An Analysis of the Belief in Religious Truths Between Muslims and Roman Catholics in Slovenia and the Question of Identity

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https://doi.org/10.31192/np.22.2.4
UDK / UDC: 28-722.7:272-722.7](497.4)
316.647.8:28
Izvorni znanstveni rad /
Original scientific paper
Primljeno / Received:
28. veljače 2024. / Feb 28, 2024
Prihvaćeno / Accepted:
24. travnja 2024. / Apr 24, 2024

In this work, an unprecedented comparison is made between recognising religious truths and observing religious practices among Muslims and Roman Catholics in Slovenia. Based on the results, the author establishes a link to the identity of the representatives of the religions in question and thus attempts to explain whether the phenomenon of Islamophobia is justified or not.

Key words: *religious beliefs, religious practices, Islamophobia, identity, Muslims in Slovenia, Roman Catholics in Slovenia.*

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Introduction[**]

The fear of Islam and Muslims persists despite many efforts to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and, given the trend of immigration to Europe and thus also to Slovenia, this does not seem to be changing any time soon. Slovenia recorded the highest increase in illegal migration in 2023.[1] Europe has responded to the new war between Israel and Palestine by stepping up surveillance of its borders. Fears of an increased influx of migrants and terrorist attacks are more than obvious and, to some extent, justified. However, Islamophobic tendencies, which are often linked to poor knowledge of Islam and the equation of Muslims, are intentionally or unintentionally supported – above all through media propaganda.[2]

In this article, we focus on Islam in Slovenia, whose population is about 5% Muslim, most of whom have Bosniak and Albanian roots. For decades, the former was a very small minority, but in recent years, there has been an increase in Muslims from Kosovo who have Albanian roots.[3] Islamophobia seems to be unjustified in this case, as Muslims in Slovenia are quite homogeneous and well-integrated, which is undoubtedly due to cultural and linguistic similarities. A completely different picture would emerge if Muslims from the Middle East and African countries were to settle in Slovenia, as they would be treated differently, and their rights would be restricted.[4]

There are several reasons for Islamophobia in Slovenia. The first is the equation of all Muslims with terrorists. The second is the ignorance of the profile of the diversity and variety of Islam, which provides answers to the fact that Islam is not as universal as it seems at first glance, that the majority of Muslims in Europe support the secular separation of state and religion, and that they understand religion and its practice as a personal choice. Furthermore, Islamophobia is influenced by the fearmongering of the media, which hardly reports on the lives of Muslims in Slovenia but regularly publishes dark news involving Muslims in one way or another. We Slovenians should be more afraid

[**] Proofreading by Terry Troy Jackson.

[1] Cf. Tadeja ZABRET, *Pod Golobom več ilegalnih vstopov v državo kot v celotnem prejšnjem mandatu, prošenj za azil pa več kot prej v 30 letih* [Under Golob, more illegal entries into the country than in the whole of the previous mandate, and more asylum applications than in the previous 30 years] (29.11.2023), https://www.domovina.je/pod-golobom-vec-ilegalnih-vstopov-v-drzavo-kot-v-celotnem-prejsnjem-mandatu-prosenj-za-azil-pa-vec-kot-prej-v-30-letih (28.02.2024).

[2] Cf. David KRANER, Intolerance in the media and representations of the Catholic Church, *Crkva u svijetu*, 56 (2021) 4, 731-766, https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/387996.

[3] Cf. Vilma STANOVNIK, Urša PETERNEL, *Število tujcev se povečuje* [The number of foreigners is increasing] (15.03.2020), https://www.gorenjskiglas.si/article/20200315/C/200319848/ August (28.02.2024).

[4] Cf. Mirjam MILHARČIČ-HLADNIK, *IN – IN: življenjske zgodbe o sestavljenih identitetah* [IN – IN: life stories of constructed identities], Ljubljana, ZRC SAZU, 2011.

of ourselves than of Muslims because we are moving further and further away from the Christian tradition on which Slovenian culture, and thus Slovenian identity, was built. And it is precisely the latter that is most often overlooked and concealed in public debates and media reports. The question arises: how do Muslims in Slovenia differ from other Slovenes?

Below are the results of a survey comparing the religious practices of Muslims and Catholics in Slovenia and their beliefs in religious truths. The comparison will provide answers to this question. Before that, we will present the identity of Muslims in Slovenia.

