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Waikato Islamic Studies Review

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Extremism and Diversity: A Religious Response to an Islamic Issue

Douglas Pratt

Douglas Pratt is Professor of Religious Studies and Convenor of the Studies in Religion programme at the University of Waikato. Professor Pratt was appointed the foundation lecturer in Religious Studies in 1988. After 30 years the University is to close the programme and Professor Pratt's position will be disestablished in July 2018. However, Professor Pratt continues as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Bern, Switzerland, and a Team Leader of the international research project, Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History 600-1900, which is based at the University of Birmingham, England. His most recent books are *Christian Engagement with Islam: Ecumenical Journeys since 1910* (Brill, 2017) and *Religion and Extremism: Rejecting Diversity* (Bloomsbury, 2017).

Abstract: *Religions espouse values of peace and harmony, even in contexts of challenge and contestation. But religions may also – and do – produce fanatical and radical extremists. Islam is by no means unique in this regard even though, today, it is Muslim extremists that capture the headlines. Religious extremism is an ideologically or theologically based phenomenon requiring to be critically understood in order to be resisted and ameliorated. I suggest it is the underlying issue of the rejection of diversity which lies at the heart of religious extremism, including Islamic extremism. It is arguably the chief driver of impositional ideologies that manifest in deadly terrorist acts. The paper will suggest an interpretive framework for understanding religious diversity and point to the affirmation of diversity as an answer to extremism.*

Introduction

Religious extremism today poses a particular challenge, or set of challenges. Among them is the specific question of religious responses to the issue of extremist Islam, which itself takes many forms. Religions normally espouse values of peace and harmony, even in contexts of challenge and contestation. But religions may also – and do – produce fanatical and radical extremists. Islam is by no means unique in this regard. But it is from within this faith, and its many communities, that contemporary forms of jihadi extremism utilising a raft of violent behaviours currently captures the global news headlines. Religious extremism, which applies to many religions, and not just Islam, is an ideologically or theologically based phenomenon requiring to be

critically understood in order to be resisted and ameliorated. It is thus imperative to attempt to scrutinise any relationship between religion and extremism both in general, or theoretical, terms as well as empirically in respect to any given religion and concrete situation in which religious actors take centre stage. In this short essay I shall be focussing on the dimension of general theoretical discussion, albeit in light of the contemporary focus on Islamic extremism. Accordingly, I suggest it is the underlying issue of the rejection of diversity – both of religious and other kinds – which lies at the heart of the impositional exclusivism driving religious extremism. It is arguably the underlying driver of the extreme ideologies that manifest in deadly terrorist acts. So what do we mean by ‘rejection of diversity’?

To the extent diversity – the fact of variety, difference, or multiple ‘otherness’ especially of variant religious identities – is called into question, let alone actively rejected, then disharmony, discord and disunity reigns. The reality today is that there is increasing evidence and examples of violent reactions to diversity. Most dramatically in recent years is the example of the forces of ISIS attempting, and to a certain extent succeeding, in eliminating not only alternative religious identities such as Yazidis, but also alternative Muslim identities such as Shi’a and Sufis. The rejection of diversity can be both external and internal, vis-à-vis any given religion. History provides examples, as well as the events of our time. Such rejection is all too often grounded in specific religious ideologies, among other factors. So how may we address the challenge of religious extremism and related terrorism? The primary component in any strategy aimed at countering this extremism and terrorism is to identify and understand the ideological rhetoric and elements within communities from which potential terrorists are likely to come, and by which they are likely to be nourished. To do that, to make sense of any potential data or evidence, we need a framework of interpretation, a lens of perspective, that offers a way of understanding the origin and dynamic structure of religious extremism and so of religiously-

motivated terrorism.¹ Fundamentalism, appropriately and critically understood, is one such lens.

The pernicious persistence of religious extremism is because it is grounded in a specific, and mostly fundamentalist, religious belief system. Although, as Keith Ward remarks, religions as such ‘cannot be exempted from the almost universal human tendency towards hatred of and violence against others’,² the particularities of any given religious extremism are, of course, dependent on the specific religion whence arises the extremism. In a nutshell, any fundamentalist ideology involves a combination of absolute attitudes, values, presuppositions, judgements and so forth, that results in a set of totalizing claims. Fundamentalism is both a specifically focussed mindset and a certain kind of narrow worldview. It has a *modus operandi* indicative of absolutism, which can apply to just about any sphere of human activity. Here our interest is in the link between religious fundamentalism and extremism, including terrorism, to which it may lead.

It is the absolutism of ‘fundamentalism’ which is at the core, and it is manifested in an exclusionary stance that rejects the validity, even presence, of other religions; and often also diversity within its own religion. An absolutist mindset, with an accompanying ideological framework, leads to forms of extremism that can, and do, manifest in violent rejections of that which is different; which is ‘other-than’.

The critical issue of religious extremism is the matter of perceptions of, and responses to, religious diversity or plurality that are held and advanced by the religious communities themselves. While most, if not all, religions promote unity – or internal

¹ See for example, Douglas Pratt, ‘Fundamentalism, Exclusivism and Religious Extremism’, in David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt and David Thomas (eds.), *Understanding Interreligious Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 241-261; – ‘Religion and Terrorism: Christian Fundamentalism and Extremism’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 22:3, June 2010, pp. 438-456; – ‘Religious Fundamentalism: A Paradigm for Terrorism?’ *Australian Religion Studies Review* Vol. 20, No. 2 (2007), 195-215.

² Keith Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?* (Oxford: Lion, 2006), 81. Cf. Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (London: The Bodley Head, 2014), 81.

uniformity and coherence – the lived reality of religious people everywhere is the context of, and contention with, variety and difference, and hence competing claims for religious allegiance and identity, whether external or internal. And whereas pluralism, broadly speaking, is the stance that embraces the fact of diversity and gives it a positive interpretation, exclusivism, as the word suggests, regards only one religion, or version of a religion, as correct, true or valid, with all others necessarily ‘excluded’ as false, or simply ignored as meaningless.

One positive way of thinking about religious diversity sees religious differences as reflecting a parallelism of religious phenomena. An affirmation of pluralism asserts authenticity of phenomena across the different religions without commenting on, or judging, matters of validity or veracity. Religious plurality may then be interpreted in terms of dynamic parallels of religious intuition and response. This yields a point of commonality that yet preserves the integrity of difference. Religions are not variants of the same thing, but they may variably express parallel processes. For example, all major religions contain a narrative account of an inherent less-than-satisfactory state of affairs for human existence, howsoever arrived at in terms of specific narratives. In all cases, however, this state of affairs requires some transformative action to overcome and so enable the attainment of an ultimate outcome or destiny. The stories expressing this vary, as do the doctrines and teachings relating thereto. But the dynamic contained within the differing narratives redounds with parallel similarities.

Yet another pluralist paradigm arises out of global ethical concerns and the awareness of religions’ contribution to the future of humankind – for good, or ill. It is succinctly expressed: No world peace without peace between the religions; No peace between the religions without dialogue between the religions. The aim is to promote interreligious détente and dialogical relations centring on global ethical concerns.³ In

³ Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).

the process this promotes an affirmation of religious diversity on the basis of shared ethical responsibilities.

What we call 'pluralism' is itself no one thing. There are different ways of seeing and understanding what affirming diversity might look like. This is the positive side of things. What about the negative? What can we say, and do, about religious extremism? Are there better ways of responding to it than what seems to be today's currency of extreme reaction – attempts at elimination, of immigrant and refugee exclusion, and making war?

Generally speaking, religion is about commitment to that which is conceived as 'absolute'. Religious absolutism, however, refers to an ideological construct that holds a specific set of religious beliefs, teachings, values and worldview absolutely and without any possibility of question or critique. It is this that often goes by the name of 'fundamentalism'. Today we can distinguish between passive, assertive and impositional forms. Passive fundamentalism amounts to a sincerely held set of beliefs, but not impinging or imposing upon anyone else. These exist within the marketplace of non-threatening religious belief options. But then comes the more rigid and insistent view of an assertive or 'hard-line' phase. This is often marked by a sense of withdrawal and by expressions of being necessarily oppositional to the wider world. Assertive fundamentalism sets the scene for the religious extremism of the third phase, impositional fundamentalism, which may certainly manifest in violent behaviours. Extremist attitudes here result in violence, including terrorism.

The violent behaviours in which religious extremists indulge are by no means random or arbitrary. There is a very particular logic and rationale that applies. 'The groups and individuals engaged in violence construct and maintain a social and theological reality in which killing and mayhem are legitimated'.⁴ They generally take action

⁴ Selengut, 'The Sociology of Religious Violence', 89.

against that which is perceived to be a threat or danger and regard any responsive measure as ‘an ethical and moral act’⁵. The ideology of religious extremism is not confined to one religion alone. Violence that is fomented by extremists of any religion can be viewed as an attempt ‘to achieve specific goals deemed appropriate and necessary in particular religious worldviews ... where sacred texts and traditions continue to hold people’s pious allegiance’.⁶ And, of course, religious extremists portray themselves as ‘true believers’ or ‘holy warriors’, or something similar, and may even be upheld as such by a wider supportive constituency. This is very evident in some quarters of the Islamic world where there is tacit, and at times explicit, support for hard-line Islamism and jihadi activism from within Muslim communities. Although it is equally true that there are mosques and Muslim communities that disavow, and even expel, hard-line extremists.

While it is usefully instructive and informative to engage in analysis and reflection on the nature and extent of this extremism, a key pressing question remains for wider secular and pluralist societies: What can we do about it? In recent years, much attention has been paid to the issue of countering violent extremism (CVE) – a term that embraces more than just religious extremism. CVE is a field of both academic study and practitioner engagement. It typically has two dimensions – the application of a security apparatus to detect and thwart violent extremist acts before they take place; and engagement with communities from which extremists emerge in order, especially, to promote dialogue and education with the aim of undercutting the appeal of extremist ideologies and claims. Thus far the attention of such strategies has been largely with Islamic extremists and Muslim communities. Is this adequate? Given the anti-Muslim extremisms driving Islamophobia and the evidence of reactive or mutual

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Selengut, ‘The Sociology of Religious Violence’, 96.

extremisms emanating from negative perceptions of and reactions to Islam, should not similar strategies be applied to other religious extremists and their communities?

