RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND VALUE ORIENTATIONS

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Abstract: The results of the analyses of European Values Study data (European Values Study 2008) indicate significant differences between the social and value profile of Eastern Orthodox Christians and the Muslim community in Bulgaria. In this survey, for an important share of the respondents who define themselves as Muslims, religion is no longer a value in itself but a complete environment, which determines the attitude towards other values and relations. Religious morality structures the new models of participation and forms of solidarity. While the Orthodox Christians mostly have a traditional respect for the norms of faith, among an important part of the Muslims religion is becoming a value scale and a core of social activity in general. While we do have reason to consider that, overall, Bulgarian society is in a process of rethinking its attitude to religion, this applies to a much greater degree to Muslims. The mediating complex of factors that most probably accelerate certain processes of consolidation of the religious community is connected with its partial social isolation, its specific profile of professional, civic, and political activity.

Key words: values, Islam, identity, religion, tolerance, tradition, faith

The Social Profile of Religiousness

The fourth wave of the European Values Study (Fotev 2009) can serve to orient us to a deeper and more subtle understanding of the importance of religious morality and of the answers it provides in the face of the daily challenges of secular life. Declared personal affiliation to a religion does not in itself imply active religious practice or, even less, a religious identity covering all elements of social conduct of the faithful (Bosakov 2006). The social profile of the respondents who have indicated affiliation to Islam can be defined distinctly enough. According to the survey findings, 73,3% of all respondents who answered this question defined themselves as religious. More often religious are women (78,0% of women have indicted they are religious, and 68,1% of men) and people living in villages (78,3 % compared with 71,9 %, living in 'other cities' and 68,0 % living in Sofia). At the same time, with respect to age the figures are notably dynamic. The smallest share of those

who indicated they were religious was in the age group between 25 and 39 (69,7 %). In terms of their biographies, this is the age group of the people whose value attitudes and religious convictions were shaped shortly before and at the very start of the post-totalitarian transformations in Bulgarian society. In all other age groups the registered degree of religiousness is higher than the average result for all surveyed persons. Closest to the average is the group of people age 40 to 54 at the time of fieldwork, in the spring of 2008, when the survey was conducted: 73,5 % of them indicated they were religious.

The highest percentages for religiousness were registered among the two age groups with very differing life experiences: the respondents above the age of 55 and the youngest, between 18 and 24 years of age.

In the oldest age groups, the registered values are, respectively, 75,6 % among those aged 55 to 69, and 74,8% among those above 70. In the youngest group of respondents, 74,4 % defined themselves as religious. This is also the group with the lowest registered non-religiousness: only 22,6 % of them indicated they did not belong to any religious confession.[1]

According to the survey results, the social profile of Muslims repeats the general characteristics of religiousness, but with some important overtones. The biggest proportion of Muslims is that in the lowest age group, 18 to 24 (18,6 % of all surveyed persons in this age group indicated they were Muslims). Smaller shares, yet higher than the average for all other surveyed persons, are those of Muslims aged 25 to 39 (13,8 %) and aged 40 to 54 (14,9 %). In contrast with the traditional notions of non-Muslims regarding the religiousness of Muslims in Bulgaria by age, this study has shown relatively lower figures in the older age groups. Among the respondents aged over 70, the share of Muslims was only 7,3 %, while in the next age group (people between 55 and 69) it was 9,9 %.

The distribution of Muslims by type of settlement is not significantly different from the general profile of respondents who indicated themselves as religious. Considerably lower than the normal distribution is the percentage of Muslims in Sofia and the other cities: respectively 1,4 % and 5,8 %. But in villages, 31,4 % of those who indicated their religious affiliation were Muslims.

In generalizing the information of the study regarding the social profile of the religious, we may say that Muslims in Bulgaria today are more often young people (aged between 18 and 24) or middle-aged people (between 40 and 54), and people living mostly in rural regions of the country. The profile of Eastern Orthodox Christians shows important

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[1] This figure is lower than the average for the whole population – 26,0 %, and than the average of each of the other age groups.

differences: they are more often elderly people (aged 55 or more), living mostly in Sofia and other cities. Whereas among Muslims the percentage of men is slightly higher than of women, among the Christians religiousness is considerably more often a characteristic of women.

The two social profiles, those of people indicating they are Christians and those indicating Islamic affiliation, reveal significant differences. In the course of post-totalitarian transformation, the social distances between the various religious communities have changed. Hence it is possible to formulate a research hypothesis that the growing social disproportions such as those along the line centre-periphery are becoming more important factors for the value differences between the two religious groups. It is also possible to assume that the age distances will continue to have an impact in the same direction (Galabov 2007a). The aims of this analysis do not include the strict identification of these trends in the Muslim group, but the findings do give us reason to set this research question as a topic for future studies. Their partial social isolation, in which Muslims consolidate their value orientations with respect to Islam, has a different influence on their willingness for strict observance of religious rules. In this sense, regardless of the declared religious affiliation, in the Muslim communities there are on-going processes of differentiation, which are of considerable research interest.

Religious practices and tradition

The obtained results show that important gaps remain between religious self-identification and everyday religious practice. Despite the higher degree of integration of value assessments among Muslims, the relative shares of those who fervently obey the norms of correct religious practice and those who practically do not, remain equally important for all religions. Nevertheless, a comparison with studies conducted more than ten years ago give us reason to claim there is an on-going mobilization of religious practice in Muslim community (Georgiev, Tomova, Grekova, Kanev 1992). There is an increased share of Muslims who indicate they go to services 'more than once a week' and 'once a week'.

