the awareness to form a community”. The Medinese suras are longer and more complex than the Meccan ones, and they have structured Islam according to a legal, social and politic point of view. Therefore, according to the classical theology, the sura quoted by the Pope would be abrogating the sures that incite to violence, instead of ascribing to neo-fundamentalists. (Fouad Allam Khaled, Il Corano letto dai Fanatici, Repubblica, 13 September 2006, p. 1, Milano).


12 For example, the title “Proteste dall’Islam per le frasi del Papa: ostili e provocatorie” (Protests from Islam for Pope’s sentences: hostile and provocative) by Luigi Accattoli, Corriere della Sera, 15 September 2006, p. 2, Milano, does not seem to make a distinction between moderate and fundamentalist Muslims.
The only newspaper that seemed to maintain an analytic approach on the Regensburg speech is La Repubblica, which also included news of the protests. La Repubblica published an editorial article written by its columnist, former director and founder of the newspaper Eugenio Scalfari on September 17th. Scalfari reached the following conclusions in his article: Benedict XVI more than likely committed a major communication mistake, siding with an euro-centric view of the world that does not favour dialogue.

In the days after the speech, Avvenire seemed to be joining the call against Islam, making few distinctions with respect to the different aspects of this religious faith. Avvenire was also the first newspaper to talk in negative terms about Al-Jazeera, underlining the importance of the media in the construction of public opinion. This newspaper criticized the Qatari television, accusing it of demonizing the West and creating hostile mobs, defining this television channel as “the new prophet”. In another article which appeared in Avvenire, an interview with Magdi Allam, there was a tendency to present the Islamic front which opposed the Pope’s speech as a “compact” one, and a propensity to consider hostile Islamic sectors as the sole interlocutor the West would have to dialogue with, leaving aside the so-called “moderate” Muslims.

Only the article written by Giulio Albanini, which was published on September 16th, reaffirmed the concept that “there is a reasonable Islam”, and that it is also important to promote the dialogue through cultural cooperation, allowing for reciprocal knowledge between the two faiths and cultures.

The front-page title of Il Giornale on September 17th mentions the “war” that the Muslims allegedly declared on the Pope after the Regensburg event. In this case too, there is no clear distinction between moderate and fundamentalist Islam – there is, instead, a representation of a religion based only on violent characters that are not, in fact, typical of this faith. The only sections where disapproval of Pope’s words can be found is an interview to Abdelmajid Charfi, a professor at the University of Tunis, in which this scholar says that the Pope should define clearly the difference between Islam and fundamentalism, so as to avoid the reinforcement of fundamentalists’ instances and to avoid further

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14 Eid Camille, I mass media arabi infiammano le piazze, Avvenire, 16 September 2006, p. 5, Milano.
15 Eid Camille, Al-Jazeera, il nuovo profeta, Avvenire, 16 September 2006, p. 2., Milano. In this article, the Muslim education is represented as dominated by tv. According to the journalist, his key role is to supply information based on “synthesis” and on insufficient depth argumentations. This analysis can have a more or less plausibility, but – if the examination’s parameters are these - we can see that the condition of Arab media is not so different from the Italian information media scene, which is considered quite low-quality. To know more information about the situation of Italian media in this period: Freedom House, Map of Press Freedom, http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&country=6986&year=2006 (accessed 13.01.2010).
difficulties in interreligious dialogue.\textsuperscript{19}

From the analysis of the titles and articles published in the following days (“Al-Qaida’s threat: we will conquer Rome\textsuperscript{20}, “With Muslims a real dialogue is impossible\textsuperscript{21}, “Islam put a gag even on the Pope’s mouth”\textsuperscript{22}) it can also be noted that the representation of a violent and radical Islam remained constant and hindered the resolution of the dispute.

Another newspaper that discussed Muslim protests was La Repubblica\textsuperscript{23}. Reading the distinct articles we note a sense of regret for Benedict XVI’s difficulties in undertaking interreligious talks: according to different pieces, the attacks against the Pope are not directed at him as the Catholics’ representative, but as speaker of the words he pronounced. Indeed, positive references to Giovanni Paolo II appear, a Pope who was held in good consideration by numerous Muslim religious leaders, and whose actions were aimed at promoting an exchange of ideas between the two faiths.\textsuperscript{24}

Muslim dissent regarding the Pope’s speech was also considered in the Corriere della Sera, which however insisted on the opposition between Islam and West. For example, next to the article “Islam protests against the Pope’s statements: hostile and provocative”\textsuperscript{25}, one of Benedict’s statements was reproduced in italics, as pronounced by the Pope in Ratisbona: “The holy war of Islam is unreasonable. Not to act according to reason is against God; violence is in contradiction with the soul’s nature. God is not pleased with blood”. The graphic position of these sentences helps to convey the idea that the most important reason why protests and demonstrations are taking place is that the Pope declared violence to be in contradiction with God’s nature. This gives an image of Islam as accepting violence. Only by reading the entire article can one find a brief explanation of the protests, which were said to originate from the Pope’s

\textsuperscript{19} In Charifi’s opinion, the Pope’s words would reveal his idea of a violent Islam. According to Charifi’s view, the Pope should have condemned the fundamentalists only, and not to the entire Muslim community. (Il Giornale editor office, «Io, musulmano moderato, vi spiego perché è un errore», Il Giornale, 17 September 2006, p. 3, Milano).


\textsuperscript{21} Mathieu Vittorio, Con i musulmani è impossibile un vero dialogo, Il Giornale, 19 September 2006, p. 12, Milano.

\textsuperscript{22} L’Islam mette il bavaglio anche al Papa, Il Giornale, 18 September 2006, p. 1, Milano.

\textsuperscript{23} Here are some titles: “The anger of Islam on Ratzinger, he has to apologize for the sentences about the Prophet”, “From Pakistan to Palestine, crowds into streets against the Pope” (Politi Marco, L’ira dell’Islam su Ratzinger, si scusi per le frasi sul profeta, La Repubblica, 15 September 2006, p. 16, Milano; Scuoto Fabio, Dal Pakistan alla Palestina, folle in piazza contro il Papa, La Repubblica, 16 September 2006, p. 8, Milano).

\textsuperscript{24} Politi Marco, Lo strappo di Ratzinger, La Repubblica, 18 September 2009, p. 1, Milano. In this article, Benedict XVI is opposed to his predecessor Giovanni Paolo II, which gave a lot of importance to the interreligious communication. In Politi’s opinion, Benedict XVI demonstrates a feeble will to maintain the dialogue among religion: even if Ratzinger declares he wants to maintain the interchange of cultures, in reality he would be very worried about the Koran, and he would not have the intention to maintain the dialogue.

\textsuperscript{25} Accattoli Luigi, Proteste dall’Islam per le frasi del Papa: ostili e provocatorie, Corriere della Sera, 15 September 2006, p. 2, Milano.
reference to an anecdote in which Mohamed is defined as the one who only brings “bad and inhuman things”.

All Italian newspapers seem to agree – even if La Repubblica holds slightly different views – in representing Islam in a very simplistic way, portraying it as a violent faith constantly protesting against Christianity. Islam is also presented as rooted only in the Middle East and intending to attack the heretics of the West.

4. The Pope’s apologies as represented by newspapers

Because of the violent demonstrations that took place in countries with a Muslim majority, Benedict XVI tried to address the problem by publishing an official statement in the front page of the Osservatore Romano, in English, French, and above all, Arabic, in which he explained the words he had pronounced at the University of Regensburg.

In this article, the Pope claimed that he had no intention to offend anyone, and that he wished to continue with peace and interreligious dialogue. La Repubblica showed, through articles by Fabio Scuoto, that the apology was not regarded as sufficient by some sectors of the Muslim world, and that many representatives accepted them “with reservations”, holding the Pope’s message as not entirely “sincere”. In the same newspaper, an article by Guido Rampoldi analyzed the editorial line of Al-Jazeera. This well-known Italian journalist stressed that Western and Eastern media talk about clashes and demonstrations referring to the “Muslim world”, when in reality the demonstrators are part of a typical “segment of the ruling class [consisting of] religious groups, fundamentalist nomenclatures, some government members who are not necessarily radicals (…)”. The Corriere della Sera reproduced the declarations of spiritual leaders of Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia, who regarded Pope Benedict’s apologies as not entirely satisfactory.

Ibidem.

Another example of a strong and evident attack to the Muslim world comes from a Magdi Allam’s editorial, “The truth of the History” (La verità della Storia). Allam talks about an “international Unitarian Islamic front” which “demonstrates, unequivocally, that the Sin’s root is a blind hate ideology which prevails among Muslims outraging faith and obfuscating mind” (Allam Magdi, La verità della Storia, Il Corriere della Sera, 15 September 2006, p. 1, Milano).

Benedict XVI, Il mio discorso all’Università di Regensburg era ed è un invito al dialogo franco e sincero, con grande rispetto reciproco, L’Osservatore Romano, 18-19 September 2006, p. 1, Città del Vaticano. This first apology represents a step forward to restart talks, but because of the complexity of the Pope’s lectio magistralis, maybe it would be more useful to publish an entire translation of the discourse. In this case, the discourse could have been read without problems by Italian non-speakers. Another Arab translation will be published on September 25-26th, referring to the Pope’s speech held in front of diplomatic representatives in Castel Gandolfo.

Scuoto Fabio, Ma per le piazze non basta, minacce contro la Santa sede, La Repubblica, 17 September 2006, p. 3, Milano.

Rampoldi Guido, Crociata che agita l’arcipelago jihadista, La Repubblica, 18 September 2006, p. 1, Milano.

Even if the article’s title was “Global Islam: «A first step, now we want real apologies»”, it is immediately evident that the adjective “global” refers in fact to only a few countries. Il Giornale criticized the Pope for “bending” to Muslim requests. Avvenire partly agreed with Il Giornale, emphasizing Benedict XVI’s “freedom of expression” and giving a complete approval of his speech in Regensburg, seen as a step towards interreligious dialogue. Much attention was paid to Benedict XVI’s apology. The Pope’s regret for the numerous demonstrations was brought to the foreground, and what was also highlighted was the Pope’s dissociation from the quotation about the Prophet Mohamed. Avvenire also highlighted the negative and partial interpretation given by some western media, which were alleged to have presented the Pope in negative terms. Avvenire concentrated on the “propaganda” of Arab media, defining it as an “unjustifiable campaign of disinformation”.