The specific issue is that of combatting diversity rejection. This is, at heart, the issue of human beings learning to live together in peaceful productive relationships not simply in spite of, but in positive affirmation and appreciation for, the rich diversity of the identity and make-up of individuals and societies. The thrust of my own research suggests that, when it comes to religious extremism it is the underlying problem of the rejection of diversity – the eliminative denial of differing ‘others’ or of that which presents alterities and alternatives to a status quo – that needs to be addressed, both ideologically and practically. The American scholar, Mark Juergensmeyer, suggests ‘some assertion of moderation in religion’s passion, and some acknowledgement of religion in elevating the spiritual and moral values of public life’ are needed in order to end religious violence and that, indeed, ‘the cure for religious violence may ultimately lie in a renewed appreciation for religion itself’.⁷ In other words, if religion is part of the problem, it is also definitely part of the solution. And perhaps no small part.

The answer to the problem of religious extremism will not be found by looking outside of religion and its ideological structures, but looking to religion and into its ideologies. If extremism is a manifestation of the rejection of diversity, and rejection flows from an ideology of exclusivism resulting in exclusionary stances, then countering exclusivist thinking and ideologies would be a good place to start. Furthermore, the capacity for peaceful co-existence in a context of mutual acceptance and respect often directly advocated by religions is premised on the capacity to assert some form of pluralism: to affirm diversity. Hence the possibility that religions may counter religious extremism via the route of affirming religious diversity is something that needs to be actively promoted.

⁷ Ibid, 249.

A self-understanding of being a unique and valid member of a diverse community of faith needs to be asserted as inherent to one's own religious identity. At the same time, this needs to be acknowledged as being likewise the case with the religious identities of others. Thus affirming mutual uniqueness and integrity is the chief counterpoint to exclusivist ideologies. Such a perspective stands in contrast to the paradigm of religious exclusivism that is a specific marker of highly conservative or fundamentalist religion. Indeed, it is from within this latter ideological perspective that the rejection of diversity, and so the extremisms that manifest it, spring. It is diversity affirmation that will, in the end, combat exclusivist rejection and, in so doing, neutralize religious extremism. And if we are clear that it is certain affirmations that will counter the negativities of exclusivism and rejection that give rise to extremism and terrorism, then we have a clear aim or goal in mind. The next step is to design the educative and promotional programmes to bring that about.

The Phenomenon of Natural Environment as it Affects Man: The Quranic View

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Abstract: *Muslims believe that the Holy Qur'an is the final scripture of Allah sent to mankind through the Prophet Muhammad. As such, it is considered a guide for all humanity and a comprehensive word of God that left no stone unturned concerning the affairs of creation. In the light of the above elucidation, the Qur'an has called the attention of man to the natural phenomena and the environment around him when it talks about water, earth, fire, heavens and air that are considered as the main elements which not only made the existence possible, but also gave birth to life itself. More so, the continuity of the existence of organic and inorganic matter depends mainly on these elements. The Qur'an has referred to these elements in different ways and for various reasons, sometimes as a blessing and at other times, as a curse. Therefore, this article aims at exploring the extent to which the Qur'an makes reference to nature as a very essential source of life to man and a guide to proper understanding of the need to appreciate the mercy of God. In so doing, reference is made to verses of the Qur'an with regard to the elements earlier mentioned and how they are considered essential for the survival of man on earth. However, any negative change in the natural environment would certainly have an effect on the life of man.*

Introduction

The aim of this essay is to explore the Islamic and Quranic view of the natural environment as perceived by Muslims. Several verses of the Quran tell us that there is a meaning and a purpose behind God's creation. For example, "God created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in play" (Q: 44:38) and "He created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them except with truth" (Q: 15:85). These qualities are made known to us by the Creator's own description of Himself in the Quran and the environment. "He created environment not just a random form, but rather a reflection of the Truth, which is one of the Divine names. Indeed, the environment manifests and reflects a number of the Divine Names and Qualities." Four of these Divine Names are given in the following verse: "He is the First and the Last, The *batin* most near, The *zahir* the Most High may also be interpreted as The Most obvious which corresponds to the natural and surrounding environment ... (Q: 57:3).

The ‘outward’ (*Al-zahir*) among other meaning may include our natural surroundings, the environment. So the environment, as a reflection of the name *Al-zahir*, confirms the mystery of the presence of God in the natural world. This natural world was created by Him, for His purpose and that confers upon the natural environment a sacredness which must be recognized by human beings. This, then, means that man must have the utmost care and respect towards nature. Related verses of the Quran, prophetic traditions on environment and other data from *fiqh* works are cited and discussed.

The Concept of Environment

The environment is defined as the sphere or context where human beings live. This includes all the natural and other phenomena that affects humans and is affected by them and from which they get their means of subsistence such as food, clothing, medicine and shelter and wherein they exercise their relations with their human and non-human fellow creatures.¹ The environment is a set of conditions, substances and interactions taking place in any sphere where life exists.²

The most important aspect of it is the natural environment which is the focus of this paper and includes the earth, water, air, and living organisms, be they animals or plants. The definition also includes the different natural operations resulting from the interaction of the elements making up the natural system of human beings.³

God’s *Khalifah*

Muslims believe that man’s rights and responsibilities toward the environment are summarized by the Qur’anic word *khalifa* (viceroys or representative), a term which God uses to introduce Adam to the Angels: “verily! I am going to create generation after generation on earth or (representative)” (Q: 2:30), and “He it is Who made you

¹ Michael Allaby (1981)

² Sayyid, J. M. (1987)

³ Sayyid, J. M. (1999)

successor, generation after generation on earth.” (Q: 35:39). Therefore, Islamic scholars assert that human beings are God’s representatives and stewards on earth. This means that man is charged to maintain and tend the world and should not try to destroy it. The linguistic feminine gender with which the earth is referred to in the Quran creates the feeling that it stands as a mother to all the creatures, after all their needs for survival and provisions are already provided by God in and on the earth.⁴ ‘On earth will be a dwelling place for you and an enjoyment for a time.’ (Q: 2:36) and “He, it is Who has made the earth subservient to you, so walk in the paths thereof and eat of His provision.” (Q: 67:15) The earth is made subservient to man, and she provides for and benefits him.

However, this subjugation must be understood in the light of what has already been said about everything in nature being created by God and in constant praise, glorification and submission to God. Human beings thus have no right to plunder the earth’s resources, damage the environment, and dismiss concepts of natural sustainability. Although the earth has been subjugated to human beings because human beings are apex of creation and God’s viceroys on earth, they may not act in a way that damages the creation of God. Human beings are after all only mere stewards, and not owners. "Know you not that it is to him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and beside God you have neither protector nor helper?" (Q: 2:107) Thus human beings may take only the basic sustenance they need with grateful appreciation of the fact that they did not make this sustenance but that it is a gift from their Creator which they have no right to abuse.⁵

⁴ Gar Smith (2002)

⁵ Ghazi M. et al (2010)

Relationship between the Environment and Man

Muslims believe that the relation between man and his environment has been explained by the Qur'an thus: "We will show them our signs in the universe and in their own selves until it becomes manifest to them that it is the truth." (Q: 41:53) Furthermore "And on the earth are signs for those who have faith. And in yourselves, will then not see?" (Q: 51:20-21) In these verses God links His signs in the environment with His signs within us. This means that the Divine Reality is reflected in both the micro and macro existence which is man and the universe respectively.

In other words, man is a small world, and the universe is a large man, and by recognizing the signs in either of these worlds we can come to know the Truth or God, for His signs are both within us and within the world. Whereas the natural world cannot change itself, man can change and also he can alter the nature positively and negatively, because he has freedom of choice, he can choose to disregard God's commandments. When man does this, he becomes the lowest of the low (Q: 95:5). Man's corruption is then bound, by the inherent reflection between him and the environment, to corrupt the world, both literally and spiritually through man's actions or inactions.

Thus mankind's inward corruption is not only reflected in the world's outward corruption, it is its actual cause, both directly and physically (through man's pollution of the world and his upsetting the natural balance), spiritually and existentially. This is the real reason why no amount of scientific environmental action can fully work without spiritual renewal within mankind, and why conversely, spiritual renewal needs also environmental action to be successful. This particular insight is what is perhaps most lacking in the environment saving efforts of our day, environmentalists think they know the world and can save it without knowing and saving themselves first.⁶

⁶ Sayyid, J. M. (1999)

Holy Qur'an and the Environment

The Quran instructs Muslims not to misuse or squander the environment that has been given as sustenance for man. "But spend not wasteful in manner of a spendthrift verily, the spendthrifts are brothers of the devils, and the devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord." (Q: 17:26-27) Man and his natural environment have been created and arranged in a carefully balanced proportion and any disruption would certainly boomerang on man. "And the heaven He has raised it high and He has set the measure. In order that you may not transgress the balance." (Q: 55:7-8) If these warnings are ignored, an unsustainable lifestyle becomes rampant and this attitude throws the environment out of balance, creating hardship, misery and abject poverty for many people.⁷

Components of the Natural Environment System

The planet can be regarded as a complex system composed of four sub-systems: the earth system, the air system, the water system, and the vital system. Each of these basic subsystems is further divided into other subsystems interacting with each other.

The Earth System:

The earth system is the upper crust of earth's surface on which human beings live and interact with its elements. The depth of the crust that is important for human beings does not exceed a few or a hundred meters. It is at this level that we find all the minerals, except for oil fields, and mines wells, which can reach kilometres in depth.⁸

⁷ Sayyid, J. M. (1999)

⁸ Ghazi M. et al (2010)

The Air, Earth, Vital and Water systems

When Allah prepared the earth for human beings to live on, He made it suitable and adequate for life. He created trees and plants, and made rivers run for their sake. He put at their disposal daylight and night, the sun and the moon; He also bestowed them with the boon of rationality and put nature at the service of human beings. Allah said: *«Have We not made the earth as bed, and the mountains as pegs? and we have created you in pairs, and we have made your sleep as a thing for rest, and we have made the night as a covering, and we have made the day for livelihood, and We have built above you seven strong (heavens), and we have made (therein) a shining lamp (sun), and we have sent down from the rainy clouds abundant water, that we may produce therewith corn and vegetations, and garden of thick growth»* (al-Naba' 78:6-16).

On the creation of the earth God said: *«I called them not to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor (even) their own creation: Nor is it for Me to take as helpers such as lead (men) astray!»* (al-Kahf,18: 51).

Allah created humans from earth, from clay, from mud molded into shape, from sounding clay like pottery; then He breathed into him the soul. The origin of human beings, as well as their life elements, is from earth, from clay. This is the fecund crust which provides all the necessary elements of life. Scientists have analyzed the human body and have found that it is made up of 16 elements. The first element is oxygen and the last is manganese. The crust of earth is made up of the same elements, for the elements constituting the enriched clay are the same as those existing in the human body.⁹

Allah ordered human beings not to do mischief on earth. He said in his Holy Book: - *«And do no do mischief on earth, after it hath been set in order»* (al-A'rāf, 7: 56).

