

Geographical and historical aspects of the situation of Muslim population in the Balkans

BOTTLIK, ZSOLT¹

Abstract

Muslim groups in the Balkans speak various languages and live in several countries. These countries followed different paths of development in the 20th century so the followers of Islam were repeatedly involved in social conflicts because of their different culture. Due to Albania's isolation for decades rooted in socialism, the dissolution of Yugoslavia through bloody conflicts in the 1990s, the EU membership of Greece reaching back some decades, the new EU membership of Romania and Bulgaria and the unique geopolitical and social circumstances in Turkey the countries inhabited by the majority of Muslims will probably take different paths in economic and social development. The generally marginalised social and economic status of Muslims in the countries examined and their frequently deviating demographic behaviour compared to neighbouring ethnic groups are expected to widen the gap between them and majority societies. Due to their delayed political integration and increasing difficulties in social integration they will probably remain destabilising factors.

Keywords: Balkan, Islamisation, religious and lingual patterns, area of Muslim settlement

Introduction

Following Cold War a tangible conflict of interests has prevailed in the globalised world between the North Atlantic cultural and economic centre and the Islam world. A further aggravation of this conflict was brought about by the sequence of events after the turn of the Millennium that focused public attention on the Muslim population of almost 16 million living in Europe (*Fig. 1*).

Mention must be made of immigrant workers from Turkey who settled in Germany from the 1960s onward, as well as of a large number of Muslims from the former colonial territories (e.g. Maghreb countries, Pakistan) who arrived in France and Great Britain mostly as economic refugees. The integration of the second and third generations of these immigrants into society today is still problem-laden.

¹Senior university lecturer, ELTE Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, 1117 Budapest Pázmány Péter sétány 1/c. E-mail: agria@gmx.net

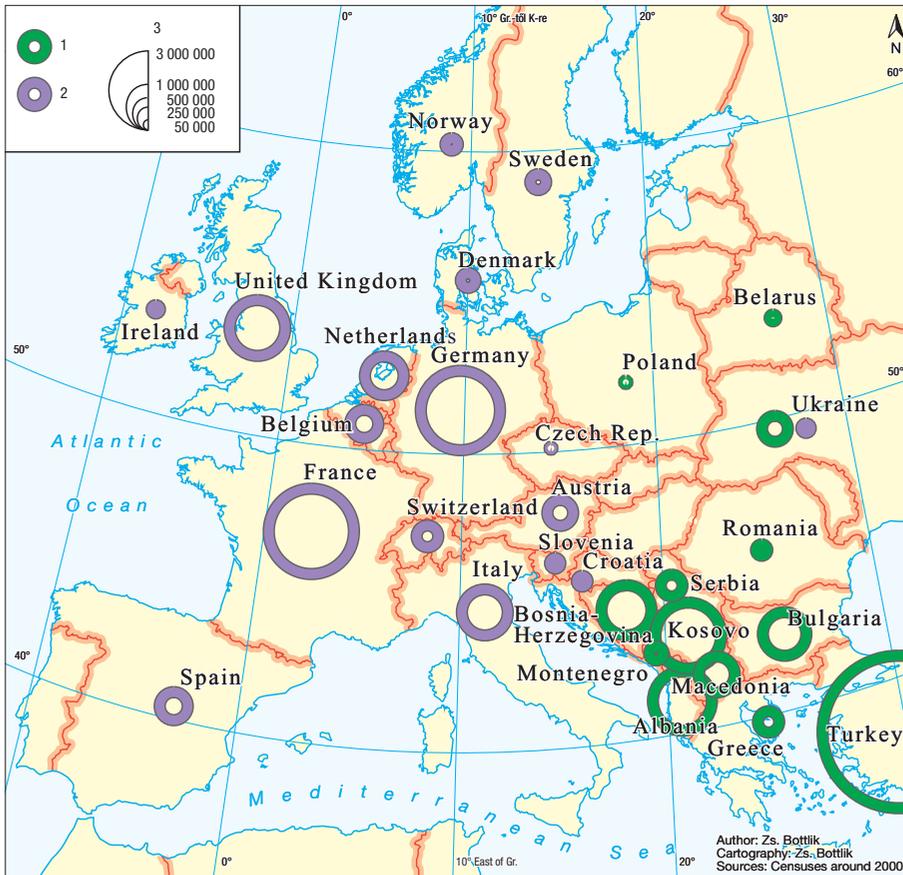


Figure 1. Number of Muslim population in European countries at the turn of the 3rd millennium. – 1 = autochthonous Muslim population; 2 = allochthonous Muslim population; 3 = number of Muslims. Source: Censuses, FISCHER Weltatmanach

The emergence and settling of the mostly Sunni Islam Muslim population (by now regarded as autochthonous) in Eastern Europe (Crimean Tatars) and in the Balkan countries goes back to earlier times in history. The settlements of the Muslims in the Balkans whose presence is considered the most significant due to their higher proportion in overall population form blocks in some places only and no town can be considered as a central settlement (HEUBERGER, V. 1999). Their presence, the spread and consolidation of Islam culture is related to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire onto the Balkans in the 15th century.

The study contains an analysis of the socio-economic differences between the above mentioned Muslim groups and the majority societies, includ-

ing their characteristics and geographical aspects. The comparison will include the different political environment of the Muslims in the Balkan countries, language differences and geographic aspects of their living environment (urban-rural areas) and the factors that influenced the changes in the location of their area of settlement.

The emergence of Muslims in Europe

The emergence of Islam culture in Europe on the Mediterranean periphery of the territory considered the centre of European culture was the result of expansion of countries with Muslim leadership. As early as in the 8th century the first large Islam population settled in Europe after the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula by the Arabs. There was probably significant Muslim population in the area of today's Spain and Portugal, although the region was situated on the westernmost periphery of the Muslim Caliphate of the Umayyad dynasty with the capital in Damascus. As a result of the Spanish Reconquista the Muslim Moors were driven out of the area by the end of the 15th century and today only the structure of settlements and some significant buildings (e.g. in Cordoba, Sevilla, Granada) remind of Islam presence centuries ago.

In addition to the smaller merchant colonies that arrived from Asia to the Eastern European peripheries the most significant Muslim group reached Europe in the 13th century with the Mongol invasion. This group was mainly comprised of political leaders and soldiers at various levels of the military hierarchy. The descendant of these Muslims can still be traced in Poland and Lithuania. There is a Muslim population of some thousands in these countries who have already been assimilated in terms of language.

Contrary to the above mentioned groups Muslim culture and religion became widespread and consolidated much more dynamically in local societies in the Balkan region in the 14th century. As a result it still has perceptible effect on the social and economic life of present-day countries. After the fall of the Roman Empire the various groups of the Romanised indigenous population of the region (Thracians, Macedonians, and Illyrians) were either assimilated by the Slav tribes invading the area in the 5th century or forced to the peripheries. Later in the mid-7th century the Ancient Bulgarians of Asian Turk origin (who later adopted Slavic language) came with well-organised military and settled in the north-eastern part of the Balkans. They gained power by the gradual weakening and withdrawing from the area of the Byzantine Empire and made efforts to unite ever larger areas under their rule. The Bulgarian Tsardom and the medieval Slavic state fell into smaller principalities due to internal problems and thus were unable to resist the attacks of the Ottoman Empire just taking shape with an expansive policy at the time for the Balkans (*Fig. 2*).