1. An identity of Slovenian Muslims

Identity is a complex, multi-layered, and multidimensional phenomenon. There is no generally recognised theory of identity.[5] It comprises similarities and differences, always active and never final, a definitive social institution, and reflexive, meaning socially constructed through interactions and institutions.[6] Identity is a composite concept that encompasses geographical and social, historical and cultural elements as well as a 'state of mind', different kinds of knowledge, art, science and technology, ethics, worldview and religion, creative achievements, memory and tradition, the present and a vision of the future.[7] Consequently, we can speak of multiple identities that are both individual and collective. For the present topic, we will focus only on Bosniak or Islamic national identity and Islamic religious identity.

1.1. Bosnian, Bosniak, and Muslim (national) identity

Today, Bosniak identity is understood as a set of different identities representing a rich national and cultural tradition in which mixtures of Slavic, Oriental, Balkan, Mediterranean, and Central European cultures are visible.[8] Compared to other Slavic peoples, Bosniaks began to develop their identity late, only at the end of the 20th century. The late formation of Bosniak national identity was certainly influenced by the universal faith of Islam, which attaches far greater importance to religious affiliation than to the question of nationality

[5] Cf. Umut ÖZKIRIMLY, *Theories of Nationalism – A Critical Introduction. Hampshire*, New York, Palgrave, 2000, 226.

[6] Cf. Marjana NASTRAN ULE, *Sodobne identitete: v vrtincu diskurzov* [Contemporary identities: in a whirlpool of discourses], Ljubljana, Znanstveno in publicistično središče, 2000.

[7] Cf. Igor BAHOVEC, Evropske identitete, kultura in pogledi na svet in krščanstvo [European identities, culture and worldviews and Christianity], *Poligrafi*, 21 (2016) 81-82, 27-51, 27.

[8] Cf. Muhidin MULALIČ, Socio-Cultural Diversity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in: Mesut IDRIZ et. al. (ed.), *Islam in Southeast Europe. Past Reflections and Future Prospects*, Bandar Seri Begawan, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, 2014, 55-66, 65.

or ethnicity.[9] Among other things, Bosniak Muslims lived within the Islamic state during the Ottoman period, where they occupied a privileged position and were consequently less inclined to develop their own national identity. In the Ottoman Empire, the caliphate was divided into Miletus systems, which initially denoted a religious community but, in the 19th century, became the designation of a single nation, although 'nation' was not an integral part of the term 'state' as it was understood in the West.[10] However, the language linked Bosnian Muslims with other nations (Serbs, Croats) and thus could not remove the boundary between Christians and Muslims.[11]

The question of Bosniak identity arose again during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Muslims could not identify themselves ethnically until 1971, as they were listed as 'Undetermined' in the censuses. Later, this 'problem' was solved by artificially combining ethnic and religious identities and coining the national term 'Muslim'. In the third decade of the 21st century, Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina still identify with three different ethnic categories: Bosniaks, Bosniaks, and Muslims.

The Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina states that the constituent peoples are Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. Bosniaks, Muslims, and Bosnians have common Bosnian-Herzegovinian roots. However, it cannot be said that they all identify as Muslims. Opinion polls conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina show that among the ethnically defined Muslims, Bosniaks, and Bosnians, there are also atheists and agnostics, as well as Catholics, Orthodox, and members of other religious communities. The triple designation is due to the past and the future.[12] After the occupation of Bosnia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire attempted to forge a unity of the Bosnian nation, which met with resistance from both the Catholic Croats and the Orthodox Serbs. However, the Muslim inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina were most familiar with the term Muslim, which they used to define themselves ethnically until the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the first Bosniak Sabor (Congress) in September 1993, they finally defined themselves officially and publicly as 'Bosniaks', which was their original national name. The national name 'Bosniak' was incorporated into the constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 30 March 1994 and publicly recognised a year later by the Dayton Peace Agreement and the Washington Agreement.

[9] Cf. Jan IVFERSEN, Christoffer KØLVRAA, Evropska sosedska politika kot politika identitete [European Neighbourhood Policy as an identity policy], *Evroorientalizem; (Z)nova medicina*, 37 (2009) 235-236, 46-67, 49.

[10] Cf. Benjamic BRAUDEU, Bernard LEWIS, Introduction, in: Benjamic BRAUDEU et al. (ed.), Christian and Jews in the Ottoman Empire, New York, Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982, 1-35, 12.