⁹ Ghazi M. et al, (2010).

«Would you then, if you were given the authority, do mischief in the Land, and sever your ties of kinship» (Muhammad 47: 22) «...and they (ever) strive to do mischief on earth. And Allah does not like the mischief-makers» (al-Ma'ida 5: 64). Doing mischief on earth consists: destroying the soil to establish settlements on it, causing erosion of the soil, deforestation and desertification, and not flattening the soil after the extraction of mines from it etc, the activity that had started since thousands of years ago.¹⁰

The Hydrological System

This system comprises water in its three states: gas, liquid, and solid, and as it exists in the air, on the surface of the earth, or underground. Water is mentioned in the Qur'an in 63 places, which are classified under the following categories: Water was the first thing to have ever existed Allah said: «...And His throne was over the water—that He might try you, which of you is the best in deeds...» (Hud 11: 7).

The Prophet said: «Allah was and there was nothing prior to Him; His Throne was over water; then He created earth and the heavens, and has everything written in His Book» al-Bukhari hadith 3190. All Organisms Depend on Water: Allah said: «...And We made from water every living thing...» (al-Anbiyya'21: 30). Research has shown that 70 % of the constituents of the human body are from water. When this percentage diminishes, the human body is exposed to diseases. If it loses 20 %, the person in question will die. The origin of human beings is from water.¹¹ The Quran reads: «It is He who has created man from water, and has He appointed for him kindred by blood and kindred by marriage: And your Lord is Ever All-Powerful» (al-Furqan 25: 54). Water is the source of all vegetation. The Quran reads: «It is He who sends down water (rain) from the skies:,and with it we bring forth vegetation of all kinds...» (al-An'am 6: 99). «...and

¹⁰ Ghazi M. et al, (2010).

¹¹ Muhammad Shomali, (2008).

We send down water (rain) from the sky, and cause plants of every goodly kind to grow their in» (Luqman 31: 10).

Water is the cause of the diversification of vegetation on earth. The Quran reads: *«He it is Who sends down water (rain) from the sky; from it you drink, and from it (grows) the vegetation on which you send your cattle pasture. With it He causes to grow for you the crops, the olives, the date-palms, the grapes and every kind of fruit. Verily in this is needed an evident proof and a manifest sign for a people who give thought» (al-Nahl 16: 10-11).* *«See you not that Allān sends down water (rain) from the sky, and We produce therewith fruits of various colors» (al-Fatir 35: 27).* Water is a source of sustenance, and the Quran reads: *«"and He sends down water (rain) from the sky, and brought forth therewith fruits as provision for» (al-Baqarah 2: 22)*

Water is a source of essential fluids, and the Quran reads: *«Then tell me about the water you drink? Is it you who cause it from the rain-clouds to come down, or We are the Causer of it to come down? If We willed, We verily could make it salt (and undrinkable): why then do you not give thanks (to Allah)?» (al-Waqi'a 68-70).*

Water as promises and threat. The Quran reads: *«Say (O Muhammad: Tell me? If (all) your water were to sink away, who then can supply you with flowing (spring) water» (al-Mulk 67: 30).* Water is a source of fear and hope. The Quran reads: *«It is He who shows you the lightning, as a fear (for travellers) and as a hope (for those who wait for rain), And it is He Who brings up (or originates) the clouds, heavy (with water)!"»(al-Ra'd 13:12) «And among His signs, is that He shows you the lightning. for fear and for hope, and He sends down water (rain) from the sky and therewith revives the earth after its death...» (Rum 30: 24).*

People need to preserve water in wells or springs throughout the year. The Quran reiterates: *«And We send down from the sky water (rain) in (due) measure, and We gave it lodging in the earth, and verily We are able to take it away» (al-Mu'minun 23:*

18). *«And We have made therein gardens of date-palms and grapes, and We have caused springs of water to gush forth therein»* (Ya-sin 36: 34). *«And We poured out on them rain from the skies in abundance, and made the rivers to flow under them and We destroyed them for their sins, and We create after them other generations»* (al-An'am 6: 6) Water is a Cause of Destruction Allah said: *«So we opened the gates of the heaven with water pouring forth, and We caused springs to gush forth from the earth. So the waters (of the heaven and the earth) met for a matter predestined* (al-Qamar 11-12) *«And leave the sea as it is (quiet and divided) furrow (divided) Verily they are a host to be drowned»* (al-Dukhan 44: 24) Water is a source of punishment on the Day of Judgement. The Quran reads: *«In front of him (every obstinate, arrogant dictator) is hell and he will be made to drink boiling festering water»* (Ibrahim 14: 16) Water is a Source of Demographic Growth Allah said: *«So let man see from what he is created, He is created from a water gushing forth, Proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs»* (al-Tariq 5-7).¹²

Water is a Means of Transportation

Allah said: *«Allah, it is He Who has subjected to you the sea, that ships may sail through it and by His command and that you may seek of His Bounty, and that you may be grateful»* (al-Jathiya 45:12)

Water is a Source of Food

Water is a permanent source of water food and animal proteins. Allah said in His Book: *«Lawful to you is (the pursuit) of water-game and its use for food—for the benefit of yourselves...»* (al-Ma'idah 5: 96). *«And the two seas (kinds of water) are not alike: this is palatable, sweet, and pleasant to drink, and that is bitter. And from them both you eat flesh tender meat (fish) and derive the ornaments that you wear...»* (al-Fatir 35: 12).

¹² Ghazi M. et al, 2010.

Water heralds Glad Tidings, Mercy, Cleanliness and is a Source of Life for Mankind
Allah said: *«And it is He who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy (rain), and We send down pure water from the sky»* (al-Furqan 25: 48).
«...and He caused water (rain) to descend on you from the sky, to clean you thereby...»
(al-Anfal 8: 11) Allah said: *«And We send down blessed water (rain) from the sky, then We produce therewith gardens of grain (every kind of harvests) that are reaped»* (Qaf 50: 9)

The Vital System

This includes the flora and fauna on the earth and in water. The climate and water elements, the diversity of soil and of the natural appearance of the earth contribute to the formation of a host of environmental plant systems. Likewise, the interaction between water, soil and natural vegetation plays an important role in the distribution of natural animal life.

Human life and that of other organisms depends on vegetation resources. The food that we eat is made of vegetable products such as wheat, corn, potatoes, rice, etc... Allah said: *«He it is Who sends down water (rain) from the sky; from it you drink, and from it (grows) the vegetation on which you send your cattle pasture. With it He causes to grow for you the crops, the olives, the date-palms, the grapes and every kind of fruit. Verily in this is needed an evident proof and a manifest sign for a people who give thought»* (al-Nahl 16: 10-11) *«Do they not observe - how much of every good kind We cause to grow»* (al-Shu'ara: 26: 7).

Human beings also live on animals which, in turn, feed on plants. Warming and providing light to our homes and the energy necessary for our factories has always depended on coal produced from forests. It also depends on petrol, a substance having its origins in plant and animal geological sediments. Similarly, the wood from which the

furniture of our homes is manufactured, and the silk, cotton, garment from which our clothes are made, as well as numerous other drugs, would not have been available had not plants existed.

The various kinds of forests existing in the world contain the most important vegetation resources. Forests are the sources of many products. Besides wood and fuel, human beings get acids, fodder, glue, alcohol, anti-freezing liquids, paints, disinfectants, oils, paper, drugs, dissolvent etc... from them. It is estimated that about 4500 manufactured substances are partly or totally obtained from forests.¹³ It is true that forests are the lungs of our planet. They preserve the necessary gas rates in the atmosphere. They also play a major part in rainfall. It has been noticed that the amount of rainfall has decreased during the last 26 years to an average of 24 % of what it was before the logging of forests in the Republic of Columbia.¹⁴

Animal Wealth

Animals are a direct source of nutrition for human beings. Moreover, they depend on some animals help also in agriculture or as means of transportation. The Quran states: *«And cattle He has created for you (men): From them ye derive warmth and numerous benefits. And of their (meat) ye eat.»* (al-Nahl: 5) *«And (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride and use for show, And He has created (other) things of which ye have no knowledge»* (al-Nahl: 8)

Humans benefit either directly or indirectly from land animals and their products. A number of animals and birds have faced extinction either directly as a result of indiscriminate hunting or indirectly as a result of the destruction of the environment suitable for their living and reproduction, or still as a result of the clearing of woodland

¹³ Ghazi M. et al, 2010.
Ghazi M. et al, 2010. ¹⁴

for agriculture and grazing. This has greatly affected the biodiversity system and has jeopardized the environmental balance which Allah had created.¹⁵

Islam and Natural Reserves

There are several Hadith regarding the environment. Muslims believe the Prophet designated some places in Mecca and Medina to protect and conserve the fauna and flora within the two holy places and its environs. Abbas reported that the Prophet said: “This land was protected by Allah on the day He created heavens and earth; no one was allowed to engage in battle in it before me; and even then, it was permitted only at a specific time during the day; it is a protected place till the Day of Judgement; no cut of its trees, no hunting, and no defecation.”¹⁶ Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet said: “Ibrahim made Mecca into a sanctuary and I do the same for al-Madina; no hunting and no logging in its surrounding area.”

It is evident that Islam adopted the principle of natural reserves with specified borders and limits, and enacted legislation to protect it. Thus, Islam was a pioneer in introducing such advanced measures as environment protection. Concerning the pilgrim who wore his Sacred robe (pilgrim’s garb) in Mecca, anyone who was found hunting an animal or felling a natural tree not grown by man, is indicted for committing a misdemeanour. From a religious point of view, such person has committed a sin and has to ask for forgiveness. He should also be fined and pay the equivalent of what he has cut or has killed; the fine should be in kind (of those animals found in the reserve).¹⁷

The man who committed the crime is also subjected to another punishment: the authorities may confiscate the timber or meat acquired illicitly, if he is a pilgrim. But if the act was committed by a person who wore not the pilgrim’s garb, he is considered to have committed a sin and should ask for forgiveness.

¹⁵ Ghazi M. et al, 2010.

