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### IMPORTANCE OF EXPERIENCING FEASTS FOR INWARD CONSOLIDATION AND OUTWARD INTEGRATION OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN GERMANY

A significant religionist of Rumanian origin Mircea Eliade deals with a dilemma of time concerning its basic essential dichotomy in a slim book called *«The sacred and the profane»*. Eliade introduces his section on sacred time by claiming that for religious man there were two types of time, sacred and profane, the former experienced in religious festivals, the latter in ordinary daily life. Religious festivals reactualised sacred events from the mythical origins, so participating in them meant stepping out of ordinary time and into sacred time, the time of origins. Religious festivals occurred periodically, so sacred time was also circular. By contrast, modern, non-religious man does not experience sacred time. He has his periodic celebrations, but they are not experienced as sacred, as involving contact with the divine [Cp. Eliade, 1968, p. 68-115].

On the example of Turkish Muslims who live in present Germany it is possible to show the meaning of religion with regard to infiltration to the majority of the Muslim community. The modern European liberal community of the western type of which final countenance is also influenced by the historical Christian traditions, this could also be characterised by the inconsistent comprehension of the time where next to the everyday profane duties the citizen has a private space for living his religious life. The way he would fill this space is his matter of choice - for example, to accept a certain sacral time for public divine service. This dichotomy of sacral and profane living space with its time characteristics has been developing together with the specification of the significance and contents of the concepts like: society, nation, authority or the citizen's position.<sup>1</sup>

From this point of view the Turkish Muslims in present German community have a harder position. In the first place the character of Islam shows the traditional way of seeing life as a whole experiencing temporality. The key to understanding is the word «Islam» alone – «self devotion» where the individual activity is not abolished but on the contrary uplifts

the behaviour of men in his and God's interest. A Muslim is in this sense continually submitted to Allah and his prophet. The relationship to God can also be characterised by the concept of *imám* - «faith». A Muslim acknowledges the commitment to submit to Allah and the *mu'min* (believer) in full trust and has no doubts about His commandments. Theoretically these concepts are quite interchangeable. However the concept of the word Muslim makes the concept of the word Islam distant from the word *imám*. Here it is not so important whether somebody yields to Allah according to his own inner keenness, but whether he represents the Muslim community outwardly. This doesn't necessarily mean that it's done on the basis of faith. On the contrary *imán* and *imín* can not be separated from the inner conviction and be understood as pretending of faith. The unity of Islam and faith than becomes publicly a very hard ideal to achieve. If Islam is understood as a public conscience than not acknowledging it in this form corresponds to getting oneself on the very edge or to exclude oneself from the Muslim community which doesn't holds only for the traditional Muslim countries but also for the situation of Turks in present Germany. Subsequently there is no testifying value to differentiate between religious sincerity or hypocrisy. On the other hand not emphasising the inner conviction is an easier way of spreading Islam among great number of confessors [Cp. Křikavová and team, 2002, 15n].

While giving attention to the significance of feasts and obligatory Islamic divine services for the inner consolidation of the religious community and its outer integration into the major nonmuslim society, it is necessary to uplift one more characteristic. The common experience of the uniqueness of feasts and the regularity of prayers can go along with strengthening the inner bonds with the religious community, personal identification of every single believer, and finally with Islam as such. A part of the long-lasting discussion is also how these processes influence the integration of the Turkish Muslims into the German society. Whether it is possible to understand the importance of religion as a sign of non-crossable otherness or just

<sup>1</sup> This process affected formation nation on the basis of citizenship (France) or principle of ethnic origin (Germany).



as other particular characteristics (besides ethnicity, way of behaviour etc.) of a particular group of people forming the part of modern Germany population.

#### Holidays and Everyday Life

For more detailed processing of feasts and ordinary life in Islam it is necessary to uplift a specific part of the dilemma on which the researcher focused his attention. We are able to describe feasts due to a number of different characteristics. For example regularly repeated public feasts which are marked by common ritual behaviour can be typologically distinguished from private feasts in the family atmosphere, which are held on the occasion of transitional rituals connected with the life of an individual (for example marriage, funeral and so on). To uplift the importance of experiencing feasts for inward consolidation and outward integration of Islamic religious groups in Germany it is important to pursue the first type of feasts. With regard to this distinction it is necessary to pay attention to public Islam prayer (*salat*) as an inseparable part of religious duties of every physically and mentally sound Muslim. The prayer *salat* itself is along with the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) an exceptional example of ritual behaviour in Islam which specifies in details the religious law (*shari'a*).<sup>2</sup> This relates also to the time dimension that concerns us now the most.

#### The Prayer

The prayer *salat* is in Islam considered to be a purely cultic manifestation of piety and is not linked to any effort to coax anything for oneself. Only with the exception of right guidance on God's path as we read it in the first sutra of Koran: «...Keep on the right path» (The Opening: K 1:6). What really matters is the Muslim divine service that can be performed five times a day. The believer can enter the state of communication with God (*halat al-irham*)<sup>3</sup> only when he fulfils a number of criteria concerning his surrounding and himself. The inseparable part of these conditions is also observance of fixed prayer-hours [Cp. Mendel, 2002, p. 72].

In contemporary western-Europe industrial culture the observance of prayer-hours is for many Muslims very hard thing to do. In firms where active believers

of Islam make only a small part of all the employees it is not usually possible with regards to the flow of the process to respect their religious duties. Furthermore the offices, schools or factories have no space available that would be suitable for the imposed ritual ablutions and the following individual prayer service. Islam has to deal very often with clashes between ideal ritual regulations and actual life. In this case it is recommended for a believer to make up for it in the evening after work [Cp. Kreitmeier, 2002, 161n].