[11] Cf. Marija NIKOLAEVA TODOROVA, *Imaginarij Balkana* [Imaginarium of the Balkans], Ljubljana, Inštitut za civilizacijo in kulturo, 2001, 271.

[12] Cf. Ahmet ALIBAŠIĆ, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in: Jocelyne CESARI, *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, 429-474.

Researchers argue that the Bosniak identity consists of four elements: the feeling of belonging to the Bosniak nation, the acceptance of the Bosniak language as a mother tongue, the experience of Bosnia as a homeland, and the identification with Islam as a religion.[13] The threefold identification of Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina remains alive today in everyday life, which, according to Baltić, proves that the Bosniak national consciousness and, thus, identity are not yet fully developed. In addition, not all immigrants from Bosnia identify themselves as Bosniaks.[14]

1.2. Islamic and Muslim religious identity

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a blending of religious and national identity can be observed, with the former replacing the latter. In a broader sense, however, Islamic and Muslim identities are primarily sub-areas of religious identity. The hyphen 'and' indicates that they should not be completely equated. The essential difference between the two is the domain to which they refer. Islamic identity refers to the field of Islamic theology, while Muslim identity encompasses other fields of study such as sociology, history, political science, and psychology.[15]

> 'The endeavour to uncover "Islamic identity" consists primarily of an analysis based on the primary textual sources of the Islamic faith and the interpretation of religious concepts as they relate to Muslim self-understanding.'[16]

In contrast, Muslim identity defines the specifics of Muslim society.

Regardless of whether we speak of Islamic or Muslim identity, it is important to bear in mind that this is never monolithic but is influenced not only by the long history of Islam but also by its spread, its collision with other cultural contexts and their possible interweaving with traditional Islam. At the same time, however, different groups have also formed within Islam, influencing the formation of individual and group identity.[17] The greatest threat to collective Islamic identity is economic globalisation.[18]

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[13] Cf. Admir BALTIĆ, *Bošnjaška kultura od prostovoljstva do profesionalizacije* [Bosnian culture from volunteering to professionalisation], Ljubljana, Bošnjaška kulturna zveza Slovenije, 2009, 29.

[14] Cf. *ibid*., 25.

[15] Cf. Saied Reza AMELI, *Globalization, Americanization and British Muslim Identity*, London, ICAS Press, 2002, 30.

[16] Anja ZALTA, Muslimanska identiteta v času globalizacije [Muslim identity in the age of globalisation], *Annales. Series Historia et Sociologia*, 16 (2006) 1, 69-76, 71.

[17] Cf. *ibid*., 73.

[18] Cf. Tugrul KESKIN, The Socilogy of Islam, in: Tugrul KESKIN (ed.), *The Sociology of Islam*, Reading, Ithaca Press, 2012, 1-18, 5.

We can divide Islamic identity into maximal and optimal identities.[19] While the former involves living according to the rules of religious law and thus integrating religion into all areas of life, the latter allows only partial fulfilment of religious life. In other words, the maximum Islamic identity can only be lived in those Islamic countries in which Sharia law is valid at the state level. The optimal Islamic identity is achieved when a Muslim does not live in an Islamic state, but the state nevertheless offers him religious freedom and legal security for his life and property (cf. European countries).

The various Islamic identities can be linked to the guidelines of Islam for Ramadan. Tariq Ramadam divides Islam into six groups.[20] In addition to the cultural or sociological Muslims, he names the Salafi reformists, the Salafi liberalists, the politically formalist Salafis, the scholastic traditionalists and the liberal or rational reformists. Sandres (in Roald) divides Muslims into ethnic, religious, political, and cultural groups.[21] A simpler subdivision within Islamic religious identity divides Muslims into four groups: Traditionalists, Islamists, Modernists, and secular-oriented Muslims. Traditionalists advocate the fulfilment of religious duties and refer to tradition, but at the same time reject political involvement in Islam. This is where they differ most from Islamists, who at the same time defend Islam as a way of life in all its aspects. Secular Muslims are those believers for whom the certainty of their Muslim identity lies in the fact that they profess the existence of God and Muhammad. Their religious practice is paralysed; religion is a matter for the individual; they are not interested in politically and socially implicated religions. The modernist view of Islam, on the other hand, understands Islamic ideology in the light of a modern worldview. As such, it strives for a reform of religious thought and wants to reform society as a whole through modernisation. In contrast to the Islamists, they advocate a gradual 'Islamisation' of the environment.[22]

After a brief overview of the different types of identities, it becomes clear that this is a complex and topical issue. The question of identities is even more interesting and complex when we talk about immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Here, it is not only about the intertwining of religious and ethnic identities but also about the effects of the migration experience and the question of more or less successful integration. Muslims in Slovenia are also confronted with all of this.