¹⁶ Al-Bukhari, (1991)

¹⁷ (*al-Tirmidi* nd)

Penalties for those who encroach on the sacred precincts of Mecca and kill, either deliberately or because they forget the Islamic ban are of many kinds. The first punishment involves offering the equivalent of what is killed as alms to Mecca and its people. The second option for atonement is feeding the poor and the guilty party fasting. In all the cases, there is a punishment for he who dares to harm life on the reserved land or kill animals.¹⁸

This clear legislation ensures the protection of life on the land. Only in this way, could animals, plants and birds prosper. Scientists estimate that the destruction of vegetation and forests has reached such an alarming level that half of all forestry that existed in 1950 has been felled since that year. In 1990, only 560 protected forests existed in the world, covering about 4% of all the forests in the world.¹⁹

Conclusion

It is clear through this paper that Muslims believe that the human being is no more the son of his environment as the parable of Arabia goes but a creature among the creatures of the environment; his living and survival are attached to the survival of his natural environment. Any evil alternation he makes in the natural environment will negatively affect his living naturally. When man destroys the natural environment, knowingly or unknowingly, he is really trying to commit suicide. For Muslims, the Quran has proved to man this in various verses stating the importance of the environment as the source of man and his continual existence. Furthermore, the traditional Hadith reported from the prophet have laid the foundation of protecting the environment. For Muslims then, there is a clear religious imperative to take action with regards the protection of the environment so the process of safeguarding the natural environment should not be left to the international organizations and regional governments alone but it should be

¹⁸ Sayyid Sabiq (1998)

¹⁹ Sayyid, J. M. (1999)

extended to the local and state government levels as well as to the community and individual levels.

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Muslim Youth and Societal Development: The Case of Nasarawa State in Nigeria

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Abstract: *A linkage between Muslim youth and societal development is obvious and lifelong. This interaction is not only symbiotically connected, but one depends on the other for its sustenance. Therefore, the role of Muslim youth in the development of Nasarawa State in Nigeria, Africa, cannot be overstated. The youth are the engine of growth and development because they provide the labour force for production of goods and service in the state. Thus, the importance of the development of Muslim youth is crucial for the entire developmental processes and aspirations of any society and in this sense, productive youth are acknowledged as the cornerstone for societal rejuvenation.*

Introduction

Youth is the time of life between adolescence and adulthood, especially the period before a child becomes an adult.¹ The youth, in terms of an individual's level of dependency (which can be marked in various ways according to different cultural perspective), refers to young people who still rely on their family emotionally and economically.² The population of youth in Nasarawa State of Nigeria is about forty seven percent (47%), although national and international multi-dimensional classifications of youth obscure these figures; the Nigeria National Youth Policy regards anybody between the ages of 18-35 years as a youth, whereas the United Nations describes anyone within the age bracket of 15-24 years as youth. Also, the Commonwealth recognizes the ages between 16-29 years as youth. However, in Nigeria youth have the larger percentage of active economic and political population, it is pertinent to stress at this juncture that in whatever circumstances youth constitute a fundamental group for any nation. Hence the need for the youth to rise up to the

¹ Joanna Turnbull, *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, 8th Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.1730.

² Andy Furlong, *Youth Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2012). pp. 2-3.

challenge of moving Nigeria to greater heights.³

The age of youth is a period of great change and hope for the future. It can be the happiest and most productive time of a person's life, yet can also be fraught with numerous psychological, sociological and spiritual crises. Because the young people of any society carry the future of their nations on their shoulders, their problems and troubles should be of utmost concern for everyone around them and solutions to these difficulties must be practical and concrete.

Young people who follow Islam may become a source of pride, inspiration, and strength for the global Muslim community. They can offer hope for the future and a cure for the ills that plague the world. The altruistic reward that pious Muslim youth pursue lies not only in this world but in the external life to come.⁴ A society can only be made by those who live in it, and similarly a religion can only stand firmly by the help of its adherents.⁵ It might therefore be considered incumbent upon the youth to put into action all the positive lessons they have learned which emanates from their faith with conviction and sincerity.

The Concept of Youth in the Qur'an

For Muslims, Islam has provided a perfect code of life which addresses all human concerns at every stage of life regardless of status, gender and ethnicity. The term 'youth' appears fourteen times in the Qur'an using four different words. These are all contained in the following verses of the Qur'an:

And We have enjoined upon man, to his parents, good treatment. His mother carried him with hardship and gave birth to him with hardship, and his gestation and weaning

³ I Gandhi, "The need for youth to be patriotic to become self-reliant". News Analysis on Rima Radio, 2015, p.1.

⁴ Muhammad Salih Al-Uthaymeen, *Youth's Problems*, (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2011), p.33.

⁵ Ibid. p.25.

is (period) thirty months. Until, when he reaches maturity and reaches (the age of) forty years, he says...⁶

And whoever of you have not the means wherewith to wed free believing women, they may wed believing girls from among those whom your right hand possession.⁷

In this particular verse, the word “*Fataya-tikum*” means Slave girls (youthful girls) which are allowed to be weds by believers who have no means to marry or free girl. Elsewhere the Qur’an reads “And women in the city said: “the wife of the Aziz is seeking to seduce her (slave) young man.”⁸ This incident refers to an occasion when the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph in English) was accosted by the wife of a chief and he refused her sexual demands. In another place the word “*Fatayaan*” was used to means two young men (i.e. those in prison with Prophet Yusuf) as contained in the following verse, “And there entered with him two young men in the prison...”⁹ The Qur’an utilizes the word youth as “*Fiityatu*” to mean young men in this verse (Mention) when the youths retreated to the cave and said, “our Lord grant us from Yourself mercy and prepare for us from our affair right guidance”.¹⁰

This story informs readers and listeners about those young men who fled from their people for the sake of their religion, fearing persecution. They took refuge in the cave of a mountain, where they hid. In another place the word youth is used as “*Fityatuun*” (young men) as follows: “It is We who relate to you, (O Muhammad), their story with truth. Truly they were youths who believed in their lord (Allah) and We increased them in guidance.”¹¹

This refers to young boys from paradise who will serve the people of paradise, in one

⁶ Qur’an, Surat Al- Ahqaf, 46:15.

⁷ Qur’an, Surat An-Nisaa, 4:25.

⁸ Qur’an, Suratul Yusuf, 12:30.

⁹ Qur’an, Suratul Yusuf, 12:36.

¹⁰ Qur’an, Surat Al-Kahf, 18:10.

¹¹ Qur’an, Surat Al-Kahf, 18:13.

stage of life from which they will be never change (i.e. everlasting youth). These are the places in the Qur'an where the term 'youth' appeared with different words but the same or similar meaning.

The Concept of Youth in *Hadith*

In the *hadith* the Prophet Muhammad addressed Muslim youth in different aspects. Reference is made to some *hadiths* that talk about young people and also underline the merit of youthfulness, the enviable position young people occupied in the heart of Muhammad, and the care he had for their welfare, their religious discipline and self-control, the highly commendable role they played during his lifetime, their high sense of responsibility and generosity, their gallantry, and their sacrifice. Also mentioned is the confidence that was in their future. Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet Muhammad had said:

Seven are (the persons) whom Allah would give protection with His Shade on the day when there would be no shade but that of Him: A just ruler, A youth who grew up with the worship of Allah, A person whose heart is attached to the Mosques; Two persons who love and meet each other and depart from each other for the sake of Allah; A man whom a beautiful woman of high rank seduces (for illicit relation), but he (rejects this offer by saying):" I fear Allah" A person who gives charity and conceals it (to such an extent) that the right hand does not know what the left has given: And a person who remembered Allah in privacy and his eyes shed tears.¹²

So Islam stresses an important contribution to be made by youth. The acts of all these seven groups of people are "easy to be said" but also "difficult to be done". The more difficult the test, the greater the reward would be in the sight of Allah.

¹² Abdul-Aziz Zakiuddin Al-Munthiri, Sahih Muslim, English Translation, (Darus-Salam Publishers), N.D, p.445, Chapter 31, NO: 537.

The concept of youth from the views of Muslim Scholars

Over several centuries many Muslim Scholars have expressed their views on youth. Shaykh Muhammad Salih al-Uthaymeen states that youth is a time of great change and he categorized the young people in to three classes: the first class are a pride for this *Ummah* (nation) and the symbols of its life, its prosperity, and its religion. They are those whom Allah will use to repair the Muslim community and shall attain the bliss of this world and next.

On the other hand, the scholar asserted, corrupt young people are those who have deviated religiously, behave recklessly, delude themselves and are engulfed by their own vices. They do not accept truth from others, do not refrain from the falsehood that is inherent in their minds, and are selfish in their conduct. They are obdurate, do not give truth a chance, and do not care that they neglect obligations that are due to Allah or those that are due to human beings. They are a calamity to themselves and a catastrophe to society. They bring this *Ummah* (nation) down to the lowest of the low, obstructing its way to honor.¹³

Finally, in the last category, the scholar explained that, the confused young people are the ones who are uncertain, irresolute, and at a crossroad. They know the truth and are sure of it. They live in a religious conservative society but have the misfortune of being exposed to evils like skepticism about the truthfulness of the Muslim creed, corruption in conduct and behaviors, decadence in action, attacks on the established customs and traditions, and other various absurd trends. They can free themselves from this confusion, however, by concentrating on Islamic education and learning it from its original source, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, with the help of sincere scholars.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., p. 27

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

The Concept of Societal Development in the Qur'an

The Islamic way of life is based on a unique concept of man's place in the universe.¹⁵

The Islamic society is often conceptualized as being unique in its structure, composition and its characteristics. These characteristics are drawn from the Qur'an and *hadith*. The following is characteristic of an Islamic society as contained in Qur'an. These three characteristics are summarized in the Qur'an: "You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidden what is wrong and believe in Allah."¹⁶

The Islamic *Shariah* divides enjoining what is right (*al-Ma'ruf*) into three categories: The mandatory (*Fard* and *Wajib*), the recommendatory (*Mandub*) and permissible (*Mubah*). The observance of the mandatory is obligatory on Muslim society and the *Shariah* has given clear and binding directions about this. The recommendatory (*al-Ma'ruf*) are those which the *Shari'ah* expects a Muslim society to observe and practice. Some of them have been very clearly demanded of us while others have been recommended by implication and inference from the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. Besides this, special arrangements have been made for the growth and encouragement of some of them in the scheme of life advocated by the *Shari'ah*. Others again have simply been recommended by the *Shariah*, leaving it to the society or to its more virtuous elements to look to promote them.

This leaves us with the permissible (*al-Ma'ruf*). Strictly speaking, according to the *Shari'ah* everything which has not been expressly prohibited is a permissible. Consequently, the sphere of the permissible is very wide, so much so that except for the things specifically prohibited by the *Shari'ah* everything is permissible for a Muslim. Within this vast sphere we have been given freedom to legislate according to our own direction to suit the requirement of our time and its dictates. On the other hand, that

¹⁵ Abul Ala Maududi, *The Islamic Concept of Life*. Accessed January 20, 2017.
www.islam101.com/sociology/conceptLife.htm.