The responses to this question, combined with the data on religious self-identification of respondents, show, albeit indirectly, the existence of two clearly distinguishable groups of Muslims. For the first of these, the acceptance of religious rules is expressed through greater activeness in obeying religious rituals; in the second group, likewise very distinct, there is a withdrawal from the practice required by their religious canon.

In this circle of questions, the comparison between the results for Muslims and Christians shows significant dynamics. While among Christians those indicating they most often actively follow religious practice are people who devote time for prayer and meditation

'more than once a week', among Muslims the large group of respondents is that which indicated devoting some time for prayer 'everyday'. Even those who evidently do not follow all the requirements of their faith, pray at least once a week. These results correspond to the declared feeling that religious faith is a source of strength and consolation: Muslims are 21,7% of all those who have indicated this answer.

Attendance of religious services during childhood is one indicator that has specific dimensions in the Bulgarian context. For the greater share of respondents, the attitude to religious tradition in childhood was determined by the conditions of the totalitarian regime, i.e. the restrictions and negative ideological views on religious practice in those times. The responses to this question among Muslims show that, despite those circumstances, a significant part of them did attend the mosque for certain religious holy days (15,5 % of all those who indicated this answer self-identified as Muslims). More often these were women (30,2 %); men were 25,1 %. The type of settlement also differentiates this occurrence of religious practice early in life: 33,1 % of the Muslims in Sofia, 24,9 % in other cities, and 30,9 % of those living in villages attended mosques at the age of 12 for religious holy days.

At the same time, some telling results for the purpose of this analysis are obtained by a comparison between the two distinct sub-groups among the surveyed Muslims, viz. those who did attend services in a mosque as children and those who indicate they 'never or practically never' entered a mosque during their childhood. The second group merits special attention.

In it men in the age group 25 to 39 are 43,1 %; the respondents between the ages of 40 and 54 are 48,6 %; and those between 55 and 69 are 44,3 %. The traces of restrictions imposed on religion in the biography of these people are clearly evident. Together with this, among the youngest age group (between the age of 18 and 24), the share of those who never visited a mosque even on religious holy days is 25,9 %. Albeit indirectly, the answers to these questions confirm the hypothesis that there has been a change in the practice of religion among the youngest generations of Muslims.

Religious faith

Significant changes are taking place in traditional Bulgarian Islam. One of the main agents of these changes today are the young Muslims who are still students in secondary schools and universities. Through this future spiritual elite of the Muslim community, new dimensions and new dynamics of this community's integration process will emerge and be asserted. The attitudes and positions of these young people, their values, will define to a considerable degree the directions of the process of integration of religious communities into

the secular, democratic political model. That is why part of the efforts of researchers for interpreting the problem of the integration of the Muslim community in contemporary Bulgarian society will increasingly have to be focused on an analysis of the representations, justifications, and argumentations of the members of the spiritual and intellectual elite of the Muslim community in Bulgaria.

The initial assumptions that set the boundaries of this analysis are defined by the understanding that the so-called folk Islam in our country is being subjected to a fundamental rethinking in the context of modern democratic development and of the impact of contradictory phenomena which we have defined as a new Islamic culture and which mirror the effort to construct a specific Islamic modernity (Bosakov 2006). Together with this, we share the view that the Muslim community in our country is a unity only in the representations of non-Muslims. The internal differentiation and fragmentation of the contemporary Islamic *lifeworld* is a fact the fundamental importance of which is often underestimated. That is precisely why one object of the researcher's interest in this study is the internal heterogeneity of the representation of the unifying impact of religious education in the Muslim social environment.

The basic themes that shape the research efforts in this direction are formulated around the distances between meanings in the interpretation of democratic civic and secular values on one hand, and observance of the religious canon on the other. The social realities of the attitude towards Islam in Bulgaria are a precondition for attempting to formulate new questions and build various hypotheses reflecting the dynamic reality of the relations between religious communities.

The results of the analysis of European Values Study data (European Values Study - 2008)[2] indicate significant differences between the respondents who have defined themselves as affiliated to Eastern Orthodox Christianity and to Islam.[3] It is precisely through comparison that we distinctly see the difference between declared religious *affiliation* and a complete religious *identity*. Among Eastern Orthodox Christians, there is a considerably more significant internal differentiation in indicated opinions and assessments than among Muslims. Those who have defined themselves as Muslims display a higher level of personal

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[2] The survey data are accessible at the Internet address of the Bulgarian Sociological Association: http://www.bsa-bg.org

[3] The lack of space in this article for a precise distinction between the sub-groups of Sunni and Shiite Muslims has lead to generalizations that might, to a certain degree, obscure the essential distances between these two divisions in Islam.

integration as regards their value orientations than do Christians or people of other religious confessions.

Along with this, a comparison between different religious groups in the study clearly reveals that the profile of atheism has practically lost a great part of its value orientations. Outside the declared non-affiliation it involves with respect to a specific religion, atheism practically does not involve any specific value or social orientations of its own.

To this we should add the fact that this survey of values in Bulgaria is the first in which a comparatively lower share of respondents have clearly indicated affiliation to Eastern Orthodoxy (58,6 %). The mechanical declaring of religious affiliation is gradually giving place to fuller, better integrated sets of values, and this trend seems more distinct among the Muslims. That is why the chosen research hypothesis can be confirmed and partially modified on the basis of the findings. Regardless of various differences internal to the Muslim group, the results show a higher degree of integration at the level of values (Bosakov 2009). This gives us reason to continue our research in the direction of the basic elements of the hypothetical set of value orientations that corresponds to the Islamic religious identity in present-day Bulgarian society.