[19] Cf. Adel Theodor KHOURY, Religija in kulturna identiteta: Primer islama v Evropi [Religion and cultural identity: the case of Islam in Europe], in: Dean KOMEL et al. (ed.), Obrazi Evrope, Evropa, svet in humanost v 21. stoletju: dialog med kulturami, Zbornik mednarodne konference z dne 10.-12. aprila 2008, Ljubljana, Inštitut Nove revije, zavod za humanistiko, 31-40, 35.

[20] Cf. Tariq RAMADAN, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, 24-29.

[21] Cf. Anne Sofie ROALD, *Woman in Islam: The Western Experience*, London, Routledge, 2001, 18.

[22] Cf. *ibid*., 75.

2. Islamic religious doctrine and practice

We see that the national and religious identities of Muslims are deeply intertwined. Strictly speaking, one could say that a Muslim is someone who recognises all religious truths and strictly adheres to the prescribed religious practice. However, as in other religions, there are also more or less consistent believers in Islam.

The Islamic doctrine is called 'iman' (Arabic: إِيمَان, 'īmān'), which means testimony or confession. The word has two meanings. Firstly, it means 'the acceptance of revealed truths and walking firmly on this path in words and deeds'.[23] The way of the word iman is also understood as the acceptance of the religious truths or 'shartas' found in the Qur'an (2, 177, 285; 4, 136).[24] One could say that the Islamic religion is composed of the 'six pillars of faith' or 'erkanu-l-iman'.

Islam is classified as an Abrahamic religion whose origin is monotheism. Islamic dogma ('qadr') consists of six pillars, which include belief in one God, belief in angels, messengers of God, holy books, the Day of Judgement, and belief in God's will and decision.

Being a Muslim means being an exemplary believer and citizen. Recognising religious truths is a foundation, but without religious practice, it quickly erodes. These are the five parts that make up the Islamic faith, or rather, the five actions that an orthodox Muslim must fulfil. Thus, it is obligatory for all members of the Islamic religion to profess faith in the one God ('shehada'), pray five times a day ('salat'), give alms ('zekat'), fast in Ramadan ('saum') and, at least once in a lifetime, if circumstances permit, make a pilgrimage to Mecca during the Great Pilgrimage ('hajj').

In addition to the obligatory practice of religion, Muslims are expected to live in accordance with the rules of Islamic religious law, which relate to family, economic, criminal and inheritance law. Islamic law also regulates issues of diet, burial, and clothing and provides answers to various moral and bioethical questions.

3. Religious practice of Muslims in Slovenia

Religious practice is the most important expression of faith in the daily life of believers. It is expressed through the observance of religious rules and participation in religious rituals, which are "expressions of recognition

[23] Adalbert REBIĆ, Iman, in: Drago BAJT, Marta KOCJAN-BARLE (ed.), *Splošni religijski leksikon* [General religious lexicon], Ljubljana, Modrijan, 2007, 453.
[24] Quran.com, https://quran.com/ (14.01.2024).

of God's presence".[25] Since religion accompanies the temporary events of life (birth, marriage, death, etc.), these are also characterised by a certain religious practice, often linked to traditions. For example, Muslims in Slovenia follow a similar pattern to the other major religious communities. The preservation of religious practice is closely linked to the preservation of tradition. In our case, it is mainly the influence of the Bosniak tradition. Since most Muslims in Slovenia have their roots in Bosnia and Herzegovina, knowledge of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is crucial for understanding Islamic religious practice in the Republic of Slovenia. According to Grabus, the religious practice of Muslims in Slovenia is a remnant of Bosnia and Herzegovina.[26] According to him, religious authenticity and autonomy can only be preserved through a connection with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Muslims in Europe are not characterised by strict religious observance. Researchers found that Muslims in the Balkans are the most secularised.[27] A similar argument can be made for Muslims in Slovenia, who are dominated by Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by Albanian Muslims from Kosovo.