¹⁶ Qur'an, Surat Aal-Imran 3:110.

which is forbidden is bad (*Munkar*) and has been grouped into two categories. Things which have been prohibited absolutely (*haram*), and things which are simply undesirable (*makruh*). The ideal Islamic society is based on moderation and this concept of community of moderation is explained in the Qur'an very nicely:

Thus have we made of you an *Ummah* justly balanced, that you might be witness over the nations and the Apostle a witness over yourselves.¹⁷

Also, the Islamic society is ideally one single *Ummah* (nation). This concept of being one Muslim community is clearly explained to the following verse: "Verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your lord and cherisher; therefore worship me (and no other)".¹⁸ Nevertheless, the ideal Islamic society is based on consultation. A whole chapter of the Qur'an is designated under the title of consultation (*Ash-shura*): "And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affairs is (determined by) consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend."¹⁹

Also, the ideal Islamic society is built on the concept of brotherhood. Muslims are ordained to have the feelings and application of concept of brotherhood. Allah says in the Qur'an: "The believers are but single brotherhood..."²⁰ The Qur'an repeats this theme: "O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and died not except in the state of Islam."²¹

One important characteristic of the ideal Islamic society is the concept of Jihad (holy or divine struggle). Jihad is to be undertaken for the sake of Allah, i.e. to apply rules and regulations of Allah, and for the pleasure of Allah. Jihad is meant to defend the land of Islam and defend the Muslims themselves.

¹⁷ Qur'an, Surat Al- Baqara 2:143.

¹⁸ Qur'an, Surat Al-Anbiyaa 21:92.

¹⁹ Qur'an, Surat Ash-Shura 42:38.

²⁰ Qur'an, Surat Al-Hujuraat 49:10.

²¹ Qur'an, Surat Aal-Imran 3:102.

The Concept of Societal Development in *Hadith* Literature

The ideal Islamic society is relatively unique in its structure, composition and its characteristics. Many Muslims believe these characteristics are stated or outlined in the *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad. The following are some significant characteristics of an ideal Islamic society as contained in the *hadith*. One of the characteristic is brotherhood which was explained in the *hadith* of Prophet (S.A.W) which has been narrated by *Al-Nu'man bin Basheer* that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) said: “The similitude of the believers in their kindness mercy, affection and compassion toward one another is like a body, when one organ ill, the whole body is drafted to take care of the problem.”²²

This particular *hadith* clearly shows that Muslims are single society irrespective of their tribe, colour, race and culture, therefore they should live like brothers and sisters no matter the condition they found themselves. Advice is another characteristic of the Muslim *Ummah*. Abu Ruqayah Tamim Bin Awss Al Dari reported that the Prophet Muhammad said: “The religion is Advice. We asked; for whom? He said: for Allah, for His book, for His messengers, for the Imams of the Muslims and for the rest of the Muslim *Ummah*.”²³

This is considered another important instrument in living with one another: whenever the Muslim *Ummah* imbibes the culture of advising each other there will be harmony, tranquility and mutual understanding. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: “There is one hundred and ten (110) obedience to any creature while disobeying the creator.”²⁴ Therefore, theoretically, whenever a leader commanded what is good it becomes compulsory for the general society to obey him and only disobey him when he disobeys the commands of Allah. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: “If

²² See: A-Munthiri, Hadith No: 1774.

²³ Imam An-Nawawih, 40 Collection, Hadith No: 21.

²⁴ See: A-Munthiri, Hadith No: 1095.

any community leaves Jihad behind them, Allah is to prevail punishment on them.”⁵³

However, a very real question can be raised whether and if Muslims today do (or can) adhere to such characteristics or apply them in their daily lives.

The Concept of Societal Development from the views of Muslim Scholars

Muslims scholars have a vital role regarding the establishment of an ideal Muslim society. According to Abul Ala Maududi, a group of people or society which consists of true Muslims can never break away from the law of their lord. Its political order, its social organization, its culture, its economic policy, its legal system and its international strategy must all be in tune with the code of guidance revealed by Allah. Any unwilling contraventions must be corrected as soon as they are realized. It is disbelievers who fell free from Allah’s guidance and behave as if they were their own master. Anyone who behaves like this even though he may bear a name similar to that of Muslim, is treading the path of the disbelievers.²⁵

Muhammad Ali Al-Hasim states in his writing, that one of the most important distinguishing characteristics of the true Muslim society are that they measure every known custom of their society against the standards of Islam. Thus all of their social values are derived from their understanding of the basic principles of their religion.²⁶ Finally, he said other habits which Muslims should discard include having pictures and status in the house and keeping a dog at home (unless it is a guard dog). Islam is strongly opposed to these practices, and several *hadith* expressly forbid the believers to adopt them.

The Role of Muslim Youths to the Development of Society in Nasarawa State

In this section, effort is made to exhaustively bring out and discuss the major

²⁵ See: Al-Maududi. *The Islamic Concept of Life*.

²⁶ M Al-Hashimi, *The Ideal Muslim*, (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2005), p.335.

contribution of Muslims youths in the promotion and development of society in Nasarawa State. These contributions indicated the level of commitment exhibited by Muslim youths in their effort to eradicate ignorance, illiteracy and social vices among the people of the state and to educate them on their rights and religious obligations.

Youths Contribution to Development of Islam

The Islamic religion emphasizes a process of admonishing and calling people to the true practice based on the understanding and interpretation of Salaaf Salih. This awakens Muslims (male and female) to rise to the important task of seeking knowledge and disseminating the same to others where Islam is less practiced. In recognition of the importance of knowledge in Islam, Muslim youth have contributed immensely to the development of Islam in Nasarawa State especially in many areas of religious endeavour such as *Da'wah* activities, conversion campaigns in rural areas where Islam has not reached, *Ramadan Tafsir*, *Hajj* training programmes, organized study groups and counseling services, qur'anic studies and competitions.

Contribution in Da'wah Activities

Muslim youth in the area studied have designed a series of *Da'wah* and religious activities in different places in order to offer their contributions in order to spread Islam in the area. The National Council of Muslim Youth Organization (NCOMYO) Nasarawa State chapter is the mother body of all organizations established by the youth to carry Islamic activities and outreach programmes to remote villages where the people follow traditional folk religions and animism. Under the auspice of NCOMYO, youths carry out programmes when some problem affecting the Muslims arises. These youths organize forums for dialogue and roundtable discussions for the disputing parties in the presence of Islamic scholars and elders. This normally takes place on weekend i.e. Saturdays and Sundays for proper attendance by the public to achieve the

desired intention.²⁷

Conversion Campaigns

One of the major activities of Da'wah programme of Muslim youth Organizations is the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam. Although all the original inhabitants of Nasarawa State are Muslims, the Muslim Youths Organizations embark on exercises to spread Islam to the areas where the religion has few adherents. This is why the Nasarawa State chapters of the organizations are engaged in the conversion of non-Muslims outside Nasarawa State. This takes them as far as Tiv land in Benue State and *Berom* and *Goemai* ethnic groups in Plateau State. This was jointly done with Benue and Plateau State chapters of the Youth Organizations. As result of these outreach activities, more than 3,000 indigenous folk formally converted to Islam in the visited areas. In order to give solid Islamic foundation, Islamic schools were established in the areas to educate the new converts on the basics of Islam and recitation of the Qur'an²⁸. However, the converts are often faced with problems from their families for converting to Islam. Many young girls who were neglected by their parents for accepting Islam were brought up, educated and married off to Muslims.²⁹

Contribution to Qur'anic Study and Memorization

In this aspect, Muslim youths played a vital role in this regards through the recitation of the Qur'an on a monthly basis which has improved standards of recitation and memorization in the area studied. Under the auspices of FOMWAN in Nasarawa State, monthly Qur'anic recitations were organized, to encourage the women folk to improve their knowledge of the religion. Similarly, in conjunction with FOMWAN, Muslim youths in the State were able to establish Islamiyah Schools at different sections of the

²⁷ Interview with Ustaz Bashir Yahaya, *Ameer* NACOMYO, 37 years, December 15, 2016.

²⁸ Special report on Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) 20th Anniversary, 1990-2010, p.51.

²⁹ Interview with Rabi'a Suleinman Umar, Assistant Coordinator FOMWAN, Nasarawa State Chapter, December 24, 2016.

State to enhance Islamic education and provide sustainable learning process.³⁰ Also, Muslim Students Association on Nigeria (MSSN) Nasarawa State Area Unit organized this programme during Islamic Vacation Course (I.V.C.) annually, where participants are drawn from all Secondary Schools to participate in the Qur'anic memorization event and the winners are awarded with gifts as motivation to other young boys and girls.³¹

Refresher Courses/Extra Moral Classes

This is another contribution of Muslim youths in the educational development of Nasarawa State, where they assist in revising the curriculum of Senior Secondary Schools in order prepare candidates that would sit for West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), etc. The programme is organized annually by the Muslim Youths Organizations in the State for sciences, social sciences and Arts students in all the Local Government Areas in the state months before their final Senior Secondary School examinations (SSCE). During the programme, teachers and facilitators were invited from Secondary Schools, Polytechnic and College of Education, and the University to teach the students voluntarily during weekends (i.e. Saturdays and Sundays only). Some of the beneficiaries of these programmes excelled in all their papers which paved way for their successes in securing admission into tertiary institutions of learning.³²

Public Enlightenment/Seminar Programme/Symposium

The youth organizations organized different symposia and public lectures geared towards the development of Islamic and Western education in the area under studied

³⁰ See Special report on FOMWAN,p.53.

³¹ Interview with *Ameer* MSSN, Nasarawa State Area Unit, 45 years, January 09, 2017.

³² Interview with *Ameer* MSSN, Nasarawa State Area Unit, 45 years, January 30, 2017.

because Muslims lag behind in the acquisition of Western education especially medical health practices. In this regards the general public were invited to the venue where current issues affecting the society were presented according to Islamic perspectives. Also, erudite Islamic scholars were invited to present lectures on issues affecting the society, especially the youth. Furthermore, Muslim Coppers Association (MCAN) Nasarawa State Branch has tremendously contributed in this aspect, especially in one of its programmes called “Muslim Coppers Forum”. During the programme, Muslim Corps Members were invited from different angle of the State and lectures were presented to them on different Islamic topics. For instance, a lecture presented in February, 2016 on the “Islamic Perspective of Economic Melt Down in Nigeria” and “Life in the grave” was also presented on 13th March, 2016.³³

Contribution to Economic Development

Islam aims to be an all-encompassing religion, inclusive of economic activities, which emphasize self-reliance and independence for the improvement of one’s life. Muslim youth embark on business ventures centered on youth and female empowerment through skills acquisition programmes and intellectual studies, where monthly salaries are paid to teachers in different centres that teach youth and women the art of trade and skill empowerment; at the end of the exercise, capital for starting entrepreneurship was disbursed to the trainees. Also, the Muslim youths in collaboration with other Muslim *Ummah* raise funds in order to finance the skills acquisition scheme and give capital to those that want to start small and medium scale enterprises.³⁴

Contribution to Social Development

In this aspect, Muslim youth in Nasarawa State have contributed immensely to the

³³ An oral Interview with Uthman Salisu, 29 years, Ameer Muslim Corp Members Association of Nigeria (MCAN), Nasarawa State Chapter, November 29, 2016.