The data show that, among those who indicate ***religion, work*** and ***family*** as very important in their lives, there is a greater share of respondents self-defined as Muslims. At this stage of analysis we may say that it is around these three spheres that the most clearly discernable groups of value orientations are concentrated, those for which we may claim with a high degree of probability that they are the value orientations of Muslims in Bulgaria. While among all respondents, taken as a whole, religion is relatively less often defined as a leading value for the respondent, its importance for Muslims is predominant.

Among those who have indicated religion as *very important for their lives*, Muslims amount to 31,1%, while the percentage of all respondents who have given this answer is 12.8%. The proportion of Eastern Orthodox who have indicated this answer shows it to be a much rarer choice for them than for Muslims (54,0 % of all those who indicated this answer declared they were Eastern Orthodox, although the relative share of this religion among all respondents is much larger – 58,6%). There is a similar distribution of answers to the questions regarding the importance of work; it is only with regard to the family that a clear similarity between representatives of the two religions is registered.

Among those who have indicated religion as very important in their lives, the share of Muslims is three times as high as that of all other surveyed persons. The results show that relatively young people (aged between 18 and 24) are those who have selected this answer

more often. The answer was given more often by women than men, and by residents of villages and small towns three times more often than by those of larger settlements. The social profile of those for whom religion is *very important* or *important* in their lives can be related to the existing inequalities between centre and periphery in the context of the growing differences by income and education, and this profile usually corresponds to a traditional type of family. For the predominant share of these people, religion is a factor that structures their whole lifeworld, defines the distances to others and the general meaning of attitudes to the family and work.

The findings, compared with those of the previous EVS waves, provide grounds for formulating the hypothesis that in the last ten years the importance of religion has generally changed in Bulgarian society (Fotev 2000). But whereas the predominant secular values have expanded their influence among the group of Christians, among Muslims in Bulgaria there is a process of strengthening of Islam as a set of values and of consolidation of the community around Islamic values. Hence, the discussion below will be devoted to the influence of the religious value system on the attitude of Muslims towards modern values and social practices.

Apart from the topic of *religion, work*, and *family*, Muslims indicating the other three sets of values, *leisure time, friends and acquaintances*, and *politics*, as very important to them are a smaller percentage than the overall percentage of this religious group within the total population. The difference in percentages is greatest as concerns the importance of 'leisure time' (only 9,1% of those who indicated this as very important for them were Muslims, whereas the share of Muslims in the total population is 12,8%). Next in order of importance come 'friends and acquaintances', where 9,4% of those who indicated this answer were Muslims, and, slightly higher, 'politics', indicated as very important by 10,0 % of Muslims.

Regardless of the distinct structuring of more important and less important value spheres in the lives of Muslims, in these six sets of values there are elements pertaining both to private and to public life. It is notable that the group of Muslims directs its attention in a greater degree to "inner" values, which regulate the intimate everyday lifeworld, such as 'religion' and 'family', while among their important values related predominantly to some sort of public interaction, 'work' is foremost.

The distribution of items defined as most important in the life of a person, and the exceptionally high share of Muslims who indicated religion as important compared with results for all other values, permits us to take the next step in this analysis and formulate one of its basic research theses: religion is not simply a value preferred and important for Muslim. All research findings give us reason to assert that, for the predominant share of the surveyed

Muslims, religion represents an integral value scale upon which all other values are projected and acquire meaning. *Religion as an integral value system is a structuring factor of the attitude to the other spheres of personal and public life.* The religious ethics of Islam influences to a decisive degree the expressed attitude to the other values.

A comparison with the other religious communities, and especially with Eastern Orthodox Christians, does not show a similar process occurring there. The declared affiliation with Christianity, once placed in a different value context, begins to waver or takes on a different form. The results of this analysis give us reason to formulate the research hypothesis that there are significant changes taking place in religious consciousness in the past years, changes that have led to a relative decrease in the importance of religious morality among the largest group, that of Christians, and, on the contrary, to a consolidation of religious morality among Muslims. The testing of this hypothesis should be the object of an additional, full-scale analysis, but here we may claim that the religious dimension can be found in practically all issues related to everyday life, public interaction, and accepted values of the surveyed groups.

Religion and family life

The answers to the question as to whether the Church or a religious faith provides answers for important social issues, indicate an enhanced consensus on this value among Muslims. Of those who indicated that religious faith answers 'problems of family life', the highest share was of Muslims (30,1 %). In second place comes the ability of religion to answer the 'present-day social needs of the country' (28,8 % of all who answered positively were Muslims). In third place come 'the moral problems and needs of people' (24,4 %) and in last is the ability of religion to answer 'the spiritual needs of people'. (19,8 %).

Even though, as regards proportions internal to the group, all four answers are entirely and categorically supported by Muslims, there is some difference in the proportions of these answers. For the sake of comparison, among Eastern Orthodox Christians, the highest proportion is that of the indicated item that the Church provides answers for 'the spiritual needs of people' (61,8%) and for the 'moral problems and needs of people' (59,8 %). The established difference in proportions is important and provides a basis for reformulating some of the preliminary research hypotheses, especially those regarding the traditional dispositions of the 'individual vs. collective' type (Galabov 1996).

The identification of family life as an area of religious morals is an exceptionally important part of the interpretation of the survey findings regarding the Muslim community (Bosakov 2010). The traditional, predominant and shared view among most surveyed persons

regarding the factors that guarantee a happy family life, has some specificities among Muslims.

At the same time, this is the group in which there is a prevalent conviction that shared religious beliefs of the spouses are a guarantee for a happy marriage. Such a view is shared by more than half (52,9 %) of all surveyed persons, but among Muslims this share is greater: it is 24,8 % of all those who indicated religious beliefs as a 'very important' condition for a happy marriage and 13,5 % of those who indicated it as 'important'.