A special significance has the noon prayer *salat al-dhum'a*, of which every sound and adult Muslim should take part. In comparison with other prayers which can take place on any ritually clean place the emphasis is on joint congregation of believers in *masjid* (or *djami*). An important part of this prayer is preaching (*chutha*) the juristic, religious and ethical themes. In traditional Muslim countries Friday prayer is still a significant political event which is by the media transmitted from all the important mosques. The institution *masjid* have besides the religious meaning also various social and cultural functions. Often they are at the same time specialised shops, cafés and centres of education [Cp. Faruk Sen – Hayrettin Aydin, 2000, p. 34-41].

In the formal sense similar to the Friday meetings are public joint prayers of a small feast (*al-'id as-saghir*, or *'id-al-fitr*) in the end of the month *ramadan* and a big feast (*al-'id al-kabir*) in the month *dhu-l-hidha*, which solemnly closes the ritual of visiting Mekka (*hajj*). Both prayers in the whole world take place in the morning of the festal day on a free space, which proves the ritual character of the mentioned examples. During the significant Christian feasts (for example Christmas, Easter or Pentecost) should all the employees in Germany regardless of religious or cultural differences have a day off and all the students should have holidays. However the feasts issuing from Islam are from the view of government common working days. These differences cause to many Turkish families problems and in individual countries are solved according to the concrete situation (for example the rate of Muslims in relation to the number of employees in a factory and so on) [Cp. Spuler-Stegemann, 2002, p. 171].

European sociological approach similarly as the modern interpretations of Islam thinkers [Cp. Iqbal, 1999, 62n] emphasise a socially integrating function of Islam prayer which represents an important part of the life cycle and unity of believers (*umma*). The Muslim tradition accentuates rather the purgatory function of each participant realising that the due performance is a very important condition for a positive estate of an obituary existence. Both views show concrete points

<sup>2</sup> «...Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest, and Allah knows what you do» (The Spider: K 29:45).

<sup>3</sup> A notion «ihram» is next to the prayer associated with the pilgrimage *hajj* where this form of sanctification during a certain time expands into a spatial dimension («haram»). It relates to the whole district of pilgrimage towns Mekka and Medina where only Muslims can stay. Due to the ritual a pilgrim can enter a holy time of feasts and likewise due to the goal of his way the bordered sacral space. Surrounded only by the believers he frees himself wholly from everyday life. [Cp. for example Francis E. Peters, 1996, p. 60-70].



of the significance of Islam prayer congregation for an individual and likewise for a religious group. An individual is by his participation on a ritual integrated into a process of inner consolidation of the community. The religious group is then strengthened thanks to realising its unity, which is next to the religious behaviour influenced by various cultural ethical and economical factors<sup>4</sup>. However this process can still inhibit the expected outward integration of Muslims into the major society of present Germany.

This specific situation has its roots in different models of national integration in European countries. In general it could be said that French immigration politics demands from the newcomers their assimilation. Religion is essentially a private matter and the government doesn't acknowledge the plight of minorities. For the British model is typical a partial politic view to the plurality of various ethnical and religious groups. Continually is however expected a certain measure of adoption to the major culture. In comparison Germany exercised an utterly different model. In this case the ethnical, cultural and religious difference was considered to be an essential barrier for the political integration. This proved to be true at the welcomed economical integration of immigrants into society however the situation was considered to be only transient. In general it was assumed that foreign workers would return to their homeland (Turkey and

Yugoslavia). For a long time their political and cultural integration was being refused [Cp. Barša, 1999, p. 10-13; Rex, 1996, p. 51]. Nobody expected that the workers after economic conjuncture would stay in their «new homeland» and that even the members of their families would join them. All along the government made effort to maintain their culture «in order to ease the immigrants' return and to protect German cultural homogeneity» [Martiniello, 1997, p. 56].

The dilemma of Turkish immigrants who were coming to Germany because of economical reasons throughout the decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a part of long-lasting discussion over the multicultural ideal. This discussion is not confined only to the reality of today's Germany but takes place also in other countries of Western Europe (Netherlands, Belgium or France) where the solutions between autochthonic population and generations of Marco/Algerian immigrants who often consider Islam to be their self-identification are considered [Cp. Baukje Prins, 2004; Fetzer, Soper, 2005]. It is important to keep in mind also the other side of the whole process and that is the major Non-Muslim society. All the general conclusions issuing from the research of up to now experience in integration can help to affect the future development. However in the end they are restricted by many aspects, which issue from the context of individual examples.

<sup>4</sup> Religious behaviour is here only one of many causes. However due to different religious and cultural profile of the European countries (Christianity and Hebraism) and groups of immigrants it gains a meaning.



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### **ЗНАЧЕНИЕ РОЛИ ПРАЗДНЕНСТВ ДЛЯ ВНУТРЕННЕЙ КОНСОЛИДАЦИИ И ВНЕШНЕЙ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ ИСЛАМСКИХ РЕЛИГИОЗНЫХ ГРУПП В ГЕРМАНИИ**

#### **РЕЗЮМЕ**

В статье рассматриваются вопросы внутренней консолидации и внешней интеграции исламских религиозных групп в Германии на основе опыта проведения различных празднеств.