Grabus describes Muslims in Slovenia as Ramadan Muslims, as there are two to three times as many believers during the holy month as usual.[28] Celebrating Islamic festivals is the most commonly observed Muslim religious practice in Slovenia, according to our survey results and Slovene Public Opinion (SPO) 08/1, SPO 17/1 and SPO 19/1.[29] They are celebrated by almost everyone, even by those who do not fulfil other religious observances or do not consider themselves members of the Islamic faith (this is only part of the tradition). Muslims are no different from members of other religions in this respect, as Christmas and Easter, which are Christian festivals, are also celebrated by almost all Slovenians, whether they are Christians or not. At the same time, we note that a person's personal faith determines how they experience and understand a particular vacation, how they prepare for it and what they ultimately see as its essence.

The survey also revealed that a third of Muslims in Slovenia fast and that they perform daily prayers and read the Quran more regularly during this time. Women rarely participate in communal worship, most often on holidays or even less frequently. In contrast, 47% of male respondents attend communal prayer at least once a week. Our interviews with the imams revealed that one third of

[25] Cf. Mari Jože OSREDKAR, Molitev kot izraz prepoznavanja Božje prisotnost [Prayer as an expression of recognition of God's presence], *Bogoslovni vestnik*, 83 (2023) 1, 9-20, 9.

[26] Cf. Nedžad GRABUS, *Sožitje je naša pot. Intervjuji in govori muftija dr. Nedžada Grabusa* [Coexistence is our way. Interviews and speeches by Mufti Dr. Nejad Grabus], Ljubljana, Kulturno-izobraževalni zavod Averroes, 2011, 21.

[27] Cf. Corinne TORREKENS, Dirk JACOBS, Muslims' religiosity and views on religion in six Western European countries: does national context matter?, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42 (2015) 2, 325-340, 331.

[28] Cf. Grabus, *Sožitje je naša pot…*, 196.

[29] Cf. Slovene Public Opinion, https://nesstar2.adp.fdv.uni-lj.si/webview/?language=sl, (28.02. 2024).

the community members regularly participate in congregational prayer, while the others do so sporadically. In our interviews with Muslims, we found that personal prayer ('dova') is more important for Muslims in Slovenia. It is a way for the believer to thank God for all his favours and, at the same time, ask him for various requests. The 'dova' also has a special place in the Bosnian Islamic tradition. It is often an individual request for God's abundance, blessings (e.g., rain) ('bereket'), for good luck ('hajr') and for success and wealth ('nafaka').[30]

The fourth pillar of Islam is almsgiving. Respondents state that they give it frequently (37%) or very frequently (36%). Through interviews and conversations with Muslims, we obtained more insight into how this pillar is fulfilled. Many agree that it is not only important how much money you give to someone, but more importantly, that you are good in life and willing to help another person.

The final pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca. The Hajj is a huge financial commitment that many people cannot afford. Just over half (53%) of Muslims surveyed said that they would make the pilgrimage if they had the opportunity; 13% have already made a pilgrimage, and just 24% have no intention of making a holy pilgrimage. While there is a possibility that this percentage is slightly higher due to the population that completed the questionnaires, a similar percentage was also found in the Aufbruch Survey.[31] The survey also showed that Muslims in Slovenia are more likely to make the pilgrimage to Mecca than Muslims from the other countries included in the survey; the only countries with a higher percentage of pilgrims are Croatia and Belarus. This could be due to the better financial situation of Muslims in Slovenia compared to other countries.

Let us briefly consider other aspects of the religious practice of Muslims in Slovenia. One of the most visible signs of the Islamic faith is the prescribed dress practice of Muslims, especially Muslim women. In Slovenia, an increase in the veiling of Muslim women can be observed, regardless of which school of law they belong to.[32] The latter is mainly due to the desire to belong and to adhere more strictly to Islamic rules. Consistent veiling is characteristic of religious women who follow Salafi Islamic teachings. Immigrant women from the Middle East and Africa are also usually veiled. Muslim women born in Slovenia or other Balkan countries, whose mothers and grandmothers did not veil

[30] Cf. David HENIG, *Remaking Muslim Lives. Everyday Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Urbana, Chicago and Springfield, University of Illinois Press, 2020, 94.

[31] Cf. Niko TOŠ (ed.), *Vrednote v prehodu III. Slovenija v srednje in vzhodnoevropskih primerjavah* [Values in Transition III. Slovenia in Central and Eastern European comparisons], Ljubljana – Wiena, Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za družbene vede, IDV-CJMMK, 2014.