From this analysis of newspapers, we can see that the apologies divided the Muslims. Some of them appreciated the Pope’s effort, while others asked for further apologies. Benedict XVI thus decided to hold a meeting in Rome with the representatives of the whole Muslim world to restate the necessity of interreligious dialogue.

5. Italian Muslims and world Muslims: the convocation of nuncios in Rome

The position of Italian Muslims on the Regensburg accident was described by newspapers in a very superficial way. Only with the Pope’s response to the protests did the newspapers begin to consider Muslim views. Avvenire, starting on September 17th 2006, published regular pieces expressing the views of the Ucoii (Ucoii is the Union of Italian Islamic Communities and Organizations). Here the organization showed its availability to continue the dialogue with the Chris-

31 Talking about Islam with a global approach and identifying it with some countries or with the Middle East only is an inaccuracy that we can see often in the Italian media scene. It contributes to supply the reader with wrong information about the real Islamic presence and distribution in the world.
33 Geninazzi Luigi, Il rispetto dev’essere reciproco, Avvenire, 17 September 2006, p. 1, Milano. The newspaper publishes also some discourses that Ratzinger pronounced during a meeting with the representatives of German Muslim communities on August 20th 2005 in Kohln. The intention probably is to underline that Pope has a real will to maintain the exchange of ideas with the Islamic people. (Extract from a Benedict XVI’s discourse: Musulmani e Cristiani, insieme per le sfide del nostro tempo, Avvenire, 17 September 2006, p. 5, Milano).
35 Newspaper talks about the Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s declaration, too. The president of Iran, leader of an Islamic Republic, defended the Pope’s position, and his speech was shown by media on September 20th. “The Pope is a man of peace and he deserve respect” Ahmadinejad said. The newspapers do not gave a great importance to this declaration: it was only a pretext to attack West and to underline that Pope’s Benedict was under US control (Geninazzi Luigi, L’avvio di schiarita, Avvenire, 20 September 2006, p. 1, Milano).
tian community, all the while reaffirming the necessity of being more careful when speaking about sensitive subjects and problematic issues in the context of international relations. Numerous interviews with members of the institutional group that represents Italian Islam were published by this newspaper. The Ucoii leaders approved of the Pope’s words, and even complained about Arab media, which manipulated the speech.

This position was confirmed in the interviews with leaders of the Muslim League, who spoke of “political motives” behind the dispute. La Repubblica also attached great importance to the Ucoii speech and yet published statements by Sami Salem’s which were full of regret for the Pope’s words. Because of the continuing tensions between Muslims and Christians, the Pope decided to organize a meeting in Castel Gandolfo for September 25th, inviting the ambassadors and representatives of Islamic communities of the 22 countries in which the great majority of the population believes in Allah. According to Avvenire, this formula “intends to privilege the cultural value of the initiative, to enhance the dialogue, boosting it through a very clear diplomatic gesture.” The meeting, which took place immediately before the beginning of Ramadan, was met with favourable reactions by Muslim representatives, and was broadcast live by Al-Jazeera. According to Avvenire, however, the Arab television continued to blow on fire of polemics, while Al-Arabiya, the direct competitor of Al-Jazeera, was appreciated for its moderate position on Regensburg accident.

The importance of the meeting was also reaffirmed by the Osservatore Romano, which published in its front page the speech that Pope Benedict XVI addressed to the Ambassadors of Muslim countries, together with an Arabic translation. Il Giornale continued to stress the opposition between Islam and

39 Salem is the imam of the great Mosque of Rome. He said that he complained about Ratzinger’s discourse, because it reinstated the relationship between Islam and West as they were in past times. (Politi Marco, Ratzinger è stato frainteso, reazioni inqualificabili, La Repubblica, 19 September 2006, p. 2, Milano).
40 The countries are: Kwait, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Pakistan, Qatar, Indonesia, Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Liban, Yemen, Egypt, Iraq, Senegal, Algeria, Morocco, Albania, Arab countries League, Syria, Tunisia, Libya, Iran, Azerbaijan. Members of the Consulta Islamica – the Institutional Group for Islam in Italy –, the Imam of the Mosque of Rome, the director of the Office for the world Islamic league and the general secretary of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy were also invited to the meeting.
43 Eid Camille, Ma Al-Jazeera soffia ancora sul fuoco, Avvenire, 20 September 2006, p. 5, Milano. Al Arabyia is defined as a moderate broadcast. It was build on a strong advertisement base, it enjoys of financial funds coming from important international brands, as Procter&Gamble. Its themes are agreed by moderates regimes of the Persian Gulf (Della Ratta Donatella, Al-Jazeera. Media e società arabe nel nuovo millennio, Bruno Mondadori, Milano, 2005, pp. 107-137).
44 Il dialogo interreligioso e interculturale: una necessità per costruire insieme un mondo di pace, L’Osservatore Romano, p. 1,
West, publishing an article that paid no attention to the Islamic representatives’ positive reaction. Once again references to the Islamic community appeared of a simplistic and generalised character. La Repubblica focused on Al-Jazeera’s audience and reproduced the Pope’s address to the Muslim ambassadors in its entirety. According to this newspaper, the majority of Al-Jazeera’s audience expected “real” apologies from Pope.

The role that the media played in this matter was also discussed by Mohamed Nour Dachan, a representative of Ucoii, who expressed his satisfaction with the Pope’s speech. Yet, in an interview published in the Corriere della Sera, he urged media representatives to stop using pictures of flags being burnt if the whole matter was to be resolved. The Corriere della Sera, however, remained faithful to its editorial line, presenting Benedict XVI as the one who acted correctly and needed not to look for a compromise with Islam. He was represented as a defender of freedom of expression and of the principle of the religious reciprocity.

On the same day, in the internal pages of the newspaper, the introduction to a book about Islam and Christianity was published in the form of an article. The book is by Alain Besançon, an expert of religions, and was published in November 2006. Besançon expounds the differences between the two faiths, and dismisses any prospective rapprochement between Muslims and Christians on a religious level. Once again, despite the fact that the speech given at Castel Gandolfo was appreciated by Muslim ambassadors, the newspaper added fuel to the fire.

The only a positive note was the description of Ucoii. Though this organization continued to have reservations about the Pope’s speech in Regensburg, it was presented by Italian newspapers as a “moderate” (according to Western parameters) Islamic organization, which tries to use diplomacy to solve problems and re-establish good relations between the two religious faiths. In contrast, the Consulta Islamica, another Italian Islamic organization, was sympathetic to the

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45 Fabbri Roberto, «Aspettavamo le scuse ma non sono arrivate», Il Giornale, 26 September 2006, p. 6, Milano. In this case, there is a denial of Muslims’ appreciation for apologies.

46 Guolo Renzo, Ma non basta parlare con i governi musulmani, La Repubblica, 26 settembre 2006, p. 1, Milano; Ratzinger Joseph, Il rispetto reciproco tra le diverse religioni, La Repubblica, 26 settembre 2006, p. 1, Milano.

47 The journalist uses an opinion poll made by Al-Arabya to underline this matter. The tv asked what relationship Muslims should have to keep in front of Benedict XVI’s words, and it showed that there was a great division on how to act (Dusi Elena, “Diretta e forum su Al Jazeera, pubblico diviso su giudizio”, La Repubblica, 26 settembre 2006, p. 10, Milano).


49 Allam Magdi, Quelle donne eleganti davanti a Benedetto, Il Corriere della Sera, 26 settembre 2006, p. 1, Milano.

50 Massimo Franco, Sullo sfondo la reciprocità religiosa, Il Corriere della Sera, 26 settembre 2006, p. 8, Milano.

51 Besançon Alain, Maometto e Gesù, i confini del dialogo, Il Corriere della Sera, 26 September 2006, p. 11, Milano.
Pope’s views. It supported Benedict XVI and was inclined to accept the thesis of a possible communication mistake. This is probably due to the fact that Consulta Islamica is a political organization, set up by the minister Giuseppe Pisanu in 2005. Its members are chosen by Berlusconi’s government, as Il Giornale underlines, and they are probably quite benevolent towards the Church. Therefore the description of the main Islamic Italian community’s reactions does not seem to be of great importance in the representation given by Italian media. Even if the opinions of Muslim representatives were present in the media, references to the Italian community’s feelings were on the whole quite superficial. The newspapers’ attention was entirely focused on the so-called “Muslim world”, i.e. on the statements of Islamic fundamentalists in other countries.

Conclusions

My analysis shows that Italian newspapers covered the Regensburg accident constantly for the whole month of September 2006. Each newspaper presented its point of view, even if we can see that the Corriere della Sera, Il Giornale, and Avvenire maintained an editorial line which showed Christianity and Benedict XVI as unassailable and irreproachable elements, opposed to the violent, aggressive, anti-western Islam interested in destroying Christianity. Some of the articles published in La Repubblica criticized the Pope’s position; while the Osservatore Romano simply acted as the press office of the Vatican State.

Leaving aside the Pope’s questionable choice of words, the newspapers turned out to have presented the global Muslim community as interested in annihilating the Catholic religion, and in conquering the West, in a climate of constant “clash of civilisation”. Another element that emerged from my research was the media construction of this episode: the presentation of a stereotypic Islam in Italian newspapers, on the one hand, and the demonstrations that took place in some countries, on the other hand, are simply an effect of bad media coverage. According to some journalists’ opinion, on the Muslim side there existed a tendency to denounce the Pope every time he spoke critically about Islam. Even if this were the case, it is equally true that most of the articles published in the Corriere della Sera, Avvenire, Il Giornale, did not show any intention to scale down the polemics. They did not show any significant attempt at understanding Islam and creating a bridge towards it. The collocation of these articles to internal pages and the choice of titles and terminology are elements that become crucial in such cases. They can help to produce, or not to produce, an objective approach to facts, and they should certainly avoid adding to the widespread incomprehension and misunderstanding. In this case, newspapers used generalisations and coarse approximations. This is not, however, uniquely an

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Italian problem: it is a worldwide problem affecting the Arab media as well. All media seem to base their work on journalistic standards which aim to summarize information, to turn politics into a show, and to offer infotainment instead of encouraging understanding. Summarizing similar subjects involves various risks, and in the case of the Ratisbona speech, summaries clearly led to reciprocal incomprehension, intensifying the stream of protests led by fundamentalists in Muslim countries.