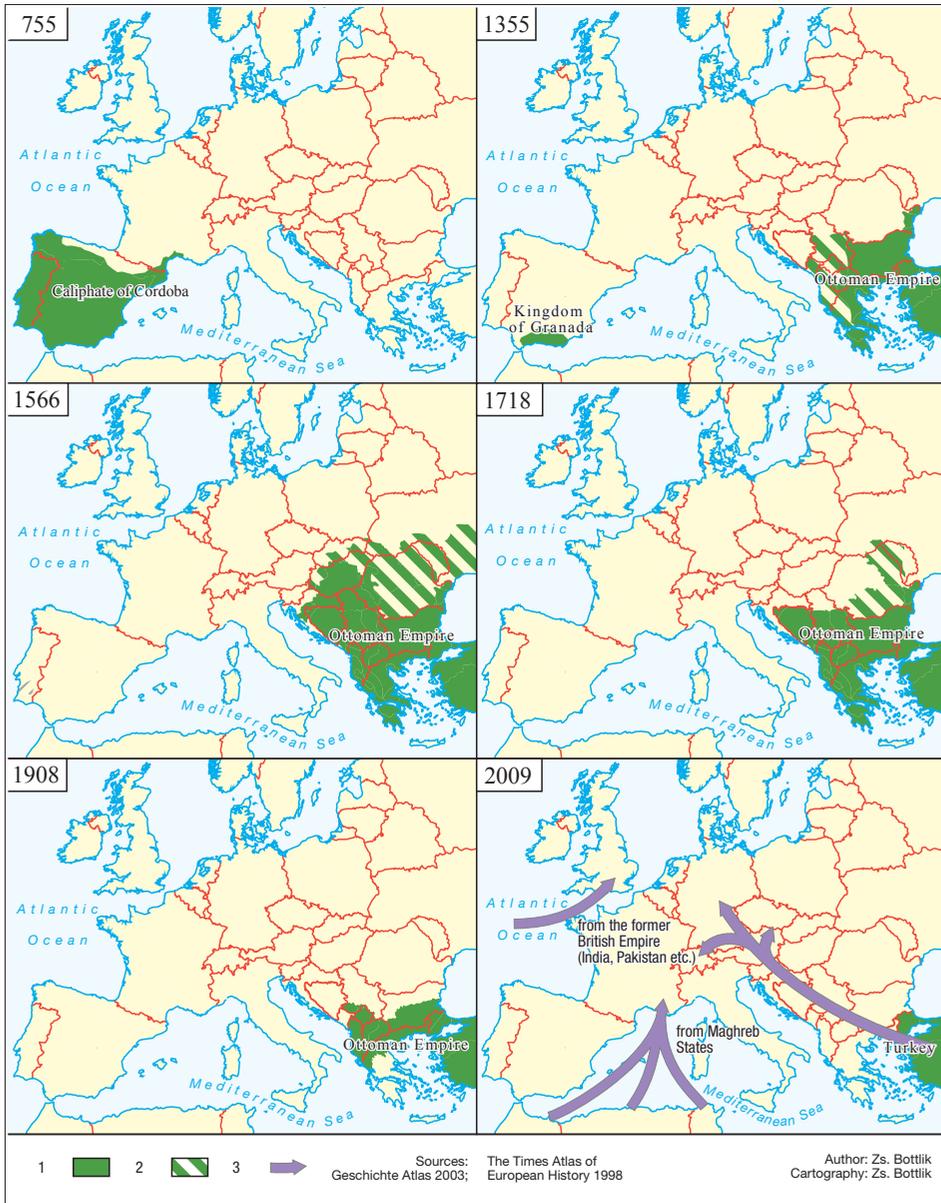


Figure 2. Changes in areas under Islamic rule and influence in Europe and the main routes of recent migration. – 1 = territories under Muslim authority; 2 = territories under Muslim influence; 3 = the migration directions of Muslim population after 1945.
Source: The Atlas of European History 1998, Geschichte Atlas WESTERMANN 2003

The history of the Ottoman Empire goes back to the time in Asia Minor when the former Seljuk Empire disintegrated into small principalities. In line with its intensive expansion policy – and with power vacuum created in the geographically and politically torn Balkans – the interest of the Ottoman Empire focused on the region. Due to the inadequate military power of Christian rulers and the lack of a uniform defence strategy the Ottomans managed to integrate the entire Balkan Peninsula into their empire within a century.

Islam played a crucial role in this process both from political and socio-political aspects. With the seizure of Constantinople in 1453 and making it the capital city of the Ottoman Empire as Istanbul, Islam had become consolidated all over the Balkan region.

The central Turkish leaders had no concern for the interference with everyday life or religious practices of the conquered Christian population; they only expected local religious dignities to recognise the Sultan's authority. However, it was in the Empire's interest to support and strengthen the groups loyal to the central power. This support was mainly manifested in the extension of privileges for Muslim population. As a result there was an obvious difference in the standard of living between Muslim and non-Muslim population that was also apparent in the extent of their economic activity and in their use of space.

The situation of Muslims under Ottoman rule

The increase of the number of Muslim believers and the expansion of their settlement area – although with declining intensity and ensuing territorial consequences – in some places lasted from the 15th century to early 19th century. The process was facilitated by two factors, immigration policy and the actual islamisation of the Christian population. The settlement of Muslim population was focused on strategic points and fortresses, towns situated by main trade and military roads. Large urban, peasant and nomadic population was resettled from Anatolia, the core territory of the Empire and they assimilated the population of Macedonia, Thrace located closer to the centre of the Ottoman Empire and also the population of neighbouring Greek and Bulgarian regions in terms of language and culture. This process probably generated significant conversion in the Rodope Mountain but without language assimilation in the mountainous areas (ERMANN, U.–ILIEVA, M. 2007). Direct islamisation was focused on Bosnia and the Albanian plain of the river Shkumbini (DŽAJA, S.M. 1993).

In the areas inhabited by Albanians the primary motivation of population to convert to Islam was of economic nature as more favourable taxation rules applied to Muslims (BARTL, P. 1968). Another attractive factor for the large number of people who converted was the better organised social, economic

and political structures of the Ottoman Empire (compared to local structures) transmitted by Islam characteristics in the first phase of conquests. For obvious reasons, these positive factors were generally neglected in textbooks of history. Forced islamisation was manifested in the introduction of child tax (*devşirme*) applied only to non-Muslims population exerting indirect pressure (MINKOV, A. 2004).

The dividing line between voluntary and forced conversion to Islam was not sharp. In the area where the largest number of people converted (mainly in Bosnian regions) the border zone of the contesting Orthodox and Catholic churches should also be taken into consideration. People who lived in this religious contact area often changed (were forced to change) their religion, consequently they lacked a strong attachment to either denomination. In addition, the weak presence of the Catholic Church and its suppression by the Turkish administration mainly in areas inhabited by Albanians also has to be mentioned here. Under these circumstances it is no wonder that dervish orders (especially the Bektashi order) play an important part in the religious culture of south-east European Muslims (and in the spread of Islam) and that various forms of Islam-Christian syncretism are present.

To sum up: it can be assumed that the islamisation process in the Albanian territories was slow at the beginning and only accelerated in the 17th century when people converted to Islam for economic reasons (BAKHAKU, F. 1994). As a result, their settlement area rapidly expanded. In Bosnia, however, mass conversion from the very beginning was supported by a religious factor: the Bosnian heretic Bogomils were in conflict with the Catholic Church that wanted to reconvert them to Catholic faith (BARTL, P. 1968). As for the geographic aspects, the number of Muslim population increased most significantly in plains, river valleys and basins of the west Balkan region with land suitable for agricultural purposes where most strategic trade and military roads also ran.

Another geographic aspect of the expansion of the Muslim settlement area is that Muslims inhabited towns and the surrounding areas in a higher proportion than the Christians did. Muslim urban culture was characterised by religious schools funded by foundations, handicrafts industry (trade guilds) and by the most important Ottoman field of art: architecture (IBRAHIMI, N. 2009).

In addition, there were obvious differences in legal and consequent social status. Muslims were granted opportunities to rise socially by their special legal status in the state, by employment possibilities in the army and various state institutions. The Turkish administration considered religious differences the major division in the relationship of countries within the Empire. Ethnic differences manifest in the variety of languages were considered a secondary factor only (TIBI, B. 2002).