In second place among the priorities of Muslims is similar social origin (16,7 %). Together with 'having children' and 'fidelity in relations between partners', these are the factors that define a successful marriage for the greater part of the surveyed Muslims. The difference in comparison with those who identified themselves as Eastern Orthodox Christians is visible with regard to many details of the attitude to things upon which the success of a marriage depends in our times.

The combination between religion and family life proves to be an important element in the core values identified so far among Muslims. First of all, more than half of all surveyed persons (52,9%) indicated that the shared religious beliefs of the spouses were a very important or important condition for a successful marriage. But, while the share of Eastern Orthodox Christians who indicated this answer corresponds to the general proportion of Orthodox Christians in the population, for Muslims the percentage is considerably higher: on the average, 19,5% who gave this answer defined themselves as Muslims.

Religious tolerance

Of determining importance for the problems we are concerned with here is the general correspondence between shared moral principles and the degree to which religiousness and religious morality serve in structuring certain value attitudes among Muslims.

The comparison between the results obtained for Eastern Orthodox Christians and for Muslims show different profiles for the two groups as regards the strict obedience to moral principles. The greatest share of Christians is that of respondents who indicated they have a relativistic perspective on morals, so that the qualification of good and evil entirely depends on the circumstances. This view is least supported by Muslim respondents. Among them, the largest percentage indicated they judged good and evil categorically, but with the reservation that deviating from the guidelines is justified by special circumstances. This view is also shared by a considerable portion of the Christian respondents. But Christians are also the ones who least often express support for categorical moral judgments. It is in the context of this

general moral perspective that the respondents' attitude to the other religion and the correctness of their own religion can be inscribed.

The general level of declared religious tolerance in Bulgarian society, judging by the findings of this study, seem relatively high. The results for the question regarding whether there is only one true religion and the truth that one or all religions have to offer, show that, compared with respondents of other religions, Muslims are more willing to accept the idea that 'there is only one true religion but other religions may hold some truth'. Among Eastern Orthodox Christians, this view and the view that 'there is only one true religion' are supported equally. Coming second in the support of Muslim respondents is the option that 'there is not one true religion but all religions contain some basic truths'. As could be expected, there is almost negligible support among Muslims of the view that none of the world religions contain truths about the basic questions.

These results confirm the hypothesis that there are significant differences in the way in which those who have defined themselves as Christians perceive their own and other religions. There is a slight prevalence among Christians of the view that 'there is only one true religion, but other religions also contain some truths'. This is the view most often supported by Muslim respondents. The second most often supported view is that 'there is not only one true religion, but all great world religions contain some basic truths'. At least at a declarative level, the representatives of these two religions in Bulgaria are willing to acknowledge and value the importance of other faiths, but it seems that among Muslims, at least judging by their answers to this question, this attitude is more clearly expressed than among the respondents who have defined themselves as Eastern Orthodox Christians.

The relativistic attitude registered as widely present among Christian respondents does not correspond to a higher degree of religious tolerance. The comparison of these aspects, essential for our discussion, shows that what serves as a basis for religious tolerance here is, to a far greater degree, the view that there are clear criteria of good and evil, combined with an understanding that specific circumstances can lead to deviations from these moral norms.

The survey results delineate significant differences between the social and value profile of Eastern Orthodox Christians and the Muslim community in Bulgaria. In this survey, for an important share of the respondents who define themselves as Muslims, religion is no longer a value in itself but a complete environment, which determines the attitude towards other values and relations. Religious morality structures the new models of participation and forms of solidarity (Fotev 2003). While the Orthodox Christians mostly have a traditional

respect for the norms of faith, among an important part of the Muslims religion is becoming a value scale and a core of social activity in general.

Analysis shows that the measure of declared tolerance is much higher than it appeared to be in past years – or at least in past surveys our desire to discern enduring processes of social integration amidst cultural difference blunted our critical perceptiveness about some of the findings. During a relatively long period of time, the importance of spatial closeness in the everyday reality of cultural variety has been preserved. In this sense, the attitude towards Islam in Bulgaria is confronted with the far more significant issue of the limits of a positive overcoming of the fear of the other.

Do we have reasons to refer to a new Islamic culture in Bulgaria, or is it more a matter of a specific kind of religious modernization evolving, which preserves the basic postulates of faith, shifting them into a new social context and building a space of dialogue with the democratic values that are being established in contemporary Bulgarian society?

At the same time, the attachment to secular values remains relatively unstable. While we do have reason to consider that, overall, Bulgarian society is in a process of rethinking its attitude to religion, this applies to a much greater degree to Muslims. The mediating complex of factors that most probably accelerate certain processes of consolidation of the religious community is connected with its partial social isolation, its specific profile of professional, civic, and political activity. Though we have no reason to believe there is a direct causal link between these social phenomena, we may assume they unfold in parallel, and under certain conditions exert a mutual influence on their own course of development and form.

The relative social isolation of significant groups of Muslims is accelerating the agreement on certain reference values and is helping the process of transmitting those values from generation to generation, regardless of the different life experience and social experience of the separate communities. Along with this, at every level of achieved consensus on values in the Muslim community, there is a corresponding change in attitudes to the social environment. We may judge of the dynamics of these processes through secondary analysis of the results of previous surveys and also by differences registered by age groups.

Regardless of whether we opt for a diachronic or synchronic research perspective, we may envisage our further research efforts in the context of relations between social solidarity and religious identity, between effective interaction and the preservation of a religious community identity. Justifications for such a perspective are provided us by the results of this study, which show the prevalent value of 'work' and 'family' as the community's reference points for personal fulfillment.