[32] Cf. Maja PUCELJ, *Islamofobija skozi prizmo sodobnih migracij* [Islamophobia through the prism of contemporary migration], Doktorska disertacija, Ljubljana, Alma Mater Europaea – Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis, Fakulteta za podiplomski humanistični študij Ljubljana, 2019.

themselves, are also veiled. According to our survey, the population of Muslim women in Slovenia are the most veiled is between 24 and 36 years old. Muslim women with Albanian roots are somewhat more consistently veiled, especially if they are first-generation immigrants. The interviewees agreed that veiling is a matter of personal choice.

We note that a large proportion of Muslims in Slovenia do not eat pork. Some of them consume alcohol, which is also mentioned by Grabus. Alcohol consumption is also common in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[33] Some Muslims do not adhere to the halal diet. Ramadan believes that prayer is more important for a Muslim than halal food. Interestingly, the Muslims surveyed adhere more strictly to the halal dietary rules than to prayer.[34] If one refers to the interpretation of Ramadan, this is due to ignorance of Islamic regulations. At the same time, the influence of tradition, especially family and cultural habits, can be seen here.

4. Religious practice of Slovenian Roman Catholics

The religious practices of Roman Catholics differ from that of Islam. The focus of Christian religious practice is on regular daily prayer and participation in Holy Mass on Sundays and feast days.[35] Roman Catholics' religious practice also includes strict fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Everything else is more or less not prescribed and is, therefore, a matter of personal choice.[36] The more consistent Roman Catholics also fast on Fridays and attach great importance to visible signs of faith (pictures, wearing a cross, a rosary or a fish sign in the car), pilgrimages and reading the Word of God or other religious literature.

Surveys show that in 2017, 24% of Catholics stated that they attend religious services. Exactly 30% said they participate in religious services on important feast days, and slightly more said they attend less than once a year or never (SPO 17/1).[37]

[33] Cf. Cornelija SORABJI, *Muslim Identity and Islamic Faith in Socialist Sarajevo*, Doktorska disertacija. Cambridge, 1989; Tone BRINGA, *Biti musliman na bosanski način* [Being Muslim the Bosnian way], Sarajevo, Dani, 1997.

[34] Tariq RAMADAN, Europeanization of Islam or Islamization of Europe? Islam, Europe's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural, and Political Landscape, in: Shireem T. HUNTER (ed.), *Islam, Europea's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural, and Political Landscape*, London, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, 2002, 207-218, 212.

[35] Cf. Ivan PLATOVNJAK, Rest in God – The Spirituality of Rest, *Edinost in dialog* 77 (2022) 1, 259-277, 271-273.

[36] Cf. Andrej ŠEGULA, Upanje in zaupanje v kontekstu pastoralne teologije v času globalnega nezaupanja [Hope and trust in the context of pastoral theology in a time of global mistrust], *Bogoslovni vestnik*, 81 (2021) 4, 917-924.

[37] Cf. Slovene Public Opinion, https://nesstar2.adp.fdv.uni-lj.si/webview/?language=sl (28.02. 2024).

Regarding prayer, 14% do so daily and 11% weekly (SPO 19/1).[38] More than half never visit places of pilgrimage, while 18% go once or twice a year. Interestingly, almost half of the respondents have a religious object at home (SPO 19/1).[39]

5. Comparison of belief in religious truths between Slovenian Muslims and Roman Catholics

As formulated by Glock and Stark, the conceptual dimension of religiosity consists of dogmatic truths and belief systems inherent in a particular religion. The ideological dimension is not about how well believers know the dogmatic truths of a religion but how well they accept the role of religion in their psychological and social adjustment. The dimension under consideration indicates to what extent and in what aspects the believer recognises the dogmatic truths. The totality of religious truths is clearly defined in Christianity and Islam. Since Islam drew on the Jewish and Christian traditions in its development, it is not surprising that the two religions have dogmatic similarities, and it is precisely in dogmatic questions that the essential difference between Christianity and Islam lies. "The Catholic Church pointed to the possibility of building interreligious dialogue on the similarities between the Christian and Muslim faiths".[40] Both religions profess belief in one God, the Creator.[41] In contrast to Muslims, Christians believe in the Holy Trinity and the associated religious truth that Jesus is the Son of God. The Quran affirms that God has no children, thus emphasising the existence of only one God (Q 23:91). Jesus is only the messenger of God, but not the most important role. This place has been taken by the messenger Mohammed, to whom God revealed the Qur'an. In addition to the belief in God, we find in both religions the belief in evil, the recognition of holy books and scriptures, the belief in messengers or prophets, angels, heaven, hell, the day of judgement and the belief in divine providence, which refers to God's omniscience as Creator.