The Muslims in the Ottoman Empire formed a uniform group not only through their identical legal status but because of their shared material and spiritual culture of strictly Muslim nature (from the observance of religious practices to everyday culture including gastronomy) so their community was more than a formal religious group.

The situation of Muslims between 1878 and 1913

The Balkans had undergone dramatic political changes from the end of the 19th century. The aspirations of the various small states aimed at the division of the Ottoman Empire usually thwarted each other. The often unfounded territorial claims were generated by the ambitions of the smaller Balkan peoples to expand. They made strenuous efforts to expand the territories of their countries just taking shape often totally ignoring the characteristics of the ethnic and religious environment within the target regions. Actually, they did not have information of this kind.

The Balkans not only do have one of the most colourful ethnic spatial structure in Europe but are located by the intersection of three continents, various religions and cultures, social, economic and political structures. This is evidenced by contemporary ethnographic-ethnic maps of the region.

The most precise map that revealed political aspirations and can be taken as a starting point for the analysis of the highly complex ethnic and religious situation in the Balkans is the one produced by the consul of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at Edirne in 1877 (Sax, K. 1877). Due to the already mentioned expansion attempts the maps of ethnic distribution in the Balkans drawn in the last third of the 19th century usually revealed the author's ethnic affiliation or lack of expertise or the customer's political aspiration. In its surface description the map failed to represent the anomalies resulting from population density so the data provided could only be used indirectly. However, it represents religious distribution of various ethnic groups speaking roughly the same language.

Based on the map by Karl Sax the spatial structure of Muslim groups did not change significantly until the conclusion of the peace treaties at the end of the Balkan wars and World War I. (Fig. 3). On the other hand, there were dramatic changes in the number of Muslim population and their proportion to overall population. The decline in population was the result of voluntary and forced emigration and population exchange. The sphere of influence of the Ottoman Empire shrank and as a result Muslim population dwindled.

In the first half of the period the decline in Muslim population and in the proportion to total population as well as the shrinkage of Muslim settlement area can mainly be explained by the following factors: soldiers and of-

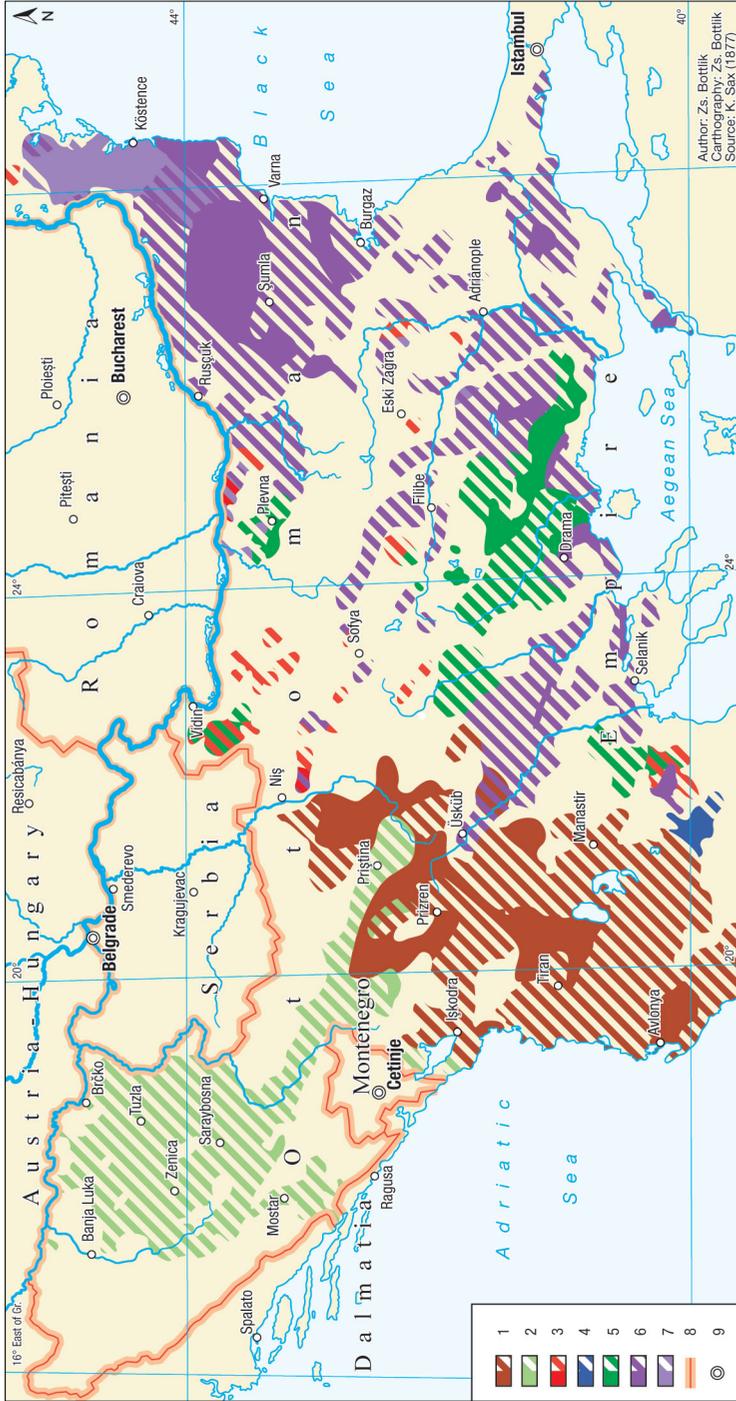


Figure 3. The ethnic (lingual) pattern of Muslim population in the Balkans in the 1870s. – 1 = Albanians; 2 = Bosniaks; 3 = Circassians; 4 = Greeks; 5 = Pomaks (Bulgarian); 6 = Turks; 7 = Tatars; 8 = Muslims; 9 = state border. (Shades of colours designate more or less continuous settlement areas, hachures denote Muslim majority.) Source: SAX, K. (1877)

ficials no longer holding positions emigrated; there was significant migration as Muslim population came under (often violent) pressure due to the changed political environment. As a result, the Muslim (mainly Turkish) population of large towns almost completely disappeared by the turn of the century (EMINOV, A. 1999). In addition, large Muslim groups left the region surrounding Niš in the south of Serbia. These Muslims had been settled there in the beginning of the 19th century to increase the proportion of Muslim population in Serbia, the country then just taking shape. At the same time, Muslims living in the rural regions of Bosnia and Bulgaria were considered as mere subjects inhabiting areas that great powers cherished territorial aspiration for. They were forced to the periphery of society and emigrated later, during the 20th century.

Muslims in the Balkans in the 20th century

With the withdrawal of the Turkish Empire from the Balkans as an outcome of the Balkan wars (1912–1913) the situation of Muslim believers changed fundamentally. Not only did they find themselves on the periphery of power but they were regarded as the unwanted heritage of the Turkish Empire in the successor states. Consequently, not only their Islam culture but the roots of their life and traditions were menaced (JOFFÉ, G. 1996).

It is clear from previous paragraphs that Muslim identity in the Balkans was based on a common culture and not on a common language. On the other hand, the official national cultural ideology of the new countries promoted a common language as the primary identity factor. Muslims in the Balkan can be divided into the following groups in terms of languages: Turkish, Albanian and Slavic (*Table 1; Fig. 4*). This distribution will serve as a basis for the analysis of their religious geography in the 20th century.

Albanian speaking Muslims

Members of the Albanian ethnic group are considered by experts the descendants of an indigenous group in the Balkan Peninsula called the Illyrians. With the invasion of the Slavs in the 5th century they were forced to move to the mountains in the north of today's Albania. Later they managed to expand their settlement area mainly to the south until the advance of the Ottoman Empire in the 14th century.