The leading importance of religion among other values determines to various degrees the importance of topics such as leisure time, relations with friends, and the striving for personalized forms of social self-expression. Together with this, the Muslims' partial social isolation enhances mistrust of people and groups that are different from one's own and hence accelerates the processes of community consolidation. The risks involved in this specific situation could consist in the formation of negative attitudes towards religious and cultural difference, but also in the increase of the existing social distances (Pamporov 2009).

In the context of the growing importance of Islamic religious morality and the relatively low degree of Muslims' civic participation, it may be presumed Muslims would give greater attention to the religious education of their children. The findings show that among the younger generations of the Muslim communities in Bulgaria there is now a more active and meaningful relation to religious practice and a clearer willingness to follow its rules.

All this gives us reason to formulate new research questions connected with the interaction between the emerging value attitudes and the process of social realization of the youngest generations within the Muslim milieu. Foremost, the question is how the values of Islam and notions of personal success are combined and joined together in the life plans and strategies of young people?

In the context of growing social inequalities, to what degree would the existing experience and culture of dialogue between religions in Bulgarian society promote the process of social integration of Muslims? Do the registered value orientations of Muslims (Fotev 2009) correspond – and, if so, in what degree – to traditional notions about Islam in Bulgaria, or is there rather a mobilization of religious affiliation that is dominated by modernization processes in the Islamic community? Can we reasonably expect there will be a growing influence of the religious institutions on the conduct of members of the Muslim community? And, above all, to what degree might the dialogue and interaction between the traditional religions in Bulgaria provide the necessary resource for modernization?

But the general research framework and theoretical scope in which these investigations can be inscribed remains, as ever, connected with the global problem of Islamic modernity. The achievement of a dynamic equilibrium between religious morality and social changes will continue to be a fundamental issue, with reference to which all other research perspectives can find a place.

Between the culture of neighbourhood and religious identity

By its significant meanings and symbolic colouring, neighbourhood, as direct contact and direct spatial proximity with others, defines everyday life. This is the microsocial scale in which the real dimensions of individual achievement are situated and the conditions for success are estimated. The need to comprehensively study this question in terms of space stems from the understanding of identity as a quality that is invariably a result and a condition achieved in the course of relating to others and comparing with others (in this sense, identity is the result of a qualitative definition of the Other). Ethnoreligious distances reveal the parametres of a "contactless tolerance": in cases when assertions are proposed that do not require direct contact with others, there is greater willingness to look for socially desirable answers. Any concrete attempt to introduce religious awareness of the "others" in a situation of immediate contact leads to decreased potential willingness to accept those different others. The gap between a consistent compliance with religious morality and norms on one hand and the idea of the orthopraxis of the other religious community on the other, generates mistrust, disregard and suspicion as to the motives of people of a different faith. These attitudes correspond to a latent ethno-religious conflict, which is liable to secondary mobilization by political and economic means. In other words, neighbourhood, as a universal social network of everyday practices, is able to compensate for some of the tensions, but its influence remains confined within the framework of a contradiction in mass consciousness – the contradiction between a positive attitude to the neighbour who is of a certain religious confession and, at the same time, suspicion with regard to that religious community as a whole (Bosakov 2010).

In looking for the means to overcome the feeling of offended religious identity among the minority, an identity that it often perceives as being under threat, a careful sociological scrutiny of the culture of neighbourhood and of the importance of neighbourhood identifies the following states and processes:

- Growing modernization in everyday life is severely trying for part of the meaning and symbolism of a religion. With respect to Islam in particular, this is one of the fundamental challenges of the new millennium: to devise a model of Islamic modernity in which the basic norms of Islam will preserve their importance, while the elements of the postmodern age that are forcefully entering into the life of society will be integrated without contradiction in the body of ethical views and values typical for the orthodoxy and orthopraxis of Islam;

- The admissibility of religiousness is not yet closely matched by respect for the right of others to be different and to follow religious norms different from one's own;

- The negative trends of development in the relations between tolerance vs. toleration of a different religious identity is a sign of an unfocused mass consciousness (toleration is primarily determined by the restricted option to be other than tolerant, rather than by an authentic culture of tolerance and respect for the different others) (Bosakov 2006).

Labour, civic, and political engagement

As for value judgments regarding work, there is practically no distance between the views of Christians and Muslims, except as regards the understanding of the importance of remuneration for work. Good job security (14,1 %), generous holidays (15,1 %) and family-friendly, (14,2 %) are the more important features of a preferred job for Muslims. Muslims are more often inclined than Christians to attribute poverty to a lack of luck (20,1 % of respondents who gave this answer were Muslims), to laziness and lack of willpower (14,4 %), but also to social injustice (13,0 %). Likewise, with respect to work Muslims are more inclined to hold that, when jobs are scarce, Bulgarian citizens (13,1 %), and men (20,2 %) should be given priority over immigrants.

The judgments of Muslims regarding the degrees of freedom in making decisions in one's job do not follow a normal distribution of answers, and most of the indicated responses are clustered around the middle of the scale. An approximately equal share of Muslims indicated that they had a considerable freedom to make decisions in work and that they practically had no such freedom. But, regardless of these distinctions, in most cases the assessment of the respondents who defined themselves as Muslims were situated around the lower degrees of independence and freedom in making decisions in work. This assessment of their own freedom is in a way also displayed in the assertions regarding the importance of work as a third core of meaningful things in the registered value orientations of Muslims in Bulgaria.