The conceptual dimension of religiosity was best tested in the SPO 17/1 survey.[42] The data to be presented here come from that survey, although it should be emphasised that the comparison has not yet been made.

Let us start with the basic question of whether they believe in God: 81% of Roman Catholic and 93% of Muslim respondents answered this question in the

[38] Cf. *Ibid*.
[39] Cf. *Ibid*.
[40] Cf. Mari Jože OSREDKAR, Slovenian friars minor's efforts for dialogue with Muslims, *Nova prisutnost*, 19 (2021) 2, 243-254, 246.
[41] Cf. Ivan PLATOVNJAK, Ahmet TÜRKAN, The Possibility of Building Brotherhood between Christians and Muslims, *Science, Art and Religion*, 1 (2022) 2-4, 159-164, 162.
[42] Cf. *Slovene Public Opionion…*

affirmative, with two things to note. Firstly, that even those who do not believe in God consider themselves Roman Catholic (probably due to receiving the sacrament of Holy Baptism). Secondly, even those who do not believe in God but identify with Islam because of their ethnic identity and family tradition describe themselves as Muslims. Even more interesting is that most Roman Catholics do not believe in a personal God but understand God as a life force. This answer was also the most common among Muslims.

Belief in hell and heaven is much higher among Muslims than among Roman Catholics. Five per cent fewer Muslims believe in heaven, while 41% of Roman Catholics believe in the existence of heaven (Figure 1).

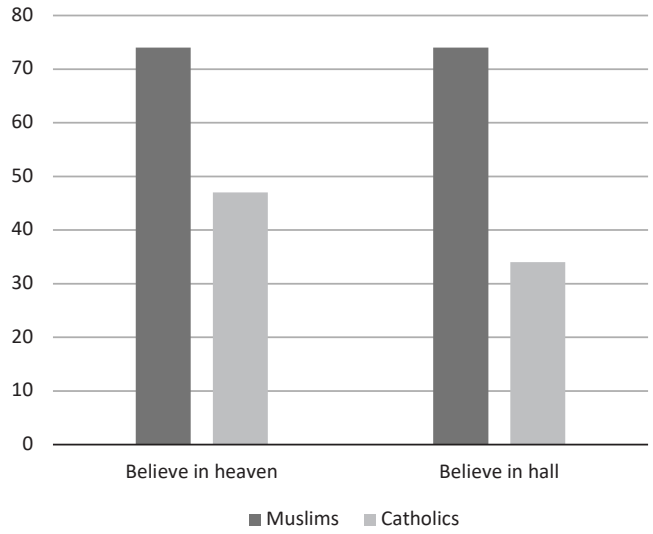

Figure 1: Comparison of belief in heaven and hell between Muslims and Catholics in Slovenia

Linked to the belief in heaven and hell is the belief in life after death. Just over half of Roman Catholics and 76% of Muslims believe in this.

It is also interesting to compare the data on belief in the devil. The latter question was only asked in 1991, and given the trend towards a decline in religious belief, it can be assumed that even fewer respondents believe in the devil today. In 1991, 24% of Roman Catholics and 54% of Muslims admitted to believing in the devil (SPO 19/1).[43]

[43] Cf. *Slovene Public Opionion…*

Conclusion

Finally, we have to answer the question we asked in the introduction to this article. What is in that distinguishes Muslims in Slovenia from other Slovenians? Based on the results shown, we can safely say that Muslims in Slovenia have a significantly stronger religious identity than Roman Catholics, which is reflected above all in their recognition of religious truths. In our opinion, the latter play an essential role in the formation of human identity, as it is built on our beliefs. In a sense, a person is what he thinks he is and what he wants to become.