³⁴ Interview with Ustaz Bashir Yahaya, Ameer NACOMYO, 37 years, January 30, 2017.

social development of the State in different aspect of life. These contributions were enumerated as follows: in collaboration with different agencies, a mutual understanding was established between the Muslim youth, Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the Nasarawa State. This has produced synergy for social development of the area studied and attainment of the set objectives. For example, National Council of Muslim Youth Organization (NACOMYO) has different programmes in collaborations with None-Government organizations (NGOs) like *kungiyar zaman lafiya*, Government agencies like, National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) etc. These collaborations were made in order to give a positive result, share information, knowledge, ideas and help in sensitizing the people of Nasarawa State on different issues that would provide solutions for the betterment of their life and society in general.³⁵

Environmental Sanitation

This is another area that the Muslim youth in Nasarawa State focuses on for the social and religions development of the area. For example, Imam Malik Islamic Foundation has designed a weekly sanitation programme for *Jummu'at Masjid*, cemeteries in the State which was later changed to monthly activities for the Islamic and social development in the area under study. Timetables were made according to the priorities, all the *Jummu'at Masjid* within the metropolis were covered on some date for sanitation activities.³⁶

Medical outreach

This is also a societal development programme operated by the Muslim youth. In this regard a medical team of Corps Members serving in the State engaged themselves in

³⁵ Interview with Ustaz Mustapha Usayn, Organizing Secretary NACOMYO, 37 years, January 31, 2017.

³⁶ Interview with Isah Umar Adam, 35 years, Nassarawa Eggon Town, January 31, 2017.

free medical treatment especially in some rural areas of the State, and spent some time collaborating with other local and international agencies like the United Nations International Children Emergency Funds (UNICEF), Islamic Medical Association of Nigeria (IMAN) etc. in the treatment of diseases like Polio and Malaria, and in some cases engaged in public enlightenment campaigns on disease prevention and Health care education.³⁷

Conclusion

There is sight of hope of living in an area, relatively free from religious, educational, economic, social and political problems in the future if the youths keep the tempo and momentum of Islamic activities. However, there is need for unity of purpose among various Islamic sects (Sunni and Sufis), promote moral values and positive aspirations. It has become incumbent upon Muslim youths to realize the strength of unity, responsibilities and duties as Muslims and stand up for what is right. In sum, the effort of Muslim youths in Nasarawa State has yielded good results and impacted positively towards the development of society at large.

³⁷. An oral Interview with Uthman Salisu, 29 years, Ameer Muslim Corp Members Association of Nigeria (MCAN), Nasarawa State Chapter. January 31, 2017.

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From Illyricum to Elysium: Yugoslav Muslims in the South Pacific

Abdullah Drury

Abdullah Drury is a University of Waikato MPhil candidate with the Philosophy and Religious Studies Programme and is researching the history of New Zealand's Muslim community. He is the author of *Islam in New Zealand: A Short History of the New Zealand Muslim Association* and has reviewed a wide range of books on the subject of Islam with many appearing in the international journal *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*.

Abstract: *The discourse surrounding Muslim immigration to New Zealand has mostly revolved around recent Asian and African settlement. However, a considerable minority originated in Eastern Europe and an elucidation of the history of Slavic or Bosnian Muslims reveals much about the wider immigrant experience and the gradual development of Islam inside a largely secular society of Christian heritage. This essay seeks to explore this topic through an examination of a single Slavic Muslim immigrant from Montenegro, Hajji Avdo Musovich (1919-2001), who served on the governing Executive Committee of the New Zealand Muslim Association for over 25 years from the 1950s to the 1980s.*

Introduction

Historically, perhaps the most interesting Muslims in New Zealand are an ethnic minority group that attend the mosque the least. This monograph explores the history of Bosnian Muslim immigration from Yugoslavia and their settlement in this country from the 1950s to the 2000s through the biography of Hajji Avdo Musovich (1919-2001). As such, Slavic Muslims are in a special category: they belong physiologically to the European ethnic majority of New Zealand and simultaneously to the Islamic faith, a religion associated here distinctly with various Asian and African minorities. This dynamic and tension has, over the six decades examined here, thrown up curious dichotomies and contrasts that are worth exploring as they serve to help illustrate broader challenges and issues facing the wider Muslim community as a whole.

I will examine this history by providing a broad overview of the entire Muslim community in New Zealand over this period, in an effort to compose an accurate image of the particular socio-economic presence and contribution of Bosnian Muslims.

Through an elucidation of the life and career of Musovich, I will explore issues of communal participation and clarify the significance and lessons contained in these experiences. The basic research question is to determine who exactly these Slavic Muslims were and what role, if any, they played in the development of Islam here through this period when the first Muslim organisation was established, the first mosque built, the first Mullah recruited, and so forth. Further broader questions include whether we can accurately describe members of this ethnic minority group as ‘Muslim’ when it serves for many as basically a cultural backdrop, a source of heritage markers, rather than a living practised faith.

The terms ‘Bosnian Muslim’, ‘Bosnian’ and ‘Bosniak’ (*Bošnjaci* in the Serbo-Croat languages) are all elastic appellations I will use broadly to cover Slavic Muslims from Bosnia, Herzegovina, and all territories often referred to as the former lands of Yugoslavia excluding Macedonia.³⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, I will use the term Bosnia to include both the lands of both Bosnia and Hercegovina.³⁹

Overview: the Muslim Community of New Zealand 1950s-2010s

For over sixty years Bosnian Muslim immigrants and refugees have operated on the fringes of the wider Asian Muslim community in New Zealand but have nonetheless made an important contribution to the cultural development of the first Muslim organisations and mosques established and built here.

In July 1950, the ‘New Zealand Muslim Association’ (NZMA) was set up in Auckland. This was the first such Islamic organisation in the entire country and was created entirely through the efforts of Indian Muslim migrants such as members of the Bhikoo

³⁸ There are various spelling variations in English such as *Bosnyak*, in order to distinguish from the Slavic *Bosanci* which has a more strictly geographic sense.

³⁹ For more, see: Noel Malcom, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1994); Kenneth Morrison and Elizabeth Roberts, *The Sandžak. A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Sabina Pačariž, *The Migrations of Bosniaks to Turkey from 1945 to 1974; the Case of Sandžak* (Sarajevo: Center for Advanced Studies, 2016).

family.⁴⁰ There were approximately 200 Muslims in the country at the time, almost entirely Indian or Asian.⁴¹ In April 1959 the Association acquired, in no small part because of the concerted efforts of several Bosnian members, a property for use as an Islamic Centre in central Auckland. In 1960 the first Mullah in New Zealand arrived: Maulana Ahmed Said Musa Patel (1937-2009) from India.⁴²

This was followed elsewhere by the creation of the Wellington-based ‘International Muslim Association of New Zealand’ over 1962 to 1964 and the ‘Muslim Association of Canterbury’ in 1977. In April 1979, Mazahr Krasniqi from Kosova, a close friend of Musovich, was elected inaugural president of the first national Muslim organisation – the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ).⁴³ Since the 1990s the Muslim community in New Zealand has grown dramatically due to massive immigration, principally from Asia and Africa. According to the 2013 census results, the entire Islamic community in New Zealand numbers over 40,000.⁴⁴

Overall, the New Zealand Muslim minority is exceptionally diverse in character, ethnicity, employment, education and geographic spread – making accurate generalisations about the evolving associations and relationships, and the salient details of such a diffuse group, increasingly difficult. The March 2013 census figures for ‘European’ Muslims stands at 4353.⁴⁵ However, the same census revealed only 162 Bosnians in all New Zealand, 20.4% of whom were born in New Zealand (meaning 81.5% were born abroad, Bosnia or Yugoslavia presumably). Of these, 78.2% lived in Auckland, the median age was 42 years and the median salary was \$29,600 per annum.

⁴⁰ Abdullah Drury, *Islam in New Zealand: The First Mosque* (Christchurch, 2006), p. 6.

⁴¹ New Zealand Population Census 1951, Volume III – Religious Profession, (Wellington, 1953), p. 9.

⁴² Drury, *Islam in New Zealand*, pp. 13-19.

⁴³ Ainsley Thomson, ‘Mazhar Krasniqi’, *New Zealand Herald*, 31 December 2002, p. A6; Khan, Zohoor Mohammad, ‘Mazhar Shukri Krasniqi’, *One Hundred Great Muslim Leaders of the 20th Century* (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 2006), pp. 157-160; Abdyli, Sabit R., *Bijtë e shqipës në tokën e reve të bardha* (Auckland: Universal Print & Management, 2010), pp. 67-70.

⁴⁴ *New Zealand Official Yearbook*, 2010, p. 106.

⁴⁵ Libby Wilson, ‘Kiwi Converts among New Zealand’s Muslim Community’, *Waikato Times* (14 November 2015), p.4.

Over 90% had a formal educational qualification. Curiously, for Bosnian folk in New Zealand in 2013, 50.9% affiliated with at least one religion, the most common being Islam at 37.7%. (Historically these numbers have fluctuated considerably: the 1996 census revealed that there were 213 ‘South Slav’ Muslims living in New Zealand.)⁴⁶

There have been two significant waves of Bosnian migrants to settle in New Zealand. The first arrived on the MS *Goya* in 1951 through the auspices of the IRO (International Refugee Organisation, a precursor to the UNHCR) following World War Two and the subsequent European refugee crisis.⁴⁷ The second important group arrived during the 1992-95 war of aggression in Bosnia. In between, and after, there has been a steady trickle of individuals and families. Compared to Asian Muslim immigrants, Dr. Shepard has written that eastern European Muslims in general had ‘been quicker to adopt Kiwi ways, more inclined to marry into the Kiwi community, and more likely to attenuate its Muslim identity.’⁴⁸

The First Wave: 1950s Bosnian Immigrants and Refugees

On 1 May 1951, the *Goya* arrived in Wellington bringing hundreds of IRO political refugees, including dozens of Slavic Muslim men, from war torn Eastern Europe. Ultimately most settled in Auckland, however three identifiable Bosnian Muslim men settled in the South Island. When the Department of Internal Affairs conducted a survey on the employment and welfare of the *Goya* men in 1953 there were over a dozen Muslim men from the *MS Goya* scattered across New Zealand from Auckland to Invercargill.