Apart from the role of media and communication, the main problem is the presence of different media realities. As Donatella Della Ratta explained in her 2005 book on Al-Jazeera⁵³, as long as we continue to distinguish between Western and Eastern media without realizing that the media scene is unique but with different points of view, the clash of civilisation will continue, and the dialogue among faiths will continue to be the result of unsatisfactory compromises.

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ПАПА БЕНЕДИКТ XVI И ПРЕДАВАЊЕ У РЕГЕНСБУРГУ: ПРЕДСТАВЉАЊЕ ИСЛАМА И „СУКОБ ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИЈА” У ИТАЛИЈАНСКИМ МЕДИЈИМА

Резиме

Као и они у другим западним земљама, италијански медији често користе израз „сукоб цивилизација“ (conflitto di civiltà) говорећи о односу „ислама“ и „Запада“. Муслимански свет се описује поједностављено и доживљава као монолитна реалност. Његово представљање од стране медија варира од ирационалног до нетолерантног. Израз „сукоб цивилизација“ нарочито се користио у септембру 2006. године, након што је папин lectio magistralis на Универзитету у Регенсбургу изазвао енергичне протесте у муслиманском свету. Изгледало је да Бенедикт XVI представља хришћанског Бога као једино рационално божанство, а ислам као ирационалну религију. Када су муслиманске заједнице у свету тражиле званично извињење, папа је одржао састанак са амбасадорима муслиманских земаља при Светој столици и представницима муслиманских заједница у Италији, како би појаснило своје речи. Овај рад анализира начин на који је поменути догађај представљен у италијанским медијима – укључујући десничарске, „мејнстрим“ и католичке медије – с цијем разумевања званичне реакције Ватикана (према Osservatore Romano), Католичке цркве у Италији (према Avvenire) и италијанске јавности.

Кључне речи: ислам, медији, политика, новине, религија.

Прихваћен 16.2.2011.
THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY AND ITS RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

Abstract

Implementing its policy, the new socialist government took various systematic measures to confiscate the major part of the property of the Islamic Community and, thus, make it dependant on the constant state aid. Understanding the reality and acting cooperatively and pragmatically, the newly elected leadership regulated their relations with the state and, thus, created the necessary room for manoeuvre, in order to lessen the harshness of taken measures, preserve the material substance and establish the basis for constant economic strengthening of the community and its religious officials. Carefully and cautiously implemented measures for solving the issue of vakuf properties, that initially had the form of registration and basic protection against dilapidation and, later, gained their original sense expressed through the standpoint that the proper attitude of all the structures of the religious community and the believers towards that issue was of crucial importance for preservation of Islam on Yugoslav territories. The processes of democratization and creating institutional assumptions for opening and solving some important issues, encouraged the Muslim intellectuals to start the debate on the confiscated property, and the Islamic Community leadership to publicly demand its return and use for the development of the Islamic education and culture. Freeing itself from the imposed mechanisms of control, continuously strengthening and feeling unconstrained in front of more and more obvious weaknesses of the state, the Islamic Community reactivated, started and successfully closed the complex process of re-establishing of the religious duty of collecting qurban skins and donations for forming the fund of Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr. Correctly estimating the sensibility of its members, the funds were publicly intended for founding of the Faculty of Islamic Studies and expansion of the schooling system, nevertheless, using the donations from foreign Islamic communities for completing the reconstruction of the planned buildings, indicated that the real aim of those activities was to

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discipline the believers and attach them to the Islamic Community. Handling those important issues, the Islamic Community created the conditions for constant improvement of the financial position of its religious officials, thus ensuring their loyalty and readiness for engagement in realization of all the planned activities, including implementation of measures for achieving certain political goals. Continuously stabilizing and strengthening its economic basis through the donations of the believers both from the country and abroad and the aid from the international Islamic organizations, the Islamic Community created the conditions for realization of an ambitious programme developed around the intensive erecting of religious buildings, education of religious officials adapted to modern conditions, expansion of the publishing activity, including women into the activities of the religious community, systematic religious education of the youngest generation and preparing for the times to come.

**Key words:** Islamic Community, Yugoslavia, financial position, vakufs, confiscation of property, special funds, religious officials.

**Introduction**

At the end of the World War II when the country was liberated, the Islamic Religious Community was in a state of complete organizational chaos. The Law on Invalidity of Legal Regulations issued before 6 April 1941 and during the hostile occupation, put out of force the Law on the Islamic Religious Community, the Constitution of the IRC from 1936 and other normative acts which regulated the internal organization and other important matters for normal functioning of a religious community. Due to the aid from the state, the elections for all bodies of the IRC were called and conducted on the territories of PR Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and AR Kosovo and Metohija. The elections were conducted with great difficulties because of non-updated electoral lists, incompetence of the lower authorities and hindrances made by some influential members of the IRC who were not ready to accept the new authorities and willingness of the major part of the IRC to consolidate and regulate their relationship with the state.

The first session of the Supreme Vakuf Assembly, where the vertical organization of the IRC was established, was held on 26 and 27 August 1947 in Sarajevo. The Constitution of the IRC was adopted and, according to its provisions, Raisu-l-Ulama and the members of the Supreme Islamic Council were elected. The menshura was handed to the newly elected supreme leader on 12 September 1947 at Gazi Husrev Bey’s Mosque. Organizational structure was characterized by the unity of the IRC on the entire territory of Yugoslavia and forming of republic bodies according to the federative organization of the new state. Constitution of republic organizations was followed by numerous problems.
that were overcome owing to a great engagement of the supreme authorities. Vakuf Assemblies of the republics brought the majority of necessary normative acts for the sectors of religious life, transferred to the IRC republic authorities by the new Constitution.

Consistently implementing the established policy towards religion, the new authorities confiscated, by a number of systematic measures, most of the IRC property and, thus, made it financially dependent on donations. The Temporary National Assembly passed the Law on Agrarian Reform and Colonization on 23 August 1945, which prescribed confiscation of landed properties from all religious communities. There was a possibility for some church institutions, depending on their significance, to keep from 10 to maximum 30 hectares of arable land, forests, gardens, win yards, fields and meadows. The confiscated church land was assigned primarily to the people of the same religion as the church whose land had been confiscated through the new measures. Strenuousness of the commissions for agrarian reform and colonization, as well as revolutionary consistency of the new authorities and politicized judicature, enabled efficient confiscation of about 90% of the entire land possessed by churches and religious communities. The remaining property was burdened by various taxes according to the Regulation on the Purchase of Grains. Confiscation of property went further on with the Law on Nationalisation passed on 5 December 1946. Production plants and all printing offices were confiscated from religious communities, with no right to compensation. In accordance with the changes of the law from 1948, hospitals, sanatoriums and other institutions were confiscated. Church premises, building land and funds of religious communities were being nationalized on the basis of provisions of the Basic Law on Expropriation from 1947, which was amended in 1953, changed and expanded in 1957. The process was finished by passing the Law on nationalization of rental houses and building land on 28 December 1958. The remaining property of religious communities did not have any legal protection and was exposed to frequent usurpations by local authorities. The above listed laws were primarily aimed against the landed property and estate of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Catholic Church, but their enforcement also brought the Islam Religious Community in an unfavourable position.

1. The status of the vakuf property

According to the Islamic regulations, every mosque should have immovable property – vakuf, for the purpose of financing basic religious, cultural and educational functions. The authorities of the Islamic Religious Community had the duty to encourage the process of turning property into foundations (vakuf) and thus ensure normal functioning of religious objects. Landed properties were also turned into foundations, but since the Muslim people most commonly
lived in cities and towns, the major part of vakuf property consisted of tenement houses and business premises. Due to the policy of compromise with the Muslim political parties, the agrarian reform conducted between the two World Wars did not include properties of the IRC to a larger extent. During the World War II, a part of the property of that religious community had been destroyed, but the real reduction occurred after the liberation with the approval of the new authorities.

There are no precise records about the quantity of confiscated land, but, according to the information gathered from the IRC press, 3,197 dunums of various sorts of land had been expropriated in different ways until 1955. Another source states that 1,925 hectares of land and forests was confiscated and 148 buildings with 137 hectares of homestead was expropriated and nationalised from the IRC during the agrarian reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina.\(^2\) During the process of agrarian reform and nationalisation, the largest part of property and premises was confiscated from the largest and the most significant Gazi Husrev Bey’s Vakuf in Sarajevo. Kuršumlija, Hanikah madrasa, imaret, large number of stores, arable land and forest estates were expropriated, only Bey’s mosque with maktab remained.\(^3\) The Law on Nationalisation, on the basis of which a large number of stores and other sorts of business premises was confiscated from the IRC, brought significant problems. Only in Kosovo and Metohija, 220 stores, 65 residential premises, 23 warehouses, 2 garages, 27 business premises and 12 inbuilt building spots were confiscated. According to the same source, in other parts of the Republic, 60 stores, 57 residential premises, 2 warehouses and 9 business premises were confiscated.\(^4\) The process of nationalisation severely damaged the IRC, but the negative consequences were lessened by the standpoint of the commission in charge that single-storied and buildings made of infirm material should be excluded from the process.