After the Albanians were defeated by the Ottoman Turks the areas by the border of western and eastern Christianity – inhabited by Catholic and Orthodox Christian Albanian population respectively – had been successfully integrated into the Ottoman Empire. These areas, however, did not make

Table 1. Distribution of Muslim population in the Balkans by country and language

Country, region	Albanian speakers		Turkish speakers		Slavic speakers			Multilingual
	Albanians	Turks	Tatars	Bosniaks	Pomaks speaking Bulgarian	Torbeš speaking Macedonian	Gypsies*** (Roma)	
Albania	2,287,000	..	..	..	..	..	..
Bulgaria	..	850,000	..	..	250,000	..	60,000
Bosnia-Herzegovina	..	..	..	1,836,700	..	..	..
Dobruđa (in Romania)	..	27,580	23,409	..	..	..	..
Greece	..	56,000	..	..	38,000	..	18,000
Croatia	..	..	..	..	50,000	..	..
Kosovo	1,932,000	..	..	16,500*	..	..	10,000
East Thrace (in Turkey)*	..	1,819,633	..	..	..	..	..
Macedonia	509,000	78,000	..	..	..	70,000	15,000
Montenegro	31,000	..	..	75,000	..	..	..
Serbia	55,000	..	..	165,000	..	..	..
Total	4,814,000	2,811,633	..	1,531,500	296,000	70,000	103,000	

* excluding Istanbul; ** This is a Musliman group (Gorans) speaking a south Slavic dialect who have managed to preserve their language and unique identity in an Albanian environment; *** estimate

Source: Kocsis, K. (ed) 2007; Преброяване на населението, жилищия фонд и земеделските стопанства през 2001 – ОБЛАСТИ том 4, книга 1–28. Национален Статистически Институт – СОФУИЯ; Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2003 POPULATION – National or Ethnic Affiliation (Data by Settlement and Municipalities); Dokos, P.T.–ANTONIU, A.D. (2002); Demographic Changes of the Kosovo Population 1948–2006. – Statistical Office of Kosovo (SOK) 2006; Census of Population Households and Dwellings in The Republic of Macedonia, 2004 Final Data Book X; Census of Population (National and Ethnic Affiliation – Data by localities) Statistical Office of Republic of Serbia 2002; SALLANAZ, J. 2007

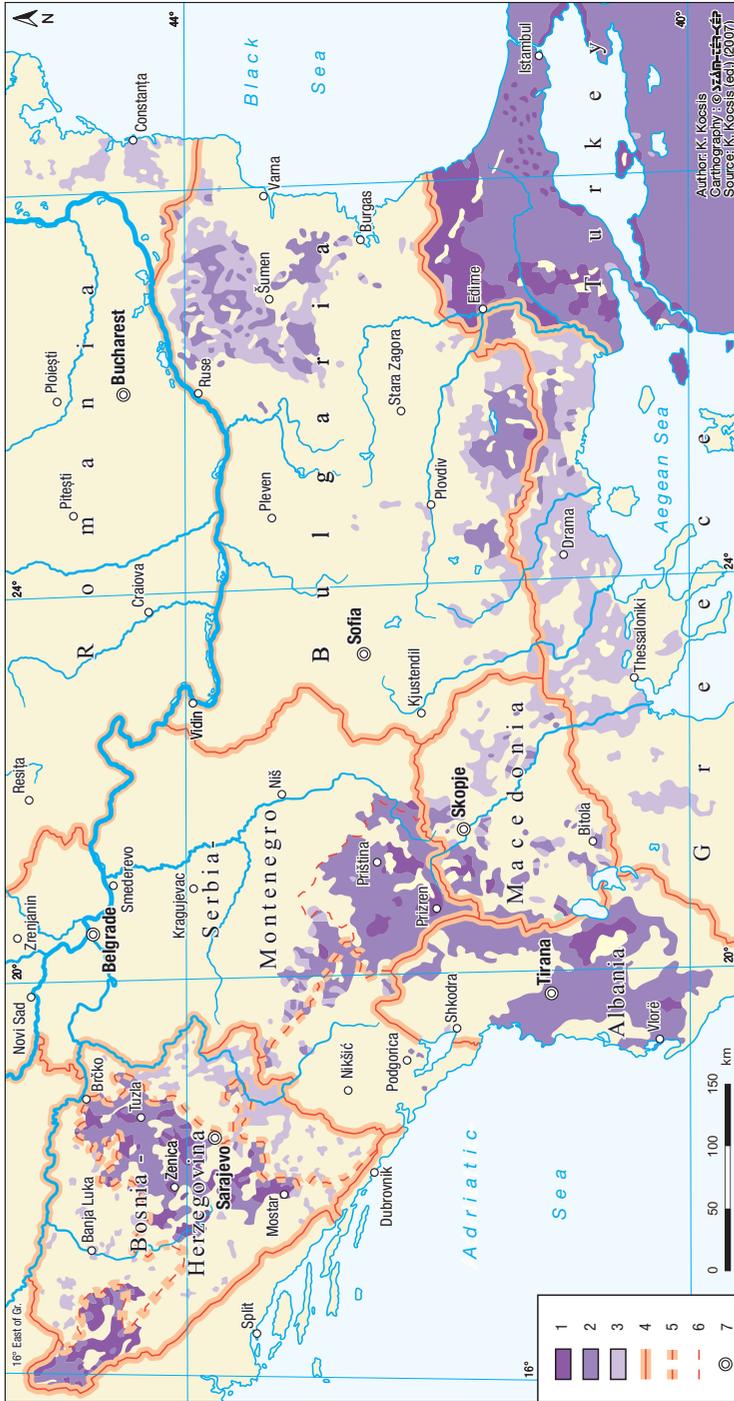


Figure 4. The change in areas inhabited by Muslim majority population between 1910 and 2001. – 1 = territorial expansion of Muslim majority; 2 = territories inhabited by Muslim majority at both dates; 3 = shrinkage of the territories inhabited by Muslim majority; 4 = state borders in 2001; 5 = boundaries of member republics in 2001; 6 = boundaries of Kosovo in 2001; 7 = capitals. Source: Kocsis, K. 2007

up separate administrative units. Due to the new political environment and the operation of the moderately aggressive dervish order (*Bektashi*) masses of people converted to Muslim faith in the strategically important places, at geographically lower areas, mainly in the plain of River Shkumbini. The areas of Kosovo and in the upper reaches of Vardar River were populated later in the 17th century by Albanians (who became majority population) due to their higher mobility and loyalty to the Ottoman state organisation. The Slav population fled creating a demographic vacuum (BARTL, P. 1996).

The intention of establishing an independent nation state became articulated by the national movement of Albanians rather late and the conditions were created after the second Balkan War in 1913. Nevertheless, significant regions of the ethnic Albanian area did not and still do not form parts of Albania. Muslims inhabit the geographically lower areas in the middle of the country while the great majority of Muslim Albanians outside Albania became residents of a south Slav country formed after World War I later called Yugoslavia. The most significant Albanian communities within Yugoslavia lived in Kosovo and Macedonia and also formed a sizeable minority in Serbia and Montenegro.

Due to the above described distribution of Albanian speaking Muslims their situation, political orientation and attitudes reveal differences that are also in line with their historical traditions. Albania established after the Balkan wars was one of the most underdeveloped area of the former Ottoman Empire. During the two world wars the Albanian government focused on the improvement of internal cohesion and overcoming economic backwardness (LIENAU, C.-SCHUKALLA, K.J. 1986).

At the same time Albanian Muslims stuck outside Albania and mostly living in royal Yugoslavia suffered from open and brutal Serbian oppression. The Albanians were not involved in the repartition of land and were not allowed to take positions in state apparatus. Administrative borders (despite various modifications) failed to connect Albanian territories.