On 1 January 1956, the NZMA staged the first nation-wide ‘Muslim Congress’ at the Garibaldi Hall on Pitt Street in central Auckland. A new Executive Committee was

⁴⁶ 1996 Census of Population and Dwellings; Ethnic Groups (Wellington 1997), pp. 107 & 119.

⁴⁷ Peter Plowman, *Australian Migrant Ships 1946 – 1977* (Dural, N.S.W.: Rosenberg Publishing, 2006), p.36.

⁴⁸ William Shepard, ‘The Islamic Contribution: Muslims in New Zealand’, *Religion in New Zealand Society*, (Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press, 1985), p. 182.

elected with the stated aim of drawing the Indian and European Muslims together and building a mosque as quickly as possible. Esup Bhikoo from the Gujarat was voted in as President with his brother Abdul Samad Bhikoo and Petrit Alliu serving as joint secretaries. Ramzi Kosovich, Avdo Musovich, Shaqir Ali Seferi, C. Shekumia and Fadsil Katseli were elected as the Executive Committee.⁴⁹ Alliu, Katseli and Seferi were Albanian Muslims.

Ramzi Kosovich, or more accurately Remzija Kosovic, was an MS Goya refugee. He was born on 21 September 1926, was a 29-year old worker from Sarajevo, Bosnia. He told the IRO agency that he was from Nevesinje, a small town in Bosnia, in order to shake off anyone from the Yugoslav government searching for him. Kosovich had fled the Communist regime, crossing the border illegally seeking political sanctuary in the West. He went onto befriend Avdo Musovich and the later named his second son after him. By 1957 Kosovich was working at Kawerau Fitters Mate in Auckland.⁵⁰ In 1957 he applied for naturalisation.⁵¹ Kosovich opened a restaurant in Manurewa and later a fish and chip shop in Mangere East. In June 1963, he returned to Sarajevo on the SS *Fairsea* and married a Bosnian girl named Emina Minka.⁵² They settled in Auckland for a few years, and he later worked at the Air New Zealand flight kitchen, then immigrated to Canada where he died a few years ago.⁵³

Musovich the Montenegrin

Avdo Musovich was born in Bielo Polje, Montenegro, on 26 January 1919, the son of Hamo and Bega. His family were descended from a Turkish governor of the territory, the *Sandžak* of Novibazar (a former Ottoman district currently divided between Serbia and Montenegro), during the Ottoman period. When he was five years old in 1924

⁴⁹ 'Muslims plan mosque for city', *Star*, 4 January 1956, p. 5; 'Muslims Raising Funds for a Mosque', *NZH*, 4 January 1956, p. 8.

⁵⁰ R23918113, Agency BBAE, Series 5041, Box 541, Record Number A371/1955.

⁵¹ R24617034, Agency ACGO, Series 8333, Record IA1, Box 2538, Record Number 115/9485.

⁵² Archives New Zealand, Passenger Lists, 1839-1973', Remzy Kossovich, 1963, Wellington, p.31.

⁵³ Drury, *Islam in New Zealand*, p. 11.

Avdo witnessed the infamous massacre of the Muslim men of the village of Šahovići. His account of the massacre was reported in detail in a 1992 Auckland newspaper interview:

I saw blood everywhere. Terrible. And I started screaming. One woman came over and said ‘You little devil. What are you doing here? The people are mad’.

And with a stick she gave me a hiding and she took me back to the post office.⁵⁴

To cut a long story short he decided to join the Turkish Navy just before World War Two where he served until transferring to the Turkish Merchant Navy in 1944. Arrested by the Yugoslav secret police when his ship visited Yugoslavia in 1945 Musovich was incarcerated, chained up and then taken by train to his native Montenegro where he spent six months.

Back in Bijelo Polje he was told was a free man in the town but could not leave without permission. After working as a waiter and with a bridge building brigade, Avdo Musovich’s seaman’s skills found him a job in the [Yugoslav] merchant navy in 1947. For six years he worked on coastal ships and during that time met and married his wife and their son was born.⁵⁵

Avdo Musovich married Sadika from Mekavci, Herzegovina, in 1950. A year later on 18 July 1951 their first son Miralem was born in Dubrovnik, Dalmatia. In 1952 on a working trip to Turkey, he decided to jump ship. He resumed working at sea on the SS *Panamante* but fell in love with Auckland after travelling the globe, and in October 1954 he jumped ship for the last time and claimed political asylum. He served a month in Mt Eden prison and was placed on probation. Without his family Musovich devoted himself to the affairs of the New Zealand Muslim Association for a period. He secured

⁵⁴ Lloyd Jones, ‘Target of Hatred’, *NZH*, 5 September 1992, Section Two, p. 5; For more on the notorious Šahovići massacres, see: Kenneth Morrison and Elizabeth Roberts, *The Sandžak. A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.97-98, 110.

⁵⁵ Jones, Lloyd, ‘Target of Hatred’, p. 5.

the release of his wife and son with the help of Federation of Labour president Fintan Patrick Walsh, who communicated to Prime Minister Walter Nash, who in turn talked to Yugoslav leaders at the United Nations in New York. In 1962 Sadika Musovich was given a New Zealand passport and came to Auckland with their son.⁵⁶ On 15 July 1965 the entire family acquired New Zealand citizenship together.⁵⁷ With the arrival of his family and the birth of two more sons, Ramzi and Suad (1964 and 1968 respectively), Musovich retired from sea life to some extent and took up work at a glassworks factory.

In January 1969 Musovich's eldest son Miralem made history when he became the first known Muslim to join the New Zealand military after enlisting as an engineer cadet with the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) at Woodburne, near Blenheim.⁵⁸ Avdo Musovich continued to serve on the NZMA Executive Committee throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Early in July 1979 the Islamic Federation received two tickets from the Islamic Government of Iran to attend the celebrations associated with the commencement of the 15th century on the Islamic calendar (on 21 November 1979) together with the first anniversary of the revolution (February 1980). Musovich was selected along with Pakistani Rahim Ghauri of Wellington, and was accompanied by the Iranian cleric Hujatal-Islam Mohammad Shariff Mahdavi.

In 1981 Avdo Musovich retired from Muslim community politics and dedicated much of the following decade to his personal family life. Ten years later when the conflict erupted in Bosnia, Musovich was the senior-most Yugoslav Muslim in New Zealand and he took the lead in spearheading the New Zealand efforts, especially those of the Muslim community, towards fundraising and providing relief for his brethren back home. In June 1992 he undertook the Hajj to Mecca.

⁵⁶ Lloyd Jones, 'Target of Hatred', p. 5.

⁵⁷ Registrar of Persons granted New Zealand Citizenship, 1949 to 1968 [microfilm] / reproduced with permission of the Department of Internal Affairs. BAB Microfilming, Auckland, New Zealand, 1995, KO-NA, Fiche 4 of 7, p. 275.

⁵⁸ See also: Kristl Gray, 'Coming home for Christmas', *The Press*, 22 December 2004, p. 7.

The 1990s Bosnian war affected the Bosnian community in New Zealand immeasurably. In early December 1992, the first Bosnian war refugee arrived: 30 former detainees and 10 members of their families granted temporary asylum. Almost all the former prisoners were males aged between 19 and 32.⁵⁹ New Zealand had committed itself to receiving 50 former internees from the notorious Serb ‘detention centres’ at Kereterm, Omarska and Trnopolje in northern Bosnia.

The first group of 14 ex-prisoners from the Bosnian horror camps arrived in Auckland before Christmas. Another group of 17 arrived on January 8. The first group has completed the six-week English as a Second Language and orientation programme and has moved into flats in Onehunga. All the refugees are Bosnian Muslims aged between 18 and 36 years old. There are two married couples, one with a two year old son. ‘Most have broken teeth from rifle butts in the mouth’.⁶⁰

From a total figure of over two million refugees driven from their homes during the Bosnian conflict, New Zealand accepted a rather miserly 143 Bosnian refugees between December 1992 and June 1997, and tried to settle almost all of them in Auckland.⁶¹ During the height of the fighting in Bosnia, the largest single influx – 83 people – arrived between 1 July 1993 and 30 June 1994.⁶² Four were allowed in the following year, followed by another four the next year. Over 1997 to 1998 a grand total of three Bosnian refugees were accepted under the government refugee resettlement plan.

⁵⁹ ‘Former Bosnian detainees arrive’, *Press*, 30 November 1992, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Jayne Harris, ‘Bosnian Ex-detainees Settling In’, *Labour Link*, March 1993, p. 1.

⁶¹ Vladimir Madjar and Louise Humpage, *Refugees in New Zealand: The Experience of Bosnian and Somali Refugees*, Working Paper Series, No.1 (Massey University, 2000), p. 3; New Zealand Immigration Services Fact Pack (July 2002), Issue 17, p. 9.

⁶² Refugee and Migrant Service Annual Report 1997-98, p. 4; For an excellent summary of the Bosnian refugee experience, depressingly reminiscent of Musovich’s own experiences seventy years earlier, see: Department of Labour, Immigration Service, ‘Ferida’ in *Refugee Women: The New Zealand Refugee Quota Programme* (Wellington, 1994), pp. 56-57.

Surprisingly these were the last to enter New Zealand on the official refugee programme.⁶³

On 20 January 1993 Television New Zealand journalist Simon Mercep interviewed several of the new refugees on the Holmes Show. They discussed their experiences of the war through a translator and were filmed in Mission Bay.⁶⁴ On 17 May 1993 Haji Avdo Musovich and Dzemat Kirkic were interviewed on television by Simon Mercep again. Kirkic expressed a desire to return home to defend his people. Musovich translated:

He is always crying. He wants to go. He wants to go over there. He said he got a ... one of his brothers is killed in Bihac over there in one town which is a war now over there. One sister is dead and one sister he don't know if she's alive or dead, and her husband and the rest. His mother, one day she heard what is his brother being killed, she collapsed and she's just like she can't walk or nothing, you know. And the reason he said life is no for me in New Zealand.

The life is no for me in New Zealand. I don't like it here. I like New Zealand. Thanks you to New Zealand government. Thank you to New Zealand people for helping me here much. And he wants to go and lately he starts using a little booze you know, and that's affected his nerves and so on. Every night he is crying and what happened was I went to him and said I was scared he might commit suicide. He says to me: when he go, he spend one week with his family and after that he's gonna go in the Bosnia to fight for his country, for his people.