Immediately after the war, the main task of Vakuf Directorates, as the bodies in charge with the property, was adjusting to restrictive regulations of the new authorities, keeping a record of the remaining property, payment of personal incomes to central services, handling the issue of surplus employees and decentralization of vakuf administration. Collecting information in the field about the remaining vakuf property was a very slow process, and the information was mostly outdated, since the new authorities kept confiscating vakuf property for building schools, ambulance stations, communal houses, public nurseries, vet-

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2 The forthcoming tasks of the IRC – a report submitted at the session of the Vakuf Assembly on 30 October 1955, Herald of the SIC, 1955/11-12, 386 and the group of authors, Socio-political and legal regime of the religious communities in Yugoslavia, the Institute for contemporary history, Belgrade, 1972, 43.

3 Šeta Ferhat, Above the Gazi Husrev Bey’s vakufnamas, Herald of the Supreme Islamic Council, 1960/6, 50.

4 Cited according to the Record from the extended session of the Commission for Religious Affairs of the Executive Council of AKMO, pages 9-10. The precise date when it was held is not known, but it was received and entered up at the Republic Commission on 6 June 1959. A copy is kept at the Archives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.
erinary stations and other premises intended for improving the social standard of the citizens. The centralization of administration and disposition of the vakuf property carried out by the Statute of 1909, turned out to be a bureaucratic brake and impediment for more flexible functioning, adjusted to the local situation, within the legal and economic area prescribed by the new authorities. A number of plans were made concerning the need to transfer a part of jurisdiction from central property authorities to Vakuf Committees, but the reforms were given up after estimating that the local authorities would, with a help of vakuf supervisors – mutevelis, use the property more for their own needs than for the needs of the religious community as a whole.

The early established relations with the new state authorities provided a better position for the IRC and much more success in their struggle against the illegal property confiscation, as well as closing of some court and administrative disputes concerning that issue in their behalf. Organizationally strengthened and politically supported IRC took a number of efficient measures with the aim of establishing order in vakuf property administration. The Vakuf Directorate from Sarajevo posted an announce to all Vakuf Committees on 29 January 1959, with precise directions for the remaining property administration. After less than two years, the Vakuf Directorate posted again a new act to all Vakuf Committees, the main task of which was to regulate the issue of vakuf property administration. In the spring of the same year, the Vakuf Directorate posted an announce to all Vakuf Committees, with the aim of precise definition and regulation of the issues of budgeting process, final account and overall financial management of vakufs.

The instructions received from the supreme authorities stimulated the republic organizations to take some measures and establish the record of vakuf property, close the initiated court and legal proceedings, carry out rectifications and amendments of land registers, improve the work of mutevelis, increase the incomes and establish an economic management of the religious community’s property. The IRC Council of Montenegro achieved the best results in keeping records of the vakuf property; they submitted a precise list of property they owned to the Supreme Vakuf Assembly in 1958. Other councils submitted the reports which indicated that the confiscation of the remaining property was still

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6 The announce of the Vakuf Directorate, No. 467 from 29 January 1954 on vakuf property administration, Herald of the SIC, 1954/1-3, 70-73.
7 The administration of vakuf property, letter No. 134/56 sent by the Vakuf Directorate from Sarajevo to all Vakuf Committees on its territory on 10 January 1956, Herald of the SIC, 1956/4-6, 197-200.
8 See the letter from the Vakuf Directorate in Sarajevo No. 957/56 from 5 March 1956 sent to all Vakuf Committees on its territory, Herald of the SIC, 1956/7-9, 281-285.
happening and that there were ongoing court disputes with individuals, agricultural cooperatives and other usurpers. Graveyards in the Republic of Serbia represented a particular problem, since, according to the current regulations, they belonged to the IRC, but in some cities they were put to the disposal of public utility companies. Confiscation of the vakuf building land in cities for the purpose of building schools, hospitals and other social premises or solving various communal problems, was continued in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Islamic Religious Community in Macedonia was forced to conduct a large number of disputes because of confiscation of the vakuf business premises and usurpation of all sorts of property in areas from which the Muslim people had been moving to Turkey those years.

Strengthening of the internal organization of the IRC and establishing discipline among imams and religious officials, enabled activating of alternative sources of income and, thus, the vakuf issue had been marginalized for years by all the IRC authorities. Particular problems related to confiscation or usurpation of vakuf property and premises in a period of more than twenty years, characterized by good relations between the state and the IRC, were being solved peacefully, by agreement and without public interference. The vakuf issue become topical again after a two-day symposium which took place in 1982 in Sarajevo, on the occasion of 450th anniversary of Gazi Husrev Bey’s Vakuf. The professors from the Faculty of Islamic Studies, legal experts, religious and cultural workers participated in it. More than twenty reports were submitted, considering the history of vakufs from different aspects and pointing out the necessity of their revitalization, as one of the most significant institutions established for providing prosperity and future of Islam on Yugoslav territories.10

After the symposium, the Supreme Assembly had been reaching the conclusions annually about updating records of the vakuf property and the necessity of returning to the great tradition of endowment philanthropy among the Muslims of Yugoslavia. Actions of this kind were also a result of a real assessment made by the IRC leadership of the time, that a large number of Muslims, owing to their life abroad and working for small business, gained wealth, that could be used for prosperity of the religious community if turned into a vakuf. A special „Vakif day“, when the benefactors were rewarded for their concern about the future of the religious community, was established for the purpose of encouraging the action. The changed circumstances required adjustment of the tradition to modern times and, thus, turning money into vakuf was also approved.

2. The attitude towards the confiscated property

Somewhat more favourable position in comparison with other religious communities allowed the IRC in the central republic to handle their most important property issues by acting wisely and patiently.\(^{11}\) Firstly, they managed to denationalize, i.e. purchase under favourable conditions, the building „Đulagin dvor“ (Djulaga’s palace), where, after reconstruction and upgrading, Gazi Husrev Bey’s madrasa and the newly opened Faculty of Islamic Studies were placed.\(^{12}\) After that, Kuršumlija and Hanikah madrasa, imaret, maktab, Gazi Husrev Bey’s Vakuf building and a part of business premises near Gazi Husrev Bey’s Mosque were also restored. The nationalized property of the IRC in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro was not restored in that time.

Complexity of the crisis in Yugoslavia and open issues of further development of economic system, made the issue of restoration of the property nationalized after the war to religious communities topical again. In their Draft law on denationalization, the Republic of Slovenia stipulated restoration of property to everybody, regardless of the status of previous owners. Bosnia and Herzegovina was preparing a similar law, while Serbia enacted a law on restoration of the nationalized property to the Serbian Orthodox Church that never came into operation because the President of the Republic denied the edict. As the first step for solving that complex problem, theorists of Islam, in a number of articles, harshly criticized the communist concept of nationalization carried out after the war. An outstanding theologian, Fikret Karčić, pointed out the following on that issue:’ In post-war Yugoslavia, the ownership basis of the society was forcefully changed by confiscation or limitation of private property. The Marxist thesis about “expropriating the expropriator” provided an ideological justification of such measures. The property of religious communities was the object of confiscation for two reasons: 1. because the religious communities in pre-war Yugoslavia were an important private proprietor and 2. because they were qualified as dangerous ideological opponents to the process of building of „a brave, new world“\(^{13}\).

The acting Raisu-l-Ulama J. Selimoski also started the issue of denationalization of vakuf property in his conversation with Ante Marković, the president of the Federal Executive Council at the time: „A huge property of religious communities, especially the vakuf property in case of the Islamic community, had been nationalized. That legal impoverishment of religious communities had


\(^{12}\) At the same time, the request of the Serbian Orthodox Church for denationalization of the Seminary building, in the centre of the city, where one of the faculties of the University of Sarajevo was located, had been rejected for years.

\(^{13}\) Karčić Fikret, Vakufs and reprivatization, Herald of the SIC, 1991/3, 267.
no real economic justification, which can be noticed from their irrational usage over years, but was more a sort of political manifestation of combative atheism in the early period of government constitution. Thus, it would be reasonable to take into consideration the possibility of denationalization of the property of religious communities, and this address is our initiative for that issue."  

Considering and following those issues, the Supreme Assembly of the IRC reached the decision, on 6 October 1990, that the republic meshihats should make a list of all immovable property confiscated after 1945, until April 1991. After having made the list, a request for restoration of nationalized and confiscated property would be sent to the federal and republic authorities.

For the purpose of analyzing the possible directions of reprivatization and theoretical processing of particular questions that should have helped the leadership of the IRC to take the right stand during their conversation with the state authorities about the modality and extent of restoration of vakuf property, a scientific meeting called „Vakuf under new socio-economic conditions“ took place in Mrkonjić Grad on 11 and 12 January 1991. The attitudes presented in papers and discussions served as the basis for reaching conclusions where the attitudes towards vakuf, as one of the corner stones of Islam, were synthesized. There was a request for restoration of the confiscated property and its using for economic, cultural and educational development of the Muslim people. The vakuf goods should be exploited in a modern economic way, using the experiences of some other Muslim countries as a role model. A vakuf bank should be formed, as well as a special body with the IRC authorities that would be dealing with those issues. A group consisting of experts of different profiles should have suggested new normative acts for that area in accordance with Sharia law and the needs of the IC. It was necessary to make a list of all confiscated and existing vakuf property and to make a database, using for that purpose all available modern informational and documentary achievements. Financial assets gained through using of vakuf property should be invested in the Islamic educational system, encouragement of hafiz, preservation of the Islamic cultural heritage and improving conditions for religious education of children. Adequate vakuf properties could be turned into experimental camps for recreation, socialization and professional development of the Muslim youth. It was also necessary to found a vakuf printing office that would print the publications of the IRC under favourable conditions.