In addition to open oppression "Serbianisation" took the form of changing the ethnic proportion in areas of contiguous Albanian settlement, mainly in Kosovo. As a result of these efforts ten thousands of Serbian families were settled in the area in several waves (1922–1929 and 1933–1938). At the same time Albanians started to emigrate. Moreover, the Yugoslav government held negotiations with the Turkish government about the relocation of Muslim population to Turkey (it concerned other ethnic groups but Albanians). Although the treaty had been signed in 1938 it was not realised due to lack of funds and World War II.

The federal restructuring of Tito's Yugoslavia after World War II. proved favourable for Albanian Muslims in the country although at the beginning – mainly instructed by the Tirana government – Albanians were highly

disloyal to Yugoslav government considered a renegade in the Socialist bloc. As Albanians were provided education in their mother tongue and had the right to publish their papers, the Albanian language was practically equal in rank with the official "Serbo-Croatian language" (REUTER, J. 1987). On the other hand, ethnic proportions were not represented in local governments and institutions. Despite the fact that Albanians had the widest scope of action in the second half of the 1970s in the politically more and more self-confident Kosovo, the Yugoslav regime was unable to convincingly integrate Albanian settlement areas into the country (REUTER, J. 1987). Albanians were free to practice their Muslim religion, the primary manifestation of their identity evidenced by mosques we can see today or national costumes closely related to Muslim religion and worn until now.

At the same time, in Albania (officially declared an atheist country in 1967) Enver Hoxha had been fighting against the religiousness of the society for decades. Mosques, churches and monasteries were confiscated and converted into department stores, cinemas or other cultural institutes or simply razed to the ground. Although churches have operated freely since 1989 (fall of Communism) two thirds of the Albanian population declare themselves as atheists and there are only few visible signs of religion.

Deeply rooted conflicts in society escalated at the beginning of the 1990s in Yugoslavia. Member states eager to develop their external relationship from the 1970s took advantage of the favourable foreign political situation and one by one declared secession from Belgrade. This process fundamentally changed the situation of Muslims in the country.

Moderate political forces managed to significantly mitigate the conflicts generated by the secession of Macedonia from Yugoslavia. Moreover, Albanians (the majority of them Muslim believers) whose primary goals were to enjoy equal rights with the Macedonians and to be provided education in their mother tongue at all levels were more or less successfully integrated into the new political environment just taking shape in Macedonia (REUTER, J. 1987).

Attempts to improve the general conditions of Albanians and the issue of the Albanian university in Tetovo proved to be constant sources of tension that last culminated in an armed conflict in summer 2000. The most significant Albanian party is a member of the coalition government (SPASOVSKA, V. 1999).

Although the majority of Albanians living in Montenegro are Muslim believers the Catholics represent a sizeable proportion, too. Unlike Catholics in Kosovo and Macedonia they were involved in the last census held in Yugoslavia in 1991 so we have accurate data about the number of Albanian Catholic believers and its change in time. Their number only slightly increased after World War II because natural demographic indicators resulted in a low-

er growth rate not only compared to Catholics in Kosovo and Macedonia but compared to other ethnic groups in the country, even to Montenegrins (SCHMIDT-NEKE, M. 2002).

The strongest Albanian Muslim community in Kosovo was most severely affected by the events of the civil war. The escalation of the crisis in 1999 culminated in military intervention of NATO. Kosovo still belongs to Serbia de jure but it is already on the path to independence having become an international protectorate and proclaimed its independence on February 17, 2008. Independent Kosovo was the first country with Muslim majority to have shown sympathy for the United States and in exchange enjoyed encouragement and support of the latter to the struggle of Kosovar Albanians for independence.

The change in the ethnic spatial structure of Albanian Muslim population in the 20th century was primarily manifest in the expansion of their settlement area. This expansion can mainly be explained by their outstandingly high natural increase rate compared to other ethnic groups and also by their assimilation effects on other Muslim groups (not Albanian speakers) in the region. Another factor is the gradual emigration from the region and demographic decrease (especially in the past few decades) of the non-Muslim population (BATAKOVIC, D.T. 2007).

Turkish speaking Muslims

Turks. Although the various groups making up Muslim population speaking Turkish are of varied origin they gradually formed a compact ethnic-religious community after the formation of old-new Balkan states (Turkey, Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria) (STOJANOV, V. 2001). Specialised literature in the 19th century used "Turkish" not only in ethnic sense but as a synonym for the concept of Muslim that included other ethnic groups (LOPASIC, A. 2002).

The number of Turkish speaking Muslims and their connected settlement area gradually declined after the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from Europe. Emigration played the most significant role in this process (PRÉVÉLAKIS, G. 1994). With the first wave of emigration a group of Turkish speaking Muslims left Dobrudja in the 1880s fleeing from Russian expansion. A significant number of people emigrated to Turkey after the Balkan War of 1912–1913 leaving mainly Serbia and Bulgaria behind. After World War I they had to leave the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as the obligation to protect minorities laid down in the peace treaty applicable for the new country did not apply to Turks.

Population exchange as per the Treaty of Lausanne ending the Greek–Turkish feud in 1923 almost completely eliminated the Muslim settlement area

from Macedonia and Thrace acquired by Greece in the Balkan wars. Only a small Turkish and Bulgarian speaking Muslim community (the Pomaks) remained in North-Thrace (Greece). In return the Greek patriarchy had remained in Istanbul.

After World War II the followers of Islam with stronger devotion to their religion – compared to their Orthodox and Catholic counterparts – were treated as enemies by the political regimes of the region (KULLASHI, M. 1994). As a result, a large number of native Turkish speaking residents left Tito's Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1950s under the framework of a Yugoslav-Turkish interstate agreement. Later the Yugoslav government pursued a more open policy restoring its relations with other Islam countries. The community with the most numerous Turkish speaking Muslims still lives in Bulgaria, even though the Muslim population was under constant pressure by the Socialist regime (there were several waves of emigration to Turkey under the framework of similar interstate agreements (1950–1951; 1968–1978; STOJANOV, V. 1997). Contrary to ethnic Bulgarians their number is constantly on the rise due to their traditionally high rate of natural increase. This tendency was severely curbed by a new emigration wave at the end of the 1980s (1988–1989).

In addition to emigration – although to a much lesser extent – assimilation had also cut their number, primarily in towns and their immediate surroundings inhabited by compact Albanian speaking Muslim communities (mainly in Kosovo and Macedonia). In many cases they simply listed themselves in the Albanian or Muslim categories in censuses. Besides the large community in Bulgaria we can find some smaller scattered groups mainly in Macedonia and some in West Thrace, Dobrudja (Romania) and in Kosovo.

Tatars. In addition to the Turks the Tatars also have to be mentioned as another Turkish speaking Muslim group with former strong presence in Dobrudja. Sources mention the so called Nogai Tatars in Dobrudja in the 13th century but their mass arrival in the 18th–19th centuries was mainly related to Russian expansion when significant Nogai and Crimean Tatar population fled from south Bessarabia (1770), the Crimean Plain (1783), Budjak (1812), and from the regions of Danube delta (1829) to the contemporary border regions of the Ottoman Empire and became loyal subjects of the Sultan. They performed military and border guard services or raised animals. As a result of the above migration waves an almost fully contiguous Muslim settlement area was formed in Dobrudja with an estimated population over 100 thousand in the 1870s (SALLNAZ J. 2007).

The departure of Ottoman administration in 1878 fundamentally changed the situation of the Tatars. The settlement area in Dobrudja became a buffer zone so masses of people fled to Turkey. Migration was organised and supported by Turkish institutions from 1916. This migration process involved two thirds of Tatars in South Dobrudja whose settlement area later became

a part of Bulgaria. For the Tatars the modernisation process that took place between the two world wars and the measures taken by the governments to foreshadow/facilitate their assimilation to the Turks were attempts to eliminate their identity factors. As a result under the framework of a migration agreement signed by Turkey and Romania (1935) a significant proportion of them decided to emigrate to Turkey.