The importance of work in the value system of Muslims is clearly shown by the results for this question. Together with this, in the context of self-assessment regarding the degrees of liberty in making decisions in work and the general attitude to work, at least one other

interesting comparison can be made, that between the viewpoints of Christians and Muslims regarding the dimension of discipline, i.e. the willingness to obey instructions at work.

Nearly twice the share of Muslims as is their relative proportion in the population have expressed support of the view that instructions at work should be obeyed even when one does not fully agree with them – 21,1 % of Muslim respondents share this view. The lowest amount of support goes to the view that instructions should be followed only if one agrees with them – only 6,2 %. Still, among Muslims there is also a group willing to take an attitude to orders according to concrete circumstances and conditions (12,4 %). In comparison, Christians put a clear stress on the need to be convinced in the correctness of instructions – 63,9 % of respondents who have expressed this view have defined themselves as Eastern Orthodox Christians.

Apart from work issues, the survey results delineate a rather passive social position among Muslims with regard to a number of questions. Muslims have an insignificant degree of participation and engagement in social activities and organizations, except for religious organizations, activities related to helping disadvantaged people, and initiatives generally aimed at preserving peace. Against the backdrop of this rather passive profile of civic activity, in their social contacts part of the Muslim respondents express some reservation regarding living in neighbourhood with certain categories of people.

Their most distinct social distances are with respect to Christians (17,2 % of those who have indicated this response were Muslims), followed by people with AIDS (16,6 % were Muslims), people of a different race (15,0 %), Jews (14,6 %), homosexuals (14,3 %), and immigrants or foreign workers (14,0 %). Although these distances are not essentially different from the distribution in the whole surveyed population, they are noteworthy, especially in the context of the general hypothesis that there is a rather distinct isolation and closure of the Muslim group within society at large. Part of the explanation for these negative attitudes can be looked for in the overall registered level of mistrust towards others in general. In answer to the question as to whether most people can be trusted or not, the responses registered among Muslims show a slight preponderance of the view that 'you can't be too careful in dealing with people' (13,0 %). This data is in harmony with the registered agreement with the view that 'most people would try to take advantage of me' – 14,7 % of those who supported this statement were Muslims.

Exceptionally important in this context are the results for the statement 'Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office'. Of the total 27,5 % of all those who expressed strong or partial agreement with this statement, an average of 64,35 % defined

themselves as Eastern Orthodox Christians, and 21,25 % as Muslims. Both percentages are higher than the general distribution of these religious groups, but the share of Muslims is twice higher.

Whereas the largest group of Orthodox Christians chose a neutral position on the question, the greatest share of Muslims indicated strong agreement with this statement (27,1 %). If, to these, we add the figures for general agreement that unbelieving politicians are unfit for public office (15,4 %), we will have reason to formulate yet another research hypothesis, regarding the influence of religious morality on the other values in the representations of Muslims in Bulgaria. Religious affiliation is turning into an important factor with regard to the general social, civic, and political attitudes of Muslims. Even if this trend is present only among certain groups of Muslims, it is worth being the object of further research efforts.

The distribution of answers on the scale of agreement with the statement *Religious leaders should not influence government decisions* shows agreement among Orthodox Christians and Muslims alike. In both groups there are normal proportions of answers; here, 60,4 % of all respondents have expressed agreement with this statement. Yet, though by the small percentage of 8,1 % of all respondents, some have disagreed with the statement; here the Orthodox Christians have a predominant share (59,0 %), while Muslims are only 6,3 %. This result indicates the presence of a connection between religious affiliation, as a significant factor of approval for persons engaged in public office, and a higher level of support for a more active participation of religious leaders in determining the agenda of society.

Even more importantly, there is a proportionately higher presence of Christians among those who have agreed with the statement that religious leaders should not influence government decisions – 62,9 % of the Christians have expressed disagreement, and 55,1 % of all those who have expressed disagreement are Christians.

It seems that the study has registered important changes taking place in the whole complex set of relationships between religion and politics. This topic, which has comparatively rarely been in the focus of Bulgarian research interest, requires with increasing urgency to be rethought. According to one of the preliminary research hypotheses of this analysis, the attitude towards political life is mediated by priorities such as religion, work, and family (Galabov 2007b). Hence, a leading direction in further research should the question as to the existence of a certain distance and lack of integration with respect to social processes, something that can be related to the relative closure within the framework of the religious and regional community; the results indicate a higher degree of coinciding between these two forms of integration amongst Muslims than amongst Orthodox Christians.

The mobile characteristics of identity

Achieving ethnic and/or religious identity – but not so much in its spatial coordinates as in respect of its quality (which results from correlating to the others) – is an important step towards overcoming the perception of others are strangers, a perception that may be considered as based on a lack of intersubjectivity. Life together in a living present tends to reject the image of the isolated and self-reproducing community and asserts the notion of a multi-cultural, poly-religious and multi-ethnic reality. The active participants in such a reality correlate to one another in the course of constituting it. A possible approach in the framework of this perspective would be to look for the dimensions of ethnic and religious identity in the social context, where the predominating trends are actually realized.

The analysis of the Islamic community (the Ummah) as a space of total identity can be meaningfully conducted in two basic aspects: the existing notion of community that Muslims have, and the specific nature of the mutual personal and community ties that the faithful maintain when coexisting with the Others. The unwavering idealization of the Ummah in both the historical and theological aspect is a trend that shapes individual and collective consciousness. People are seen as either believers in Allah or infidels. Territories and countries are either "the House of Islam" or "the House of War". Armed conflicts are either a "holy war" for the true faith or "internecine conflict" (Fitnah). Taxation is either sanctioned by Sharia law or is non-legitimate, etc. In this concrete but comprehensive sense, religious affiliation, the belonging to the Ummah, is established, maintained and transmitted as the fundament of a person's life; it turns into a total identity. Given the dissolved boundaries between the religious and the secular sphere, the religious norms become a factor that regulates and largely predetermines the social and political reality in the Ummah.