The presented issues related to the confiscated vakufs showed the ability of the IRC and their leadership of the time to adapt and make profit of all weaknesses of the state for achieving their goals. They had been pointing out for years that the vakuf property should be restored for the purpose of financial

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14 The information on the discussion president of the Federal Executive Council Ante Marković had with the leaders of the religious communities on 30 January 1990, page 7. The material of the Federal Commission discussed at the session of 26 February 1990. The original is kept at the Archives of the Federal Commission.
aid to impoverished imams and maintenance of religious buildings. Weakening of former Yugoslavia gave Islamic theologians the freedom to speak in public of the role of vakufs in reaffirmation of Islam and creating conditions for its original application on the territory of Yugoslavia.15

3. The organization of Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr funds

The vakuf incomes and permanent aid from the state could not provide for the increasing needs of the IRC and its educational institutions. That problem manifested itself in a dramatic way after passing the amendments to the Constitution of the SFRY in 1969, which stipulated the abolishment of the Federal Commission for Religious Affairs, which was the main financial source for the central authorities of the IRC. The supreme authorities of the IRC concluded that it was necessary to find new financial sources and that the solution was the affirmation of the neglected religious duties of collecting qurban skins and paying Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr, which was obligatory according to the Sharia law. Traditionally, the Islamic press first published a number of articles where the Shariatic basis of the new duties was explained to the believers.16

The Supreme Islamic Council also published a number of popular articles in the „Herald of the Supreme Islamic Council“ with the aim of obtaining support from the believers for implementation of the new measures. The property for which Zakat (religious tax) is paid was precisely listed, alongside with the explanation that Zakat-ul-Fitr (Sadaqa al-Fitr, vitra) represented a duty that all Islamic believers were obliged to fulfil on a certain day of the Ramadan fast. The value of Sadaqa was determined by the cost of daily amount of food for one man, and that money was intended to be given to the poor or regular and Ramadan imams would keep it for their own needs. The supreme authorities of the IRC were of the opinion that there was no longer a need to give the Zakat-ul-Fitr money to the poor, but that it should be centralised and redirected to a special fund instead. Consistent action of collecting of the qurban skins, whose selling would be organized by the IRC, was also recommended and the money would be distributed according to the decisions of the competent authorities of the religious community. Because the believers who lived in cities could not slaughter qurban according to the religious regulations, it was decided that those interested for that action should address the directorate of the Madrasa in Sarajevo, who would buy a qurban for the received money and dedicate it to the donor.17

15 See, Šukrić Nijaz, Historical cross-section of the use of vakufs in previous practice, Islamska misao (The Islamic thought), 1991/147-148, 69.

16 Hodžić Vehbija, The duties of Muslims towards their religious community, Herald of the SIC, 1966/7-8, 314-316.

17 The poverty of the community is a punishment for failing to fulfil the duty of Farza Zakat, Herald of the SIC, 1969/7-8, 335-376.
After the theoretical preparation, getting the believers acquainted with the new actions and on the basis of the conclusion that the Supreme Assembly reached after the session held in Priština on 5 November 1969, the Supreme Islamic Council reached the decision, in the same year, of redirecting the collected financial assets into a unique Gazi Husrev Bey’s Madrasa financing fund. An official announcement was sent to all IRC Committees in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the order to take the following measures: get imams and members of jama’ah (Muslim parish) familiar with the significance of the action; ban imams to keep the money from Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr for themselves; leave 5% to all participants of the action for their effort; The Directorate of Gazi Husrev Bey’s Madrasa was to write a popular article on its history and significance and the IRC Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina was to prepare a booklet where the regulations related to Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr would be presented in a popular way and the believers recommended to invest the bonds from roads loan in the Madrasa fund. The cited announcement was not obligatory for other Councils, but a joint carrying out of the action was recommended, as well as investing the financial assets collected in Serbia in improving the working conditions of Alauddin Madrasa in Priština and in other republics in scholarships for students of religious schools.

The decision of founding the Faculty of Islamic Studies conditioned the change of strategy and redirecting of Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr funds for financing the reconstruction of the building. The Supreme Islamic Council sent, on 11 August 1973, an official announcement to all Committees, where they pointed out the historical significance of founding the Faculty and the necessity of maximal involvement and contribution to collecting the largest possible amount of financial assets. Raisu-l-Ulama sent a special letter to small businessmen and other rich Muslims, where he called for their participation in the action in the following way: „Since I trust in Your high level of Islamic consciousness and keen sense of responsibility for our survival and a better future of Islam, this is the way I address You, as the supreme leader of the Islamic Community in SFRY, in the name of Allah, with the appeal to contribute a part of the Allah’s gifts you were granted for the benefit of certainly most noble and historically most significant action of our religious life. This is the opportunity that no Muslim should miss. A donation for the Faculty fund brings You a seven-hundredfold reward, as Allah Jalla Shanuhu guarantees in Qur’an. Financial aid to the community is one of deeds that most pleases the God. Such deeds, as Muhammad a.s. says, provide sevap even after death, no matter if a man has accomplished them while he was still alive or some-

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body else did it for the sake of his soul”.\(^{20}\)

The counsel of the representatives of the IRC supreme authorities in SFRY on collecting the assets from Zakat, Zakat-ul-Fitr and qurban skins, held in Sarajevo on 15 and 16 July 1976, encouraged further popularization of the action. Outstanding Islamic theologists submitted their thorough reports on the Sharia basis of collecting and distributing the assets and the Supreme Islamic Council wrote a special article on determining the value of Zakat. The reports and discussions served as the basis for reaching conclusions whose implementation should provide the success of the action.\(^{21}\) The second counsel dealing with the same issue took place in Priština on 26 and 27 January 1977 and there was a conclusion that the believers have widely accepted the new duty and that the amount of the collected assets was increasing annually.\(^{22}\)

The most influential theologian of the time, Dr Ahmed Smajlović, started a new theoretical discussion on the Sharia basis of Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr in 1983, whose basic meaning was to present that Islamic duty in a new, modern way and in accordance with his understanding of Islam and the role of the IRC in Yugoslav society of the time. Zakat was no longer interpreted unambiguously, as one of basic Islamic duties, but was rather defined as a sociological, anthropological and psychological category of greatest significance for personal integrity and successful functioning of the Islamic society.\(^{23}\) Dr Sulejman Mašović, who was of the same opinion as Dr A. Smajlović, summed up his past experiences in organization of such actions and thus made an indirect criticism of the Supreme Islamic Council and the measures taken.\(^{24}\) Aziz Kadribegović, who had a similar standpoint, criticised harshly some failures of the supreme authorities of the IRC related to the means of collecting assets from Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr.\(^{25}\)

The departure of A. Smajlović from the political scene brought the issues of Zakat, Zakat-ul-Fitr and qurban skins back under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Islamic Council.\(^{26}\) The action was continued with more or less success, but the

\(^{20}\) The cited text of the Reis’ letter was published in *Herald of the SIC*, 1975/9-10, 454-455.

\(^{21}\) The conclusions and reports were published in *Herald of the SIC*, 1976/4, 331-384.

\(^{22}\) On this counsel see the text, *The results of this year’s actions*, *Herald of the SIC*, 1977/1, 85-87.


\(^{26}\) Publication of *Parergon* by D. Sušić in Sarajevo magazine „Oslobodenje“ (Liberation) in August and September 1969 was an introduction to state measures against the Muslim nationalists gathered around the Islamic Community. The speeches of H. Đozo and H. Jusufspahić at the opening of a mosque near Bugojno and their public condemnation of J. B. Tito served as the bases for replacement and retirement of the first one and pasivization of the latter. The administration of the *Association of the ‘Ulama’* was removed from office and the editorial staff of the “Preporod” (Revival) magazine replaced. After six years, in 1985, the president of the IC Seniority for FR Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr A. Smajlović, was removed from office, because he was estimated to
published data constantly indicated enlargement of the collected assets, especially in FR Macedonia.\textsuperscript{27} There were also some efforts for expansion of this duty among the believers abroad, thus, in 1987, bill pads with designated values in Deutsche Marks were printed. With the aim of stimulation of collecting assets, it was decided that 20\% of total sum be put aside for the needs of the committees and, in 1989, bill pads for Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr were separated.

The end of this period, which is the topic of this paper, was characterized by unregulated issue of financing the supreme authorities of the IRC. Riyasat had decided that 30\% of the assets from Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr be appropriated for that purpose, but, due to disregard of the decision, the supreme authorities were financed by the Meshihat of FR Bosnia and Herzegovina. The assets collected from the republics were being misapplied, including their spending on the needs of the independent unions, about which the following was pointed out in the Report on the work of the Supreme Islamic Council for 1990: „This year, because of the known affairs in Kosovo, it has been approved to the Meshihat that the minimal value of the Zakat-ul-Fitr bill pads be 30 Dinars, but, as we have been informed, the Independent Union of Kosovo has made the fund of the Islamic Community become even smaller, since, owing to its activity, a large part of the assets was spent on the workers of Ramiz Sadiku and others. Neither the Meshihat of Macedonia has been excluded from that sort of occurrences, where it is speculated that 3 000 billions of old Dinars has been taken away from the Islamic Community by the activity of the Union.”\textsuperscript{28} This quotation indicates that the money from the IRC was used for financing the separatist movement, because functioning of these unions was under the direct influence of the Albanian political alternative.\textsuperscript{29}

The analysis of all activities that followed the introduction and, later, development of Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr collecting actions, clearly confirms achievement of significant results. The believers had been reserved at first, but constant announces and communications from the supreme authorities of the IRC, great propaganda of the Islamic press, the significance of the goals for which the money was to be collected and good terrain work of the imams, discouraged all attempts of resistance. The sum of money collected during the Ramadan was constantly increasing, but it was obvious that the believers did not easily accept the duty of paying Zakat for their property, which was the ultimate goal of the entire action. Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr had also been collected in private houses

\textsuperscript{27} See, Mateska Duška, The relationship between the political and religious elite in contemporary Macedonian Society, Politics and Religion, Belgrade, 2011/1, pp. 129-140.

\textsuperscript{28} Report on the activities of the Supreme Islamic Council (Riyasat) of the Islamic Community in Yugoslavia, Herald of the SIC, 1990/5, 128.