This emigration wave was halted by World War II. and the establishment of socialism in Romania (and Bulgaria). In Romania collectivisation forced Tatars hitherto mainly living in rural areas to move to urban areas. As a result, their larger communities can be found in coastal towns (Constanța) and their proportion to overall population declined under 20% in agrarian settlements despite their positive rate of natural increase. Masses of Turks emigrated in waves from Bulgaria to Turkey during the decades of socialism (KŐSZEGI, M. 2008) as they were under severe assimilation pressure and on the social peripheries.

Muslims speaking Slavic languages

There are various groups of Muslims speaking Slavic languages. Their largest community with a very strong sense of identity officially recognised as a nationality (ethnicity) is the group of Bosniaks ("Muslimans") speaking a dialect of the South Slavic languages spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mention must also be made of the Pomaks speaking Bulgarian with a less determinant sense of identity and the Torbeš speaking a dialect of the Macedonian language.

Bosniaks use the word "Musliman" for their nationality in their language to differentiate it from Muslim (BÜSCHENFELD, H. 1981). Censuses conducted in Yugoslavia included Muslim/Musliman (Bosniak) categories from 1971 and separated these groups from the Serbs and Croats similar in terms of language but different in terms of religion, who lived mainly in Bosnia and Herzegovina whereas they were less numerous in the former Novi Pazar Sandjak (BALIĆ, S. 1996).

In the 1990s after the dissolution of Yugoslavia through armed conflicts the term to describe this ethnic group changed. While attempts were made to spread the use of "Bosniak" in Bosnia and Herzegovina they were only recognised as a religious denomination in "Little Yugoslavia" (later also in Serbia and Montenegro). Nowadays most Muslimans living in the former Novi Pazar Sandjak apply the term "Muslim Bosniak" or "Bosniak" although there are people who still insist on the former "Musliman" term (BALIĆ, S. 1994).

Censuses in Montenegro and Serbia include both categories (Bosniak and Musliman) (RUZIN, N. 2000). The majority of population in the south-east

of the former Sandjak region declared themselves Bosniak rather than Muslims implying that Bosniak identity (attachment to officially recognised identity factors) is stronger where their settlements form blocs (*Photo 1*). On the other hand, in the contact zones formed with non-Muslim and Albanian population in the north of the region (in the traditional Bosnian–Albanian cultural transfer region) the tendency is the opposite. Also, in the regions outside the above mentioned areas the number of Muslims is much higher, what is more in some areas the Bosniak category remained empty. It has to be noted that in addition to the significant spatial consequences of fluctuating identity the thousands of mostly Bosnian refugees (due to Bosnian War) also influenced census data.



Photo 1. Husein Pasha's mosque (Husein Pašina Džamija) in Pljevlja (Montenegro, Sandjak region) with the tallest minaret (42 m) in the Balkans (Photo by Kocsis, K.)

The ethnic origin of Muslim *Pomaks* speaking Bulgarian as vernacular, consequently of an ambiguous identity, has always been highly debated, obviously for political reasons (TELBIKOVA-SACK, J. 1999). The most probable hypothesis is that they are the descendants of indigenous Slav peoples who converted to Muslim faith in the 15th century. The terms “Pomaks” and “Achrjani” used by Pomaks to express their identity were contrary to terms used in definitions by majority Bulgarians (Bulgarian Muslims, Muslims living in Bulgaria, Bulgarians of Muslim faith, etc.) (BRUNNBAUER, U. 2002). The political intention behind the use of the latter terms is to emphasise Bulgarian language as the major identity factor for the Pomak ethnic group. In addition, for some time the Greeks have been trying to point out that Pomaks have “their own” language that was under strong Slavic influence throughout the history but it is more similar to Greek in terms of structure and vocabulary (Voss, C. 2000).

Pomaks inhabit the area between Rodope Mountains and the coastal region of the Aegean Sea. Also large groups live by the lower course of the River Isker near Pleven, in the Struma Valley and in the region of Prilep in Macedonia. Pomaks has never been officially recognised by Bulgarian governments as a genuine ethnic group; rather they have been considered “Turkalisised” Bulgarians – their number could only be estimated from statistics.

The *Torbeš* speaking Macedonian primarily live in Macedonia mainly in areas neighbouring with Albania, near Debar and Tetovo. The insecurity of their identity can be explained by the fact that they feel strong attachment to their (mainly) Muslim culture and cultural traditions and this draws them closer to Albanians living nearby and to Turkish language to a smaller extent and not to the language they speak (Macedonian, the official language of the state). The assumption that their Slavic mother tongue does not fully express their identity is evidenced by the fact that after the dissolution of Yugoslavia a large number of Torbeš people demanded Albanian and Turkish education (schools) for their children and their main publication *Mlada Mesečina* (The Young Crescent) has been published in three languages since 1987 (Voss, C. 2006).

Other Muslim ethnic groups. In addition to the above mentioned Muslim groups the *Gypsy* (Roma) Muslims also have to be mentioned. Their number can only be estimated due to their unique identity and relation to majority groups (KŐSZEGI, M. 2008). As they are extremely open to their environment in terms of language and religion they show a very mixed pattern from both aspects. In countries with significant Muslim population a large number of them became the followers of Islam. Due to their peripheral position in society and special lifestyle they live in high concentration in their close environment. Their largest group lives in Bulgaria where about 20–40% of

them can be estimated as being Muslim (KRASTOVA, A. 1995; EMINOV, A. 1999). In addition, Muslim Gypsies are also represented in Macedonia, Greece and Kosovo (as many as 10 thousand/country, *tables 1, 2*).

Table 2. Distribution of Muslim groups in the Balkans according to types of areas inhabited

Types of areas	Immigrants	Converted
Rural areas	Turks, Gypsies, Tatars	Torbeš, Pomaks, Albanians
Urban areas	Turks*, Gypsies**, Tatars **	Bosniaks, Albanians

* emigrated or assimilated to Albanian population

** moved to urban areas in the second half of the 20th century

Spatial structure of Muslims in the Balkans at the turn of the millennium

The Balkanian Muslim population of 9.67 million currently lives in 10 countries with substantial differences in territorial concentration (*Fig. 5*). The largest communities can be found in Albania (2.287 million), Kosovo (1.932 million) and in Eastern Thrace in Turkey (1.819 million), where they make up the absolute majority of overall population. Although the largest Muslim community lives in Albania, only 70% of the country's population belongs to Muslim denomination (ASCHE, H.–BËRKHOLI, A.–DOKA, D. 2003). They form the absolute majority of population in the prefectures located in the middle and eastern parts of the country. The settlement area of Muslims is the most homogeneous in the Eastern Thracian region where almost 100% of the population is Muslim due to waves of migration from other regions of the Balkan Peninsula in the 20th century. In Kosovo almost 92% of total population is Albanian, mostly Muslims. In addition to Albanians, 1.5% of the population is also Muslim (Gorans and Gypsies). Only four Serbian communes (kommunats) fail to have Muslim majority: Leposaviq, Zveqan, Zubin Potok in the north of the country, and Shtërpçe in the south (KICOŠEV, S. 2005).