That's what he want.⁶⁵

⁶³ Refugee and Migrant Service Annual Report 1993-94, p. 6; One Bosnian refugee reported: 'We used to watch stories of the Somali refugees on television and think to ourselves, 'It's so far away.' And we would turn the channel to another station. Then one day we looked behind us and found soldiers with guns at our backs. And then we were refugees, just like the Somalis.' *RMS Refugee / Newsletter of the Refugee and Migrant Service*, Issue 2 (December 1994), p. 3; New Zealand Immigration Services Fact Pack (July 2002), Issue 17, p. 9.

⁶⁴ Holmes, 'Bosnians', 20 January 1993, New Zealand Television Archives.

⁶⁵ Holmes, 'Bosnian', 17 May 1993, New Zealand Television Archives.

In April 1994 Simon Mercep also reported efforts by the 150 strong Auckland Bosnian Muslim community to keep abreast of events in their homeland via television, radio, the internet and newsletters. Ramzi Musovich, son of Avdo, was interviewed:

It is tough for me to watch it here, you know. All those people being slaughtered left, right and centre, and the so-called international community is not doing anything about it. Full stop. What can we do? We can only sit and watch, and you know, keep track of the news.⁶⁶

Ramzi Musovich was on television again the following month when New Zealand agreed to send in peacekeeping soldiers into Bosnia under the United Nations.⁶⁷ Later that same year a magazine called 'Planet' quizzed Ramzi and he discussed the problems of communicating with folk in Bosnia and the expense of extricating family.⁶⁸

Avdo Musovich was a founding member of the Bosnian and Hercegovinian Society, set up in September 1994. A key person was the Secretary Nedim Busuladzic, an electrical engineer and recent arrival. In September 1995 Cardinal Vinko Puljic, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sarajevo, visited New Zealand was warmly greeted at the airport by Busuladzic and Musovich – the latter dressed in Bosnian national costume, complete with tasselled red fez. The reception by Musovich received very positive media coverage and the New Zealand Herald reported: 'Muslims and Catholics stood shoulder to shoulder yesterday to greet a religious leader from a land where war has pitted one religion against another.'⁶⁹

Within the Bosnian and Hercegovinian Society, however, there was an immediate tension within the community as several of the Muslim men who had been interned in Serb nationalist concentration camps objected to the presence of Bosnian Serbs who

⁶⁶ Network News, 'Local Muslims', 19 April 1994, New Zealand Television Archives

⁶⁷ Primetime, 'Reax', 24 May 1994, New Zealand Television Archives.

⁶⁸ Paul Shannon, 'Bound by Blood', *Planet*, Winter 1994, Issue 13, p. 11.

⁶⁹ Leanne Moore, 'Muslims and Catholics in single salute', *NZH*, 30 September 1995, p. 24; 'Muslims and Catholics greet Bosnian's man of peace', *New Zealandia*, November 1995, pp.20-21.

were in mixed marriages with Muslims. A year later the Bosniak Cultural Union of New Zealand Incorporated was registered on 1 November 1995. Both these associations operated for six years before being struck off as inactive after several key members left the country or concentrated their attentions on work or family matters. On 18 April 2001, the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Society Incorporated was set up with Demal Hodzic's nephew Emir serving as inaugural president. Members met monthly to arrange a spit lamb meal – a Bosnian speciality – but ultimately this project lapsed too.

Hajji Avdo Musovich died on 15 November 2001 and was buried the following day, on the first day of Ramadan 1421, following funeral prayers held at the Ponsonby mosque where he had devoted so much of his spiritual energies. In an obituary, featured prominently in the *New Zealand Herald*, he was praised as 'a battler for the underdog and the working man'. In the 1990s a visiting Turkish diplomat described Musovich as a 'living legend' and it was also said of him that he would give the shirt off his back to someone who deserved it. The Islamic Federation paid the great Bosnian *effendi* some respect when it publicly announced that 'Musovich's zeal and commitment to Islam and the Muslim minority impressed us all and made him so deeply respected and loved amongst us'.⁷⁰

Bosnian Culture and Islam

The cultural contribution of Musovich and other Bosnians brings us back to the issue of Bosnian culture and Islam. The Bosnian Muslims who came to New Zealand in the twentieth century brought with them two distinct traditions: a form of Islam inherited from the Ottoman-Turkish imperial period, and a developing style of European secularism where the state and church were legally separate entities but the state served to regulate church social relations through a variety of mechanisms and channels. This state-secularism was initiated during the era of Hapsburg occupation (1878-1918),

⁷⁰ Rebecca Walsh, 'Guiding light for Muslims', *NZH*, 24-25 November 2001, p. A27.

strained during the Yugoslav royal era (1919-1941), and manipulated for ideological purposes during the communist era (1945-1990). In New Zealand, these Bosnian Muslims encountered a society of manifestly Protestant-Christian in heritage but one that was devoutly secular and where no churches had any legal status, privilege or formal relationship. To a certain extent, the presence and participation – or not – in the emergent Muslim organisations was influenced by all three aspects (Ottoman Islam, European secularism and New Zealand secularism).

Bosnian Islam offers several unique perspectives and lessons as it arrived with the invading Ottoman army and for many centuries took the form of the faith of most of the leading members of society, the communal elite, and in fact, retained not only the native Slavic language but also some local pre-Islamic Slavic customs, traditions and values. Islam in Bosnia traces its origins (in terms of theology, institutions, ulema, rituals, jurisprudence and so forth) to the Turks and their broad-minded and inclusive interpretations and practices; for example, part of this Muslim identity is predicated on the Hanafi *Madhab* (school of law) with various local Bosnian specificities and customs. This also makes the religion relatively new to the region (compared to the presence of Christianity or Judaism) and one of the principle distinguishing features of this Bosnian Islam is a deeply-rooted tolerance of both other faiths and other Islamic viewpoints (Sufi for example); Bosnian Islam tends to emphasize tolerance and peace, and contains a deep understanding and appreciation for multi-confessional and pluralistic societies. Bosnian Muslims have survived the various vicissitudes of the past century as a distinct people by repeating and reiterating these aspects.

Devout Slavic Muslims cultivated both the basic core teachings and universal practices of Islam (honesty and charity), plus their own piety and cultural comprehension of the faith. Modern Bosnian manifestations of identity were prompted by the Hapsburg policy of *Bosnjastvo* (Bosnianism) over 1878-1918. This policy aimed to develop a

regional identity that would embrace all Bosnians irrespective of faith (Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish) but ultimately did not appeal to Catholics or Orthodox who almost entirely adopted Croat or Serb national identities over these decades. However, this trajectory did allow the Slavic Muslims of Bosnia some wiggle room to negotiate their own sense of space within the new secular society that was emerging, and as such they preferred to base it on their own experiences as a distinct Islamic religious community that had developed during the Ottoman era rather than spurious notions of biological 'race' or 'nation'.

It is intriguing however that all three Bosnian focused communal associations in New Zealand, registered after 1990, floundered. 'Many of the Bosnians who arrived in the '90s were more interested in assimilating to the Kiwi way of life than pursuing their heritage through cultural activities.'⁷¹ Clearly ethnic, religious and linguistic ties were not enough to bind this group closely together within New Zealand during this time frame. Madjar's research on Bosnian refugee health at Massey University in the late 1990s emphasized the central problem of unemployment during this decade and the reluctance of authorities to help facilitate urgently desired family reunifications. (The relevant New Zealand agencies and services were more concerned with communicable diseases and bureaucratic processes than assessing their personal priorities or the mental health issues amongst traumatised concentration camp survivors.)⁷² On the other hand, we note the existence of a 'Bosnyak Drive' near Edmonton Park in Auckland, apparently a private road on a subdivision carried out by 'Bosnyak Enterprises'. It can be argued at least that the Bosnians have left their mark on the topography of this country.

⁷¹ Sarah Murray, 'The Ones Who Got Away', *Sunday*, 5 August 2012, p. 16.

⁷² Madjar, Vladimir, and Louise Humpage, *Refugees in New Zealand: the experiences of Bosnian and Somali refugees*, School of Sociology and Women's Studies, Massey University (Albany), 2000, pp. 21, 23.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, it is clear that more research is needed here as, with the important exception of Vladimir Madjar, most of the research and history focusing on Muslims in New Zealand to date has methodologically focused on Asian viewpoints in New Zealand.

The aim of this paper was to explore the history of Bosnian-Slavic Muslim immigration from Eastern Europe to New Zealand between the 1950s and the 2000s through a close examination of one such migrant. These cultural Muslims are in a unique category as they belong both to the European racial majority but also the Islamic faith, a minority religion mostly associated with Asian and African immigrants. These nodal points have created interesting contrasts that help to demonstrate some of the challenges and issues experienced by the wider Muslim community. The eastern European Muslims brought two distinctive traditions: a type of Islam acquired during the Ottoman era, plus an evolving European secularism whereby the state and church were separated but state laws regulated a particular relationship with churches and religion. In New Zealand, Slavic Muslims found themselves inside a Protestant-Christian society that adhered to secular laws where no churches had any particular formal status. The conduct of the Slavic Muslim immigrants has been influenced by all three aspects.

Today the Bosnians are in many respects an excellent microcosm of the wider immigrant Muslim experience. Certain points jump up repeatedly. The Slavic Muslims who came to New Zealand did not originate in one particular village, town or locale, or restrict themselves to settling down in one particular area together with other Bosnians. There was no Bosnian colony inside New Zealand. Although several members of one family may have immigrated to New Zealand, there was no perceptible large-scale chain migration. The Slavic Muslim immigrants and refugees did not hail from one particular social class or caste, nor did they restrict themselves to any one line of

profession once here. Although most congregated in Auckland for economic reasons, in fact various Bosnians settled across New Zealand geographically. A few came from big cities in the former Yugoslavia but most appear to have left rural areas. Individual Bosnians participated in to a certain degree in several nascent Islamic organisations and clearly the ‘relatively moderate Islam of European provenance (Albanian and Bosnian)...made a lasting impression.’⁷³ However there is also evidence of individuals carving out their own personal, familial or group definition of Muslim identity negotiated according to their own needs, education and comprehension of the faith, informing us of how seriously these men took their religious precepts, culture and heritage.

This essay has demonstrated the positive attitude of Slavic Muslims when it comes to integration into New Zealand society and values, predicated on their specific tradition of Islam as an open, pluralistic and tolerant faith and heritage.

⁷³ Erich Kolig, *New Zealand's Muslims and Multiculturalism*, Leiden: Brill, 2009, p.23.