Research has shown that Muslims in Slovenia profess their faith in Islamic dogma to a much greater extent than Roman Catholics, but their ritual dimension is comparable to that of Roman Catholics. Given that the recognition of religious doctrines is the foundation of any religion, it can be argued that Muslims in Slovenia express a greater adherence to Islam, which is also reflected in their identity, which is in one way or another linked to their beliefs. In contrast, Slovenians, in general, are increasingly moving away from their core Christian identity, which played a key role in the formation of the Slovenian nation in the past. With the help of the Church, the Slovenian nation has been an integral part of Europe for more than 1250 years, and the Church remains today the unshakeable foundation of our spiritual rootedness in the European spiritual and cultural tradition.[44] However, opinion polls show that only one fifth of Slovenes live Catholicism in the way it prescribes – acknowledging dogmatic truths and regularly practising prescribed religious practice. Years ago, Dragoš said that the crisis of the identity pattern of Catholicism is the result of its transformation into a state in which the majority of the population no longer identifies with Catholicism in the sense of a transparent, coherent, and specific form of interrelated ritual practices, values, and dogmatic beliefs.[45]

It would be nonsensical to claim that someone who does not belong to the Roman Catholic Church, or even more strictly, who does not consistently follow religious practice, is not a Slovene. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that Christian identity (both Roman Catholic and Protestant) has played an important role in shaping the culture on which the identity of the Slovenian nation was founded in the first place. In recent decades, Slovenians have moved away from our roots while opening the door to new modern trends and foreign traditions (cf. the celebration of Halloween), which are undoubtedly changing the identity of the Slovenian nation – especially of the younger generation.

What makes Muslims different from Slovenians is their firmness in Muslim identity. Regardless of the extent to which they practise a religious practice,

[44] Cf. Janez GRIL, Naš komentar [Our comment], *Družina*, 49 (2000) 45, 3.
[45] Cf. Srečo DRAGOŠ, Katoliška identiteta Slovencev? [Catholic Identity of Slovenians?], *ANNALES, Ser. hist. sociol*, 13 (2003) 1, 39-54, 46.

they firmly believe in and acknowledge the teachings of Islam. In this way, they also connect more easily with the wider community, and individual identity quickly becomes part of the collective identity that already plays such an important role in Islam (the Islamic Ummah).

Finally, it is worth answering the question of whether the fear of Muslims in Slovenia is justified. In a way, it is. But not because of the possibility that Muslims in Slovenia are terrorists or because they want to Islamise the whole of Slovenia. Such wishes are expressed by a few people who may or may not follow the Salafi school of law. However, the majority of Muslims in Slovenia belong to the Hanifi school of law. Migration takes place for economic reasons and the desire for family reunification. The Islamic community in the Republic of Slovenia sees its task in the religious care of Muslims living in Slovenia, not in the Islamisation of Slovenians. And why should we be afraid of them? Because they have what we ourselves are currently losing. That is a strong religious identity that unites them and gives meaning to their lives. It has been proven that belief in life after death gives people resilience, hope and strength in difficult situations.[46] At the same time, it gives people a stronger sense of why they were born and what their purpose is.[47]

At this point, it should be added that in Slovenia, the fear of all the other spiritual and cultural currents that have been permeating Slovenia with great force for several decades and changing its cultural image is all too often overlooked. This refers to both the spiritual movements and the various marketing movements that, in one way or another, present religion to the Slovenian people. It may well be that in twenty years' time, Slovenians will celebrate Halloween more than the traditional Slovenian carnival, that fewer and fewer people will bless the dishes at Easter and that the nativity play at Christmas will be the exception rather than part of the custom.

[46] Arnaud WISMAN et al., Hopelessly mortal: The role of mortality salience, immortality and trait self-esteem in personal hope, *Cogniton and Emotion*, 30 (2015) 5, 1-22, 3.

[47] Cf. Ivan PLATOVNJAK, Tone SVETELJ, Technology as the Elixir of Immortality – Resurgent Philosophical and Spiritual Enigma of Human Imprisonment, *Bogoslovni vestnik*, 83 (2023) 4, 973-984, 978-983.

Urška Jeglič*

Analiza vjere u vjerske istine između muslimana i rimokatolika u Sloveniji i pitanje identiteta

Sažetak

U ovom radu napravljena je jedinstvena usporedba između prihvaćanja religijskih istina i obdržavanja religijskih praksi kod muslimana i rimokatolika u Sloveniji. Na temelju dobivenih rezultata autor čini poveznicu s pitanjem identiteta predstavnika ovih religija i na taj način pokušava objasniti je li pojava islamofobije u Sloveniji opravdana ili nije.

Ključne riječi: identitet, islamofobija, muslimani u Sloveniji, religijska uvjerenja, religijske prakse, rimokatolici u Sloveniji.

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