Muslim population of 1.84 million in Bosnia and Herzegovina makes up the relative majority of overall population (47% in 2004). No census data is available from recent past about their location at the level of smaller administrative or statistical units. The only information is the estimates (2004) on the website of the Federal Office of Statistics of the Bosnian-Croatian Federation and a map showing the proportion of Muslim population at commune (opština) level. Based on available information it has become obvious that the Bosnian War in the first half of the 1990s fundamentally transformed the spatial pattern of their settlement. Due to migration processes after the war the territorial concentration of Muslims increased and they formed a significant closed settlement area in the east and north-east of Bosnian-Croatian Federation (near Sarajevo, Tuzla) and in the north-west opštinas (near Bihač). Large groups of Muslims live in various communes in Herzegovina as a minority and their settlement areas form smaller or bigger blocks. Based on

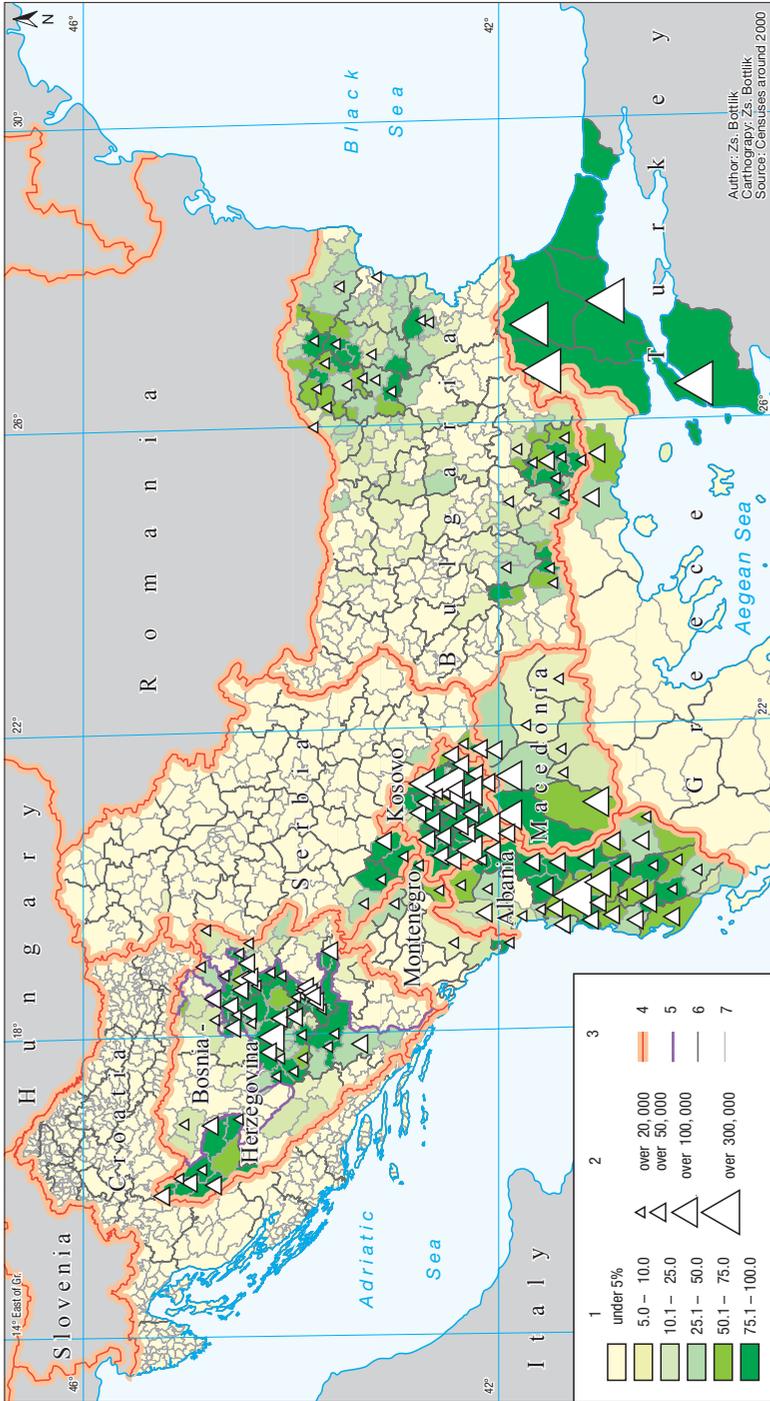


Figure 5. Muslim inhabitants on the Balkan Peninsula at the turn of the 3rd millennium. -1 = ratio of Muslim inhabitants; 2 = number of Muslim inhabitants; 3 = boundaries; 4 = state borders in 2009; 5 = boundary of entity; 6 = boundaries of NUTS 2 level or of equivalent units; 7 = boundaries of statistical units (LAU-1)

indirect estimates and the above mentioned map there might also be small scattered groups present in the Bosnian Serb Republic.

Muslim population with connected settlement area makes up strong religious minority in countries formed after the dissolution of Yugoslavia: Macedonia (33%), Montenegro (17%), and Serbia (3%). The most significant community is located in the opštinas forming a settlement area in the valley of upper Vardar in Macedonia next to the blocks of settlements of Muslims in Albania and Kosovo. The majority of Muslims in Serbia and Montenegro live in the former Novi Pazar Sandjak region. This area of settlement forms a contiguous belt of Muslim settlement proceeding with similar areas in Kosovo and in Albania. In addition, Muslims make up absolute majority in three communes in Serbia (Bujanovac, Medveđa, Preševo), currently the scenes of Muslim Albanian transgression. Bulgarian Muslims make up only 12% of the country's population and their settlements rarely form blocks. They form blocks in the north-east of the country, north of Shumen and in the opštinas in the south alongside the Greek border. Muslims living in the three small regions in West Thrace make up just over 2% of the total Greek population. They form absolute majority in the valleys of Rodope Mountains with peripheral location and in areas far away from strategic roads.

The Muslim population of 50,000 in Dobrudja makes up only 5% of the total population of the two Romanian counties within the region. The settlements do not form closed blocks and their scattered nature will increase in the future. Their largest community can be found in the biggest urban centre on the coast, Constanța.

Summary

Muslim groups in the Balkans speak various languages and live in several countries. These countries followed different paths of development in the 20th century so the followers of Islam were repeatedly involved in social conflicts because of their different culture. Due to Albania's isolation for decades rooted in socialism, the dissolution of Yugoslavia through bloody conflicts in the 1990s, the EU membership of Greece reaching back some decades, the new EU membership of Romania and Bulgaria and the unique geopolitical and social circumstances in Turkey the countries inhabited by the majority of Muslims will probably take different paths in economic and social development. The generally marginalised social and economic status of Muslims in the countries examined and their frequently deviating demographic behaviour compared to neighbouring ethnic groups are expected to widen the gap between them and majority societies. Due to their delayed political integration and increasing difficulties in social integration they will probably remain destabilising factors.

SOURCES

- Albania** ASÇHE, H.–BËRKHOLI, A.–DOKA, D. 2003. Atlasi Gjeografik i Popullsisë së Shqipërisë (Atlasi i Shqipërisë); Shtypshkronja Ilar, Tirana 115 p.
- Bulgaria** Преброяване на населението, жилищия фонд и земеделските стопанства през 2001 – ОБЛАСТИ том 4. книга 1–28. Национален Статистически Институт – СОФИЯ.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina** Federalni zavod za statistiku (<http://www.fzs.ba>) Croatia Republika Hrvatska – Državni Zavod za Statistiku (http://www.dzs.hr/default_e.htm).
- Kosovo** Demographic Changes of the Kosovo population 1948–2006. – Statistical Office of Kosovo (SOK) 2006.
- Macedonia** Census of Population Households and Dwellings in The Republic of Macedonia, 2004 Final Data Book X.
- Montenegro** Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2003 POPULATION – National or Ethnic Affiliation (Data by Settlement and Municipalities).
- Serbia** Census of Population (National and Ethnic Affiliation – Data by localities) Statistical Office of Republic of Serbia 2002.
- Turkey** Regional Statistic of Turkey – Turkish Statistical Institute (<http://turkstat.gov.tr>)

