

## HISTORY: EUROPE

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### *Introduction*

Islam and Muslim women have long been integral to the development of Europe and European civilization. This, however, is generally forgotten and instead, Islam is seen as a new entrant to Europe through recent migration, even as it is recognized that there are important and historically deep-rooted Muslim communities in southeastern and eastern Europe. Yet, research on Muslim women in the rest of Europe is a fairly recent development. Muslim women in Europe, as *Muslim* women, were generally “discovered” by scholars after large-scale labor migration to Europe from Muslim-majority nations had ended, and Muslim women’s newly visible presence is associated with “troublesome” Islam. Bodies, beliefs and family law are important themes in this research, as discussed later. Researchers do generally try to combat stereotypical notions of Muslim women as victims of patriarchal family structures. Research methods are varied but there has been a shift towards studying discourses about Muslim women in Europe rather than studying Muslim women themselves. However, examples of long-term fieldwork and contextualized analysis of everyday life are also part of the research picture.

In June 1986, the Centre for Research in International Migration and Ethnic Relations at Stockholm University and the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities arranged a conference, “The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe,” later resulting in a book (Gerholm and Lithman 1988). By stressing “new,” the convenors underlined that Muslims have historically been part of the development of Europe and European civilization. More than 25 years later, there is still a need to reiterate the fact that Europe has been shaped and shared by people with a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. It is not surprising that, in the past, those hostile to Islam claimed that Muslims were strangers to, and in, Europe. But contemporary anti-Muslim voices also get nourishment from the overall lack of interest in the historical Islamic presence in Europe.

But what and where is Europe? The simplest geographical definition of Europe—extending from the Mediterranean Sea in the south to the Atlantic Ocean in the west, and from the Ural Mountains in the east to

the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea—makes it obvious that Muslims have been in, and of, Europe since the early eighth century. Sicily and most of the Iberian Peninsula were Islamic societies centuries before northern Europe became Christian. Between the eighth and tenth centuries the population in large parts of the Caucasus and in parts of today's Russia became Muslim. Despite the enormous repression of Muslims within the Russian empire, and later in the Soviet Union, Islam survived. The heritage of the Ottoman conquest of southeast Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries resulted in the ongoing settlement of Turks as well as in conversions of local inhabitants.

A political definition of Europe yields the observation that Mediterranean Algeria, as an indivisible part of French territory, was part of Europe between 1848 and 1962. When Pierre Bourdieu collected ethnographic material in Kabylia in the late 1950s and early 1960s he thereby studied European Muslims. The Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla are until today politically part of Europe. This is physically and very concretely manifested in European Union-financed walls to stop the entry of unwanted non-Europeans into "Europe proper." Fortress Europe is today politically extended into Africa. But although the very old and continuous presence of Muslims in Europe is well known among archaeologists, historians and philologists, it is not central to contemporary European self-understandings. The history of Ottoman conquests in European geographical territory is, on the contrary, still popularly imagined as a threat to Christianity. Certain politicians and researchers have made a point of lauding the multicultural and pluri-religious composition of premodern Andalusia, and its importance for the transmission of Greek philosophy "back" into Europe is recognized. The political and intellectual history of the old Muslim presence in Europe has thus been mapped, but mainly through the history of elite men, and without wide recognition of its pervasiveness. Considering the lack of sources on social history and particularly on women, this is not surprising. There are no court materials such as those which have been so important for the understanding of economic and social life of women in Ottoman land.

### *New Muslim Presence and Old*

The amnesia, or perhaps denial, concerning the old presence and impact of Muslims in Europe is in sharp contrast to the massive interest in, concern over and even obsession about, the "new" Muslim presence in western

and northern Europe. Clearly gender relations are central to this unevenness. The cultural identity of contemporary Europe, or at least the nations of the European Union, is in large parts shaped by the projected Otherness of its Islamic neighboring region, and the identity of “real” Europeans is today shaped by the presence of Muslim Others within Europe. The smallest common denominator of contemporary Europeanness is gender equality, and gender relations and gender ideology are in no small part shaped in contrast to the perceived gender inequality among Muslims. The relatively abundant research carried out since the mid-1980s on Muslim women in Europe, or about gender relations among Muslims in Europe, is clearly a reaction against such popular tendencies to dichotomize and stereotype “the self” and “the other.”

How did the “new” Muslim presence, particularly of women, come about and how has it been reflected in research? The conventional narrative in English-language research is that the new Muslim presence in western Europe took off after the Second World War. It was driven by labor demands in Europe: male laborers came from former colonies. The ability to have wives and other family members join the men, and the speed with which this came about, varied, but the pattern was seen as essentially the same. First the Muslim men came and then the women came as dependants of male family members. There are three important flaws in this narrative. First, although migration of Muslims from former colonies to western Europe became large-scale only in the 1950s and 1960s, migration—permanent, periodic or cyclical—had taken place much earlier. Sailors from Aden, for example, came to English and Welsh ports in the late nineteenth century. Muslim Algerians (as well as Tunisians and Moroccans) were already coming to France as workers in the early twentieth century. Muslim Tartars settled in Finland—then part of the Russian empire—in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Second, links to former colonies were important for the Muslim migratory paths into France and Great Britain, but this is not the case for Germany or Scandinavia. Here, and instead, the numerically most important “Muslim” labor migration came about through agreements with the Turkish state (not all migrants from Turkey were Muslims although most were). In Sweden, “Muslim” workers were also recruited from Yugoslavia, while the vast majority of labor migrants in the post-war period were recruited from neighboring Finland. Muslim migration has thus taken place not only from former colonies to Europe, and not only to Europe from Africa and Asia, but also within geographical Europe.

Third, although it is true that most early labor migrants were men, they were not exclusively so. By 1963—that is, two years after the first bilateral agreement between West Germany and Turkey—female laborers constituted 11 percent of the Turkish workforce in Germany. By the mid 1970s they constituted 25 percent, according to Nermin Abadan-Unat, who has conducted research on Turkish migrants in Europe since the early 1960s. Women were attractive to certain German industries where manual dexterity was needed; indeed, male relatives urged women to go to Germany in order to have their husbands, brothers or fathers join them (Abadan-Unat 2011, 89–90). Hence in many cases it was women who came first and not men.

### *Discovering Muslim Women in Europe*

But is it not anachronistic to stress the religious affiliation of the migrants and settlers in the period before “Islam” became the major classifying principle for these migrants? In much of the labor recruitment it was the national rather than the religious identification or marker which was an important bureaucratic classificatory principle for the receiving countries. Western and northern Europeans did not really “discover” Islam and Muslims until after the recruitment of labor migrants had more or less ended. For “Muslim” labor migrants in Germany and Sweden, organized Islam only appeared when settlement in the host country became permanent rather than temporary.

The study of Muslim women (and men) in Europe (and elsewhere) is thus faced with a crucial conceptual difficulty. What do we mean by “Muslim”? Do we employ a broad and wide classification and include persons born in a country where the majority is classified as Muslim, or whose parents are born in such a country? Or are we using a narrower classification, including only those who identify themselves as Muslims, or only those who practice Islam in some way? Or do we, finally, only include those who are members of religious organizations? There is an intimate relationship between naming, seeing and analyzing on the part of researchers, bureaucrats, and non-Muslim and Muslim publics in Europe. The classificatory choices thus have a profound impact on methods and theory, while theoretical and methodological stances have a profound impact on the way we classify, and yet such issues are not sufficiently pondered by policy-makers, journalists and researchers.

When did “Muslim women” enter the research scene in full force? Different western and northern European countries exhibit varying trajectories. The conventional narrative of