In Islamic cannon, all possible human activities are encompassed by two categories: permissible (halal) and prohibited (Haram). The religious identity of the true believer would be impossible without this all-encompassing regulation. In other words, all values in Islam are refracted through the lens of "religion", which is not one value among others but is the integral environment that determines, encourages or penalizes human conduct. How is the integration of the faithful within modern society and the nation state made possible? To what degree are the inner dynamics and cohesion of the Islamic community influenced by the transformations occurring in society? (Given that these are transformation whose historical memory is linked to a different religious dimension and whose political development in history includes periods of passionate rejection of all religious traditions.) Closely connected

with these two questions are two essential aspects of the norm in the Islamic community: *1.The prescribed rules of relations and conduct in the family, and 2. Canonic principles of the relation between parents and children and, in a broader aspect, between adults and young people.*

The identification structure of Bulgarian Muslims is realized at two levels. The first is the religious one. According to the definitions at this level, the Bulgarian Muslim is a Muslim, the Turk is a Muslim, and the Bulgarian is a non-Muslim. The second level is the ethnic one. According to its definitions, the Bulgarian Muslim is a not pure Turk, the Turk is a Turk, and the Bulgarian is a Bulgarian. On the other hand, religious affiliation increasingly becomes the predominant reference point compared with ethnic self-definition. Under these circumstances, the preconditions exist for a gradual "secondary Turkization" of the Bulgarian Muslims. This trend has a negative effect on ethno-religious relations at the regional level, and it permanently restrains the processes of social integration in the regions with a mixed population. The attempt to abandon a group identity is looked upon with mistrust by both the Bulgarians and the Turks. The Bulgarians, under the influence of their national mythology, are inclined to look upon Bulgarian Muslims as some kind of traitors (who have been made Turks). The Turks, for their part, find it hard to accept the idea that a Muslim does not understand Turkish, regarded as the traditional language for Muslims in Bulgaria. This non-acceptance leaves the Bulgarian Muslims in a very insecure position with respect of their identity.

Bulgarian Turks as they see themselves and as others see them

Each religious community has a set of typical characteristics important for interrelations and interaction with other communities. Along with the visible image of a community, based on observations and social experience, there is an invisible side, based on cultural legacy, assumptions, myths and legends, and/or deduction; that has an essential and symmetrically important function in the formation of social perceptions. The study of this complex is of interdependent scientific importance. According to the theorem from Thomas, „ even when social perception is not real, if people assume it to be real, it becomes so in its consequences." In our case, perceptions of religious community dictate and permanently de-termine attitudes towards that community and have various foreseeable and unforeseeable consequences in concrete social behaviour and forms of coexistence. Ethnoreligious stereotypes in mass perception are a means of articulating accumulated preconceptions or outright prejudices. Our data allow drawing a generalized picture by the Turkish Muslim

community as it exists in the not very homogenous perceptions of others and of their own community. Figures 1 and 2 show the percentage of characteristics indicated as typical for Bulgarian Muslim Turks.