\textsuperscript{29} See, Novaković Dragan, The Role of the Islamic Community in Pursuing the Albanian National Interest, Politics and Religion, Belgrade, 2007/1, pp. 173-188.
during these years, without any reaction from the state authorities in charge that would, at the same time, punish the priests of other religious communities for collecting donations out of the religious buildings. Successful completion of all planned activities that had been financed from the collected money, was an obvious proof to the believers of the intended use of the money and creating conditions for strengthening of Islam on the territory of Yugoslavia. The majority of the IRC members did not know that the reconstruction of the Faculty and Madrasas was completed owing to large sums of foreign donations and that the introduction of Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr, in fact, served the purpose of disciplining the believers, their attachment to the Islamic Community and fulfilment of all Ulama’s orders.

4. The financial position of religious officials

Owing to confiscation of property, the financial position of religious officials in the post-war period depended on marhamet – charity provided by the believers and state aid. Abolition of maktab additionally worsened the entire situation, since a large number of teachers of basic Islamic teaching lost their job. Vakuf Directorates were not in a position to provide payments for all religious officials and, therefore, the most capable staff left religious service and went looking for employment in the state sector or in elementary and secondary schools as teachers and professors. Since the payments were constantly decreasing and the duties towards the creditors increasing, the state was forced to increase the aid and, thus, solve the existential problems of the administration employees at supreme and republic IRC authorities and educational and cultural institutions.

The IRC authorities were taking certain measures for regulation and improvement of the material position of their religious officials. After having signed the Social insurance contract, all elderly imams with damaged health, who fulfilled the required conditions, were recommended to submit the retirement application. There was also a constant regionalization of jama‘ahs in order to equalize the number of households and, thus, enable a more stable financing of imams. According to the decisions of Ulema Medzlis, imams were sent to perform their service in the places of their birth, because there they presumably had a house for living and some land to cultivate. Vakuf property was granted to imams free of charge when permanent income could not be provided from other funds. Regular payments of administrative staff, paid from the state aid funds, were the cause of discontent among the imams, who reasonably considered that such policy brought them in an unfavourable position and complete dependence on the believers’ goodwill.30 In accordance with the decision of the competent authorities, motivated by political reasons, all Republic Commissions for religious

30 Herald of the SIC, 1954/4-6, 113.
affairs started granting regular aid to the most impoverished religious officers, which was being paid according to the criteria of Ilmija Association. 31

The supreme authorities of the IRC were regularly discussing the issue of the financial position of religious officials and trying to find solutions under very unfavourable conditions, which would prevent the discontent among imams and departure of the most qualified staff. In order to overcome that urgent issue, the Supreme Islamic Council assembled, in October of 1956, a broader conference where the officials of the IRC and Ilmija Association discussed the material position of religious officials, most efficient means of fundraising and some other current issues. Complexity of the issue propelled the participants to form a representative board, which would take all raised issues into consideration and suggest their solutions to the Ulema Medzlis in Sarajevo. 32

After having discussed all the issues raised by the conference participants, the board proposed establishment of a special fund that would provide bonus rewards for religious officials and financial assets through tax assessment of Vakuf incomes, voluntary contributions and collecting qurban skins. The Supreme Islamic Council refused to empower the board to investigate the issue of material position of religious officials on the entire territory of Yugoslavia, which led to self-dissolution of that body and gradual marginalization of its proposals. 33

The issue of unenviable financial position of the religious officials of the IRC was often discussed by state commissions in charge of religious affairs, because of possible public manifestations of discontent and negative political consequences. The conclusions on unfavourable financial position served, typically, as the basis for constant increase of the aid. The Commission of Serbia, discussing this issue, reached the following conclusion in 1955: „Since the majority of Muslim clergy in Serbia is being poor, the Executive Council of PR Serbia, beside regular personal aid given to the Muslim clergy, also pays a social contribution to the Social Insurance Administration in the amount of 75% of basic pension”.34

The believers’ rising standards of living resulted in a gradual but constant improvement of the financial position of the IRC religious officials. An increasing number of Islamic believers temporary working abroad made a great contribution to the process, by investing surplus of the money they had earned in religious buildings and funds for supporting imams instead of production,

31 The Commission of Serbia had been granting regular aid to impoverished imams until 1980. Their number was varying from 100 to 300. The complete financial documentation related to the aid can be found in the Archives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Serbia.
32 The report on the activities of the Supreme Islamic Council – section: The issue of finding means for improving the financial position of religious officials, Herald of the SIC, 1956/10-12, 403.
since the private sector was ideologically proscribed at the time. After thorough evaluation of all possibilities, it was decided that the lacking money for financing imams and the community as a whole should be collected through more systematically organized donations from the believers. Ambitious religious officials familiar with economic fluctuations quickly reached the conclusion that the traditional way of collecting donations through money boxes in mosques became anachronistic and that it was necessary to find some alternative means for it, more suitable to modern times and better educated believers. Bayram greeting cards were being sent to the believers, to remind them of the duties towards their religious community. Specially designed acknowledgments were awarded during the ritual of Cuma Namazi on Fridays. Names of the believers who had given greatest donations were mentioned at hutbas or published on notice boards at the IRC Committees. The Islamic press regularly published photographs and occasional articles about the greatest donors, which encouraged competition among the individuals, who often gave donations that were beyond their actual financial possibilities. Obligatory monthly contributions were established for all adult members of the IRC, in the amount that was equal to TV subscription in some areas. Establishing such duty was followed by numerous problems, since the believers reluctantly accepted putting money aside regularly, but the continuous propaganda and imams’ refusal to perform religious rituals for members of the households that did not pay the contribution, gave results quickly. Money collected through membership fees was centralized within Committees and allocated to imams’ salaries. Positive results of the action, besides the reward for fulfilled religious duties, provided a stable financial position for the imams during the 1970s.

The issue of small jama’ahs in urban and, especially, rural environments was being solved successfully. Insufficient number of households in some jama’ahs implied much greater monthly allocations for financing imam and his family. Imams from smaller jama’ahs started the initiatives for forming the salary funds on the Council level, but the proposition was turned down. Instead of forming a unified payment fund, Councils often merged jama’ahs, which resulted in equal distribution of the believers’ duties in supporting the imam. The issue of official apartments for imams was also solved very successfully, since a house for imam’s family used to be built beside every new mosque. In order to stimulate religious officials to permanently solve their housing issues, the Assembly of the IRC for FR Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted, on 23 April 1975, “The book of regulations for the Mutual aid fund”, from which housing and consumer durable loans were granted under favourable conditions. It is interesting to point out that articles 16, 17 and 18 contain provisions on interests upon approved funds, which is

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35 Mujić Husein, How to provide financial assets for the purposes of the Islamic religious community, Herald of the SIC, 1964/5-6, 251-254.
not in accordance with the Sharia law, which strictly prohibits economic, bank and trade transactions burdened by interest rates.\(^\text{36}\) The above listed measures, as well as gradual but constant intake of considerable amounts of money from abroad directed, inter alia, into imams’ salaries, provided a stable solution for the financial position of imams in early 1980s, which implied decent monthly incomes and official apartments and houses or private property provided.

The state was regularly monitoring the financial position of the IRC and its religious officials and, according to the information collected from the field, changed and adjusted its policy and the amount of funds intended for the religious community. The tax policy was balanced towards the imams, and its aim was developing of the sense of responsibility towards the duties, not filling the budget. Special attention was paid to collecting donations from the believers, since, for the ideologically based state of the time, it was the best proof of success or failure of the official atheistic policy. Monitoring the issue, the State Security Service reached the following conclusions in 1961: „Ramadan and Bayram are used for collecting financial assets from the believers, which are further used for hodjas’ fees on these days, i.e. during the Bayram celebration, as well as for reconstruction and building of new maktabas and mosques“.\(^\text{37}\) In 1969, the Commission of Serbia estimated that the IRC was collecting funds for financing their activities through donations, presents and taxes for performing religious services, but that its existence would be in question without the constant state aid directed for financing the republic authorities, madrasa and on behalf of the financial support of a large number of impoverished imams.\(^\text{38}\) The state authorities noticed that the financial position of the IRC was stabilized in the late 1970s, and the Federal Commission found out that enormous amounts of money collected from the believers were further directed for university and madrasas and that some individuals were giving excessively large donations.\(^\text{39}\)

Gradual worsening of the economic situation and the beginning of a serious inflation in 1985 made the issue of financial position of the religious officials of the IRC topical once again. The Supreme Assembly obliged the Committees, by its conclusions, to monitor the price increase and harmonize personal incomes of the officials with the increase of the costs of living on a daily basis. For the sake of solving that topical issue, the Assembly proposed the following measures: “The centralization of funds is, by all means, one of the necessities in that direction, and it has to be a maximum centralization, so that the collected funds

\(^{36}\) The book of regulations of the Mutual aid fund, Herald of the SIC, 1977/1, 97-103.

\(^{37}\) Information on Ramadan and Bayram celebration in 1961, page 1. Material of the State Security Administration, Second department – Clergy section. A copy is kept at the Archives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Serbia.

\(^{38}\) Information on some issues referring to relations and activities of the religious communities in FR Serbia. Material of the Republic Commission, Belgrade, January of 1969. The original is kept at the Archives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Serbia.

could be distributed as properly as possible. Then, establishing separate funds for aiding religious officials (and pensioners) and better stimulation of their activity. Then, solidarity aid from richer Committees and putting certain percent of the incomes aside for the poorer ones, gaining extra income by better use of certain potentials, vakufs and other property of the Islamic community etc”.  

Some imams, close to the Councils and senior officials of the IRC, were striving to win city jama‘ahs for themselves, outside the given criteria, and, thus, permanently solve their existential issues. The discontent with their material position, as well as the appetite for higher earnings, affected the decision of more than 30 imams from the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina to leave their service and go to work in some of the Western European countries.

The issue of the financial position of religious officials was used for political purposes after Dr Ahmed Smajlović had been deposed from all the functions within the IRC. Since 1985, the most influential magazine of the time called „Preporod“ (Revival) had continuously been publishing the articles that pointed out the unenviable financial position of all the employees of the IRC and called for the authorities in charge to take all possible measures for improving the situation. The financial position of imams, that was not much different than the position of other employees of the IRC during the period of the greatest inflation, served as the cause for the supporters of Dr A. Smajlović to use their discontent over that issue as the basis for their gathering and setting the request, that followed the ready-made scenario, for deposal of the president of the IRC Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to force the retirement of Raisul-Ulama H. Mujić. After the enforced changes, that had been the main goal of the protest, the material position of religious officials was no longer a topical issue, even though the inflation was not quenched and the imams were living harder and harder, just as the rest of the population of Yugoslavia at the time, until the economic reforms of the last federal Prime Minister A. Marković.