REFERENCES

- BALIĆ, S. 1994. Kultura Bošnjaka: muslimanska komponenta Izdanja R&R, Tuzla 325 p.
- BALIĆ, S. 1996. Die Bosniaken. – In: HARDTE, E.–STANISJAVLJEVIĆ, A.–TSAKIRIS, D. (Hrsg.): Der Balkan in Europa Peter LANG Verlag, Frankfurt/Main–Berlin–Bern–New York–Paris–Wien pp. 63–75.
- BARTL, P. 1968. Die albanische Muslime zur Zeit der nationalen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung (1878–1912). Wiesbaden (=Albanische Forschungen 8.) 207 p.
- BARTL, P. 1996. Kosovo: Mythos und Realität (eine historische Einführung). – In: HARDTE, E.–STANISJAVLJEVIĆ, A.–TSAKIRIS, D. (Hrsg.): Der Balkan in Europa. Peter Lang Verlag, Frankfurt/Main–Berlin–Bern–New York–Paris–Wien pp. 15–30.
- BATAKOVIC, D.T. 2007. Kosovo-Metohija: istorija i ideologija. Cigoja, Beograd, 467 p. http://www.rastko.org.yu/kosovo/istorija/batakovic/batakovic-kosovo_eng.html
- BAХHAKU, F. 1994. Die Bevölkerungsstruktur der ethnischen Grenzzone von Albanern, Serben und makedonischen Slawen. – Österreichische Osthefte. 36. 2. pp. 244–264.
- BRUNNBAUER, U. 2002. An den Grenzen von Staat und Nation. Identitätsprobleme der Pomaken Bulgariens. – In: BRUNNBAUER, U. (Hrsg.): Umstrittene Identitäten: Ethnizität und Nationalität in Südosteuropa Lang Verlag, Frankfurt/M–Berlin–Bern–Bruxelles–New York–Oxford–Wien pp. 97–122.
- BÜSCHENFELD, H. 1981. Jugoslawien.- Ernst Klett Verlag, Stuttgart 264 p.
- DŽAJA, S.M. 1993. Bosnien und Herzegowina. – In: WEITHMANN, M.: Der ruhelose Balkan – die Konfliktregionen Südosteuropas DTV. pp. 149–175.
- DOKOS, P.T.–ANTONIU, A.D. 2002. Islam in Greece. – In: SHIREEN, H. (ed.): Islam, Europe's second religion: the new social, cultural, and political landscape. Greenwood Publishing Group, pp. 175–191.
- EMINOV, A. 1999. The Turks in Bulgaria: post – 1989 developments. – Nationalities Papers. Vol. 27. No. 1. pp. 31–55.

- ERMANN, U.–ILIEVA, M. 2007. Geschichte Bulgariens – Zwischen Fremdherrschaft und nationaler Identität. – In: ERMANN, U.–ILIEVA, M. (Hrsg.): Bulgarien – Aktuelle Entwicklungen und Probleme. Leibnizinstitut für Länderkunde, Leipzig. pp. 20–24.
- HEUBERGER, V. 1999. Islam in Europa. Wiener Osteuropastudien Bd. 9. Peter Lang Verlag, Wien. 131 p.
- IBRAHIMI, N. 2009. Islam's first contacts with the Balkan nations. <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/6875/nexhat.html> vagy <http://www.zeriislam.com/artikulli.php?id=927>
- JOFFÉ, G. 1996. Muslims in the Balkans. – In: CARTER, F.W.–NORRIS H.T. (ed.): The Changing Shape of the Balkans. UCL Press, London. pp. 81–95.
- KICOŠEV, S. 2005. The Ethnic and Religions Structure of the Population of Serbia and Montenegro. – In: Österreichisches Osthefte/Ländersonderband Serbien und Montenegro Jg. 47. Heft 1–4. LIT Verlag, Wien. pp. 55–73.
- KOCSIS, K. (ed.) 2007. South Eastern Europe in Maps. Geographical Research Institut, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest 136 p.
- KÓSZEGI M. 2008. Bulgária muzulmán lakossága az ezredfordulón. – Pro Minoritate Ósz, pp. 154–171.
- KULLASHI, M. 1994. Kosovo and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia. – Balkan Forum, Vol. 2. Nr. 4. pp. 149–165.
- KRASTEVA, A. 1995. Ethnocultural panorama of Bulgaria. – Balkan Forum 3. No. 3. pp. 235–251.
- LIENAU, C.–SCHUKALLA, K.J. 1986. Struktur und Entwicklung der Bevölkerung Albaniens. – In: CAY, L.–PRINZING, G. (Hrsg.): Albanien – Beiträge zur Geographie und Geschichte, Berichte aus dem Arbeitsgebiet Entwicklungsforschung am Institut für Geographie, Münster Heft 12. pp. 160–174.
- LOPASIC, A. 2002. Islam in the Balkans: The Bosnian Case. – In: HAWKESWORTH, C.–HEPPEL, M.–NORRIS, H. (ed.): Religious Quest and National Identity in the Balkan. pp. 141–157.
- REUTER, J. 1987. Die albanische Minderheit in Jugoslawien. – In: SCHÖNEFELD, R. (Hrsg.): Nationalitätenprobleme in Südosteuropa. R. UGS Bd. 25. Oldenbourg Verlag, München. pp. 133–148.
- MINKOV, A. 2004. Conversion to Islam in the Balkan. Kishve bahasi petitions and social life 1670–1730. Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden. 248 p.
- RUZIN, N. 2000. Multi-national iconographies in Macedonia. – Geojournal 52. pp. 353–357.
- PRÉVÉLAKIS, G. 1994. Les Balkans. Cultures et géopolitique. – Paris. 192 p.
- SALLNAZ, J. 2007. Bedeutungswandel von Ethnizität unter dem Einfluss von Globalisierung (Die rumänische Dobrudscha als Beispiel) Potsdamer Geographische Forschungen Band 26. Universitätsverlag, Potsdam. 345 p.
- SAX, K. 1877. Ethnographische Karte der Europäischen Türkei und ihrer Dependenz zu Anfang des Jahres 1877. – In: Die Bulgaren in ihren historischen ethnographischen und politischen Grenzen 1917. 48 p.
- SCHMIDT-NEKE, M. 2002. Die windstille Ecke: Die Albaner in Montenegro. – Südosteuropa Jg. 51. pp. 367–388.
- SPASOVSKA, V. 1999. Auswirkungen der Kosovo-Krise auf Mazedonien. – Südosteuropa Mitteilungen Jg. 39. H. 2. pp. 93–98.
- STOJANOV, V. 1997. Ausgrenzung und Integration: Die bulgarischen Türken nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg (1944/45–1989). – Österreichisches Osthefte Jg. 39. Böhlau Verlag, Wien. pp. 193–221.

- STOJANOV, V. 2001. Türkische Muslime in Südosteuropa. Das Beispiel der Muslime Bulgariens. – In: LIENAU, C. (Hrsg.): Raumstrukturen und Grenzen in Südosteuropa Gesellschaft München. pp. 231–243.
- TELBIKOVA-SACK, J. 1999. Identitätsmuster der Pomaken Bulgariens: Ein Beitrag zur Minoritätenforschung. Biblion-Verlag, Marburg. 187 p.
- TIBI, B. 2002. Der bosnische Islam. – In: VOLLE, A.–WEIDENFELD, W. (Hrsg.): Der Balkan zwischen Krise und Stabilität W. Bertelsmann Verlag, Bielefeld. pp. 1–8.
- Voss, C. 2000. Das slavophone Griechenland – Bemerkungen zum Ende eines Tabus. – Südosteuropa Mitteilungen Jg. 40. H. 4. pp. 351–363.
- Voss, C. 2006. Die slawischsprachige Balkanmuslime: kulturelle Identitäten und Sprachideologien. – Südosteuropa Mitteilungen Jg. 46. Heft 2. pp. 56–69.