The various communities produce separate, clearly different pictures. In interpreting these figures, we must not forget that communication and information flow is much more intensive and complete within a community than between communities (Theory suggests that the best strategy for overcoming ethnic and religious differences is to increase information exchange between groups). Therefore, one's perceptions of one's own group appear to be better justified. There is also an inevitable bonus on the positive side when evaluating one's own community. What is revealing are not the absolute values of the indicated percentages but rather the hierarchy of the indicated qualities and the accumulation of responses for some of them. The relatively low values of a given percentage may signify the lack of former experience and/or impressions.
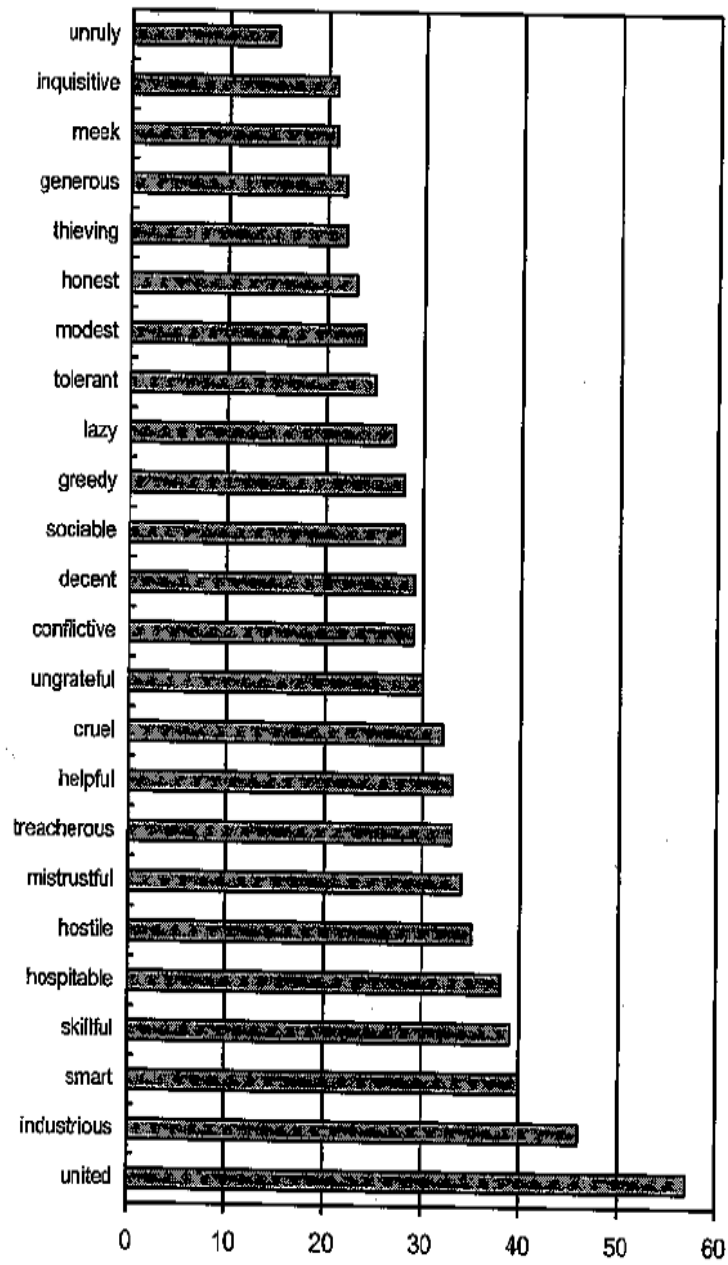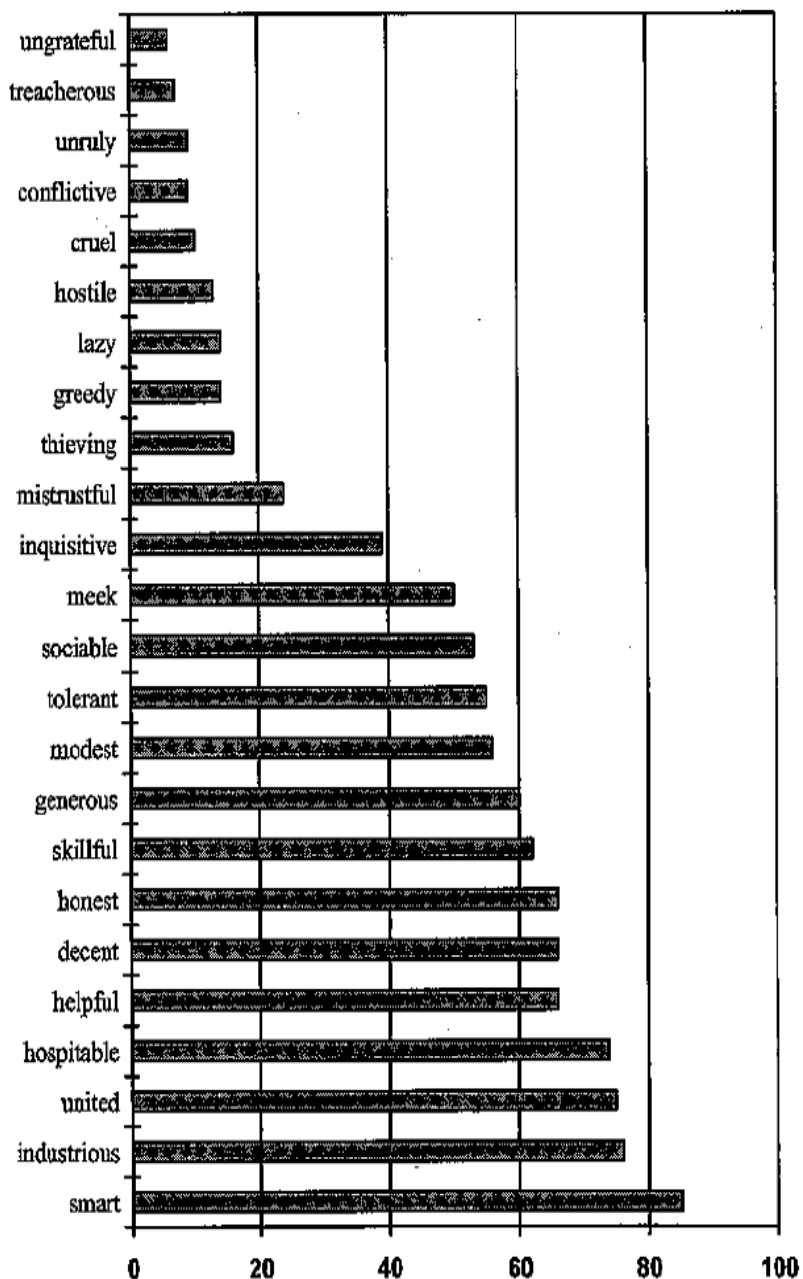
Figure 1. *How Bulgarians perceive Turks (%)*

Figure 2. *The self-perception of Bulgarian Turks (%)*

The ambiguous mass perception of the position of Islam and of its adherents is also very interesting. Bulgarian Turks live with definite notions of the subordinate position of their religion in Bulgaria, and of the disadvantageous position of their religious community. This feeling strengthens their inner solidarity. Other religious communities are more inclined to consider Islam a privileged religion: Orthodox Christians are twice as inclined, and Protestants and Armenian Christians are twenty times more inclined. It is possible that

impressions acquired from the mass media concerning religion-based political representation have influenced this estimate.

These social perceptions imply the idea of domination of one religious community over the other; this is not to say that one ethnic group distinctly controls the other and imposes its own religion, appropriating the larger portion of resources and privileges. Rather, there is a public awareness of forms of segregation, of a certain mistrust and isolation of "others," a specific representation of identity and the periodically recurring need for renegotiating ethnic representation in official state structures (Bosakov 2000) .

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