The Commissions for relations with religious communities regularly estimated that the financial position of the IRC had been constantly improving since 1980. The inflow of funds from various sources, especially from the international Islamic organizations, was substantial, and troubles occurred only with the distribution of money, because of the tendency of some individuals to keep the

40 Current issue, Standard of a religious official, Herald of the SIC, 1985/4, 331-333.
41 The report on the activity of the Supreme Islamic Council from 5.84. to 5.85 — section Harmonization of personal incomes, Herald of the SIC, 1985/3, 310.
44 See, Abdulmahdi Saheeb Jaafar, Arab View of Balkans Moslims: an Attempt at Shedding More Light of the Role of Islamic Fundamentalists, Politics and Religion, Belgrade, 2008/1, pp. 53-64.
donations for themselves. Considering the relations with the IRC, the Federal Commission estimated the financial position of the religious community as follows: “The accomplished results within the Islamic Community were, among the rest, the product of an elaborate system of financial donations from the believers, that were frequent and large, which helped this community to create a financial basis for solving its organizational, personnel and other issues without particular difficulties. One may conclude that the Islamic Community had almost completely settled its financial position, with the exception of some issues in so called diasporas. The system of material donations from the believers of this religious community was not always merely a lawfully determined voluntariness, it sometimes seemed to take the form of taxation of the believers. Besides that, collecting of funds for religious needs had also been followed by insults, pressure, public praising of the donors and competition in the amount of donations, which often overstepped the real abilities of the believers and resulted in their lesser engagement in solving everyday issues within the social community.”

The instrumentalized campaign on the unenviable financial position of the religious officials did not dissuade the Commission of Serbia to conclude the following in 1987: “The rapid economic development of our country in the post-war period enabled a significant raise of standards of all the citizens, including the believers. That raise of standards also made possible the establishment of a stable material basis of the Islamic Community, that enabled effortless financing of all the activities intended for intensifying of the religious life.”

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45 The relations between the state and the Islamic Community in SFRY, page 5. Material of the Federal Commission, Belgrade, April of 1982. The original is kept at the Archives of the Federal Commission.

46 The analysis of the actual movements within the Islamic Community in FR Serbia, page 5. The material of the Republic Commission discussed at the session on 2 August 1987. The original is kept at the Archives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Serbia. The quoted standpoint is confirmed by the objective information on the Dinar and foreign currency funds that were at the disposal of the Council of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia in 1985 and 1988: „The commission (the one formed at the request of F. Šeta, after the imams’ protest, to determine the financial activity of the Seniority/Council) exposed the precise data on the financial assets of the Council. After the deposal of Dr Ahmed Smajlović (three years ago), the Council disposed of 702,173 Deutsche Marks, 205,807 US Dollars, 16,237 Pounds and 3,459,397 Dinars. On 31 December 1988, the Council had the following assets on its banking accounts: 2,526,515 Deutsche Marks, 513,745 US Dollars, 17,864 Pounds and 123,046,476 Dinars. It should also be mentioned that the Council invested over 300 billions of Dinars for the reconstruction of significant religious buildings during the last year“, The information on gathering of the imams in FR Bosnia and Herzegovina and the efforts of the Islamic Community authorities for normalization of the situation, page 8. Material of the Commission of Serbia. The original is kept at the Archives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Serbia.
Conclusion

The establishment of a stable economic basis and generally favourable financial position of the religious officials enabled normal activity of the Islamic Religious Community and intensifying of all forms of religious life during the era of Socialist Yugoslavia. Constant changes of Constitutions and harmonization of their provisions with changing life conditions enabled the consolidation of the internal organization, and, owing to the great authority of the Councils and controlling-directive function of the Assembly, which also had some laymen among their members, a strong discipline was established among the religious officials and the concept of inseparability of secular and spiritual spheres was carefully promoted. The erection of religious buildings had not been that frequent since the departure of the Ottomans from the Yugoslav territories. The foundation new madrasas and starting the activity of the Faculty of Islamic Studies modernized the schooling system, with the aim of producing professionals capable of working in modern conditions. Publishing became a priority, which enabled printing of some of the most valuable works from the fields of philosophy and theology, popular literature for elementary religious education and starting a number of different magazines and periodicals. Both the youth and the secularized middle generation were being introduced, through various methods, in all the activities of the religious community. Religious education adopted the characteristics of systematic education and, in certain milieus, the involvement of elementary-school children was almost complete. Through attractive programmes and breaking with century-long traditions and conservatism, women as pillars of their families and an unavoidable factor in raising of young generation in Islam, found their place in the religious community. Every suitable opportunity was used for mass gatherings of the believers, which were practical manifestations of the power of religious community and its impact on the people.

The IRC used the disorganization within the state and unreadiness of the authorities in charge to get to the essence of all the processes, for constant rejuvenation of its staff through the imams educated at the best Islamic universities. Well educated and ideologically prepared during the years spent abroad, they set as their primary task the formulation and implementation of a new strategy for acting of the Islamic Community, which was in accordance with the patterns formulated in the centrals of the most significant international Islamic organizations. Gradually strengthening their position, the “new forces” decidedly demanded changing of the IRC leadership’s policy of the time, which was characterized by cooperation with the state. The lack of nostalgia for the old times enabled their connection with political elites, which correctly understood the essence of global changes sprung from the weakening of socialist regime and were well acquainted with the dimensions of irreconcilable national contradic-
tions and the economic crisis of the state. Realistically estimating the changed circumstances, but, at the same time, unready to accept the possibility of disappearance of such a powerful spiritual force like the Islamic Community from the historical scene and its sharing the destiny of once equally powerful League of Communists, the „new forces“ put effort to preserve it, even in times of disintegration of Yugoslavia in a bloody civil war and creation of new states on its ruins.
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Спроводећи утврђену политику нова социјалистичка власт је низом системских мера Исламској заједници одузела највећи део имовине и тако је учинила зависном од сталне државне помоћи. Увиђајући реалност и поступајући кооперативно и прагматично, новоизабрано руководство уредило је односе са државом и тако створило неопходан маневарски простор за ублажавање оштрине предузетих мера, очување материјалне супстанце и постављања основа из којих је произшле стално економско снажење заједнице и њених верских службеника. Пажљиво и опрезно предузимане су мере у циљу решавања проблема вакуфских поседа, које су у првој фази имале карактер евидентирања и елементарне заштите од пропадања, да би протеком времена добијале изворни смисао изражен кроз став да је правилан однос свих структура верске заједнице и верника према том питању од пресудне важности за очување ислама на југословенским просторима. Процеси демократизације и стварање институционалних претпоставки за отварање и решавање неких важних питања, охрабрили су исламске интелектуалце да покрену дебату о одузетој имовини, а руководство Исламске заједнице да јавно затражи њен повраћај и стављање у функцију развоја исламске просвете и културе. Ослобађајући се наметнутих контролних механизама, непрекидно снажећи и осећајући се неспутаном пред све евидентнијим слабостима државе, Исламска заједница је реактивирала, започела и са успехом окончала сложени процес поновног успостављања и наметања верницима обавезе давања курбанских кожица и средстава за формирање фонда зеката и зекатул фитра. Правилно проценујући сензibilitет својих припадника, средства су јавно намењивана за оснивање Исламског теолошког факултета и ширење школског система, али чињеница да су планирани објекти завршени уз помоћ донација из исламског света, указују да је прави циљ тих активности био дисцилипиновање верника и њихово везивање за Исламску заједницу. Уређујући та важна питања, Исламска заједница је стварала услове за стално побољшавање материјалног положаја верских службеника обезбеђујући на тај начин њихову оданост и спремност за укључивање у све планиране активности. Непрекидно стабилизујући и јачајући економску базу прилозима верника из земље и иностранства и примањем сталне...
помоћи од међународних исламских организација, Исламска заједница је створила претпоставке за реализовање амбициозног програма у чијем средишту је било административно учвршћивање, интензивна изградња верских објеката, школовање савременим условима прилагођеног верског кадра, развијање издавачке делатности, укључивање жена у активности верске заједнице, систематско верско образовање најмлађе генерације и припрема за времена која су долазила.

Кључне речи: Исламска заједница, Југославија, материјални положај, вакуфи, одузимање имовине, посебни фондови, верски службеници.

The recently published book *Shi’ism in America* by Professor Liyakat Takim, currently the Sharjah Chair at McMaster University, is a tremendous contribution to the study of Islam in the contemporary world. It is the first book that specifically attempts to provide an overview of the Shi’a community in the United States from documented arrival in the 19th century to post-9/11 identity. The book begins with an introduction outlining the development of the Shi’a tradition within Islamic civilization. Chapter one on the early history of the community includes very interesting points, such as the account of the sole Shi’a survivor from the *Titanic* (p.13.). This introductory chapter establishes the basic genealogies for the earliest communities in the Great Lakes region.

Chapter two hones in on the ethnic diversity of the Shi’a communities in the United States and diversity of views within them. In this the Iranian-Americans are the interesting, many polarized between the exiles and their descendants from the Shah’s regime articulating a secular Persian identity and the pro-Iranian regime Iranian-Americans who wish articulate an overtly religious Iranian identity (p.27). Some of the most original material in the book has to do with the Khoja communities in the United States. They are among the most organized and least researched of the Shi’a communities, they have an interesting tension in identities between an East African identity and South Asian heritage (p.36). The photographs in the book are from a shrine in a Khoja center in Canada (pp.66-68). References to their unique rituals such as the circular mourning rites performed during Muharram are provided in excellent ethnographic detail.

Chapter three attempts to place the Shi’a experience within the larger Muslim experience in the United States and relationship to the Sunni majority. While ethnic tensions within divide the Shi’a community, at university level many instances of antagonism by Sunni students have helped to create an American pan-Shi’a identity distinct and yet connected to the Sunni majority. The subtlety of the Shi’a as minority is not understood by most Americans as Takim later states, “…American Shi’is have been held equally responsible for the terrorist attacks even though none of the terrorists were Shi’is.” (p.212) Special attention in the chapter is paid to youth culture, interesting hybridization has occurred from
interfaith marriages between Sunni and Shi’i Muslims, their offspring sometimes referred to in the vernacular as “Sushi” (p.82). The flexibility of identities is later expanded in the final chapter on the American Shi’i identity post-9/11.

Chapter four goes deep into questions of religious law and authority for Shi’i Muslims living in the United States far from the traditional centers of authority in Qum and Najaf as well as living in fundamentally different worlds from the reality of life in the Islamic heartland. The primary translation of legal opinions by scholars such as Fadlallah and Khamene’i on contemporary issues such as single parent in-vitro surrogates is in stark contrast to their image as extremists in the American media as related to political activities (p.165). This strong chapter attempts to sketch the extent to which the religious lives of American Shi’as are connected to the traditional hierarchy and the evolution of this relationship with advances in telecommunications and new media.

The final chapter, five, pays special attention to a hitherto understudied demographic, black Shi’as. Takim explores the question of their conversion and why Shi’i Islam is perhaps more of an authentic alternative based on the story of Karbala and their historical oppression in the context of American history compared to the Sunni majority tradition. The chapter concludes with the issue of 9/11 and how it has fundamentally changed the American Shi’i and more generally the evolution of American Muslim identity as “Muslim” and “Islam” have become the existential other for the American self-narrative.

The contributions of this book to the academic study of Islam in America are numerous—establishing the early history of the Shi’i in America, contemporary ethnographic notes on various communities, and placing the Shi’i within the larger socio-religious context of Islam and/in the United States. It provides a look into the voice of the Shi’i within the larger debates of defining an American Islam, hitherto silent. The book highlights the numerous tensions of being both Muslim and American as the state engages in two wars in Muslim majority countries and domestically Muslims are categorically defined and politically marginalized as insufficiently American. In our age of globalization, American Muslims are finding themselves wanting to define a separate American identity yet are constantly associated with and tied to the larger Muslim world. This book adeptly documents this tightrope walk of the Shi’i in America, how religious authority and identity are being reconstructed by second and third generation Americans as a double-minority.

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Talking about religion, or in this case world religions, in as objective a way as possible is quite a challenging task an author has to tackle when setting out to write about the topic. In the preface to his book World Religions (2008) Warren Matthews introduces this problem to his readership (2008, 1): “At stake is our point of view of all world religions. If we accept all religious stories of faithful followers at face value, we can become lost in vast seas of wonder stories, legends, and beliefs that are rejected even by other followers of the religion. If we insist on objectivity and reject all stories that cannot be easily explained in natural and humanist terms, we discard much that believers in a particular religion find essential to its understanding.”

Religions of the World is a collection of papers edited by Dragoljub B. Đorđević and Predrag Stajić. It gives a balanced account of the major world religions, ensuring that various opinions are heard, all through the framework of the Sociology of Religion, which serves as a necessary anchor and gives this collection its scientific validity.

In the preface entitled About World Religions, Đorđević and Stajić state that present-day Serbia does not have enough comprehensive literature on world religions, which encouraged them to make this collection in the first place. The book consists of two parts, the first one dealing with historical, sociological, philosophical and theological circumstances in which the principal religions of the world – Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Daoism, Confucianism and Islam developed, grew and persisted, and the second one tackling the current state of religion and the relations amongst the believers (tolerance, Ecumenism, Protestantism and the minorities, etc.). The book has the total of 10 papers, each one comprising a separate chapter.

The first paper/chapter is entitled Hinduism and the Present-Day India, and it was written by Goran Arsić, whose aim was to reveal the essence of Hinduism.
through religion and art, science and skills, customs and tradition, the totality of life, all from a point of view of an observer. He opens with one of the most important rules in Sanskrit, which points out that one needs to be at a proper distance from something one is watching or thinking about, adding that one needs to find balance as well.

The second paper, written by Radosav Pušić and entitled *Buddhism from India to China*, opens with an intriguing question which has puzzled the western scholars for almost two centuries now – the question of whether Buddhism is a philosophy or a religion. Pušić stresses that there is no right or wrong answer to this question. He also mentions Buddha’s message to his followers, in which he advises them to study Buddha’s teaching in their own language, where again what “one’s own language” means is open to interpretation. The chapter/paper which follows was written by Isak Asiel and it talks about Judaism. It is entitled *The Jewish Religion: a strong alliance between God and people* and is built on the story of how Abraham made a pact with God. The aim of Asiel’s text is to interpret the story of Abraham and show its symbolism, as well as explain how one can relate to it in 21st century. According to Asiel, the nature of the alliance between God and people is not a historical category, but rather an eternal one. Chapter IV is entitled *How Christianity Came into Being: the First Four Centuries*, and comprises a paper by Milan Vukomanović. From the perspective of an interdisciplinary analyst, who takes into consideration the history of religion, archaeological findings, and views the Bible as something of historical, philosophical and even literary importance, he attempts to put the beginnings of Christianity into the context of the times in which it originated. The author points out that Christianity was under various influences which later on led to clashes and disagreements amongst the followers, ultimately resulting in the split between the Eastern and the Western Christianity, as well as the divergence of Protestantism later on.

The next chapter (chapter V) was written by the same author, Radosav Pušić, but this time it is about two religions of the far east. It is entitled *Daoism and Confucianism: the Two Chinese Stories*. The paper is about the two principal schools of thought in China: Daoism, the existence of which was a contribution of all the peoples who lived on the territory of China from 4th century BC to 2nd century AD, and Confucianism, which many do not even deem religion, or alternatively call it “the religion of common sense”. The important thing about both these religions is that they are not in their essence monotheistic like Christianity, Islam or Judaism – they do not revere only God. Pušić also writes that at the core of Confucianism we can find the ideal, or the humanistic ideal, as it is called nowadays, of the Chinese people, which amounts to searching for the meaning of one’s existence in everyday life, instead of waiting for the afterlife.

Chapter VI is entitled *Islam between dogma and reality: Fundamentalism and*
Wahhabism, Jihad and Terrorism, and comprises a paper by Miroljub Jevtić, a politician of religion. Jevtić opens the question of the essence of Islamic religion, saying that Islamic dogma is a very clear and precise one, as well as that the Islamic community is established as a very serious and disciplined community, which meticulously carries out all the tasks set by its religious leaders. The next chapter tackles a more local topic concerning southern Serbia and the spreading of Protestantism, especially amongst the Roma people. It is a paper entitled The Protestantisation of Serbia: the Case of Leskovac and Southern Serbia, written by Dragan Todorović. The conversion of the Roma, who are traditionally either Orthodox Christian or Muslim, is a very current and hot issue dating back to the end of the last century. It is such an intriguing process with far-reaching consequences that sociologists of religion should make sure they record, analyse and describe all of its aspects, writes Đorđević. Behind this trend we find a myriad of complex social, economic, cultural and political factors.

Chapter VIII was written by Andrija Kopilović, and is entitled The Unity of All Christians: Roman Catholicism, Dialogue and Ecumenism. Kopilović is certainly one of the leaders in practical ecumenism amongst the Roman Catholics of the Balkans. In this paper he presents four topics: “Ecumenism and the Second Vatican Council”, “The ecumenism of Pope Paul VI”, “Important encounters in the field of ecumenism”, and “The Octave of Christian Unity”. The paper which follows was written by the editor of this collection, Dragoljub B. Đorđević, and it is entitled How Believers Organise: from Cult to Church. Đorđević is undoubtedly an authority on this intriguing topic from the field of the Sociology of Religion, for which there is much interest amongst people from all walks of life: politicians, journalists, teachers, students, the believers and the non-believers, to name the few. The paper talks about four types of religious communities that people organise into: cults, sects, denominations, and churches, and analyses them through various sociological perspectives. The collection ends with a paper by Radovan Bigović, a theologian and philosopher, who appropriately puts faith into a wider context. The chapter is entitled Faith in a Postmodern and Postsecular World, and it warns that nowadays many words have lost or changed their meaning, including the notion of faith. Some of the questions that he raises are: Why are the messages about religion not only unconvincing, but also boring? Why do people reduce Christian faith to a mere human faith? The whole discussion about the prospects of religion in a postmodern and postsecular world continues into a heated debate between Jurgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger (2006).

The collection ends with the biographies of the authors and a convenient name registry. To conclude, we can say that this collection can serve as a perfect starting point for any attempt to study major world religions. It is a valuable comprehensive study on the topic, and a rare one written in Serbian. The variety of authors and the diversity of their perspectives ensure that the elusive topic of religion is viewed from
many different angles, thus bringing the reader closer to perceiving it in as objective a way as possible.

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References


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УПУТСТВО АУТОРИМА

Политикологија религије је научни часопис који објављује текстове теоријског карактера који се базе односи на религије и политике. Осим тога објављује приказе књига из политикологије религије и сродних дисциплина, научну критику и полемику. Редакција прима текстове искључиво у електронској форми на следећу адресу politikologijareligije@yahoo.com. Сви радови подлежу анонимној рецензији најмање два рецензента. Рецензентски процес траје од 2 до 4 месеца. Редакција даје апсолутну предност текстовима на енглеском језику. Да би текст био узет у разматрање за евентуално објављивање мора бити написан у следећем облику:

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Пример: Samardzic Radovan, Aristocratic Vertical in Srbian History, in: Serbs in European Civilization, Samardzic Radovan & Duskov Milan (eds.) Nova & Serbian Academy of Art and Sciences, Institut for Balkan Studies, Belgrade, 1993, pp…

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4. Fonts should be in Times New Roman form.
5. Font Size should be 12.
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7. Font Size in footnotes should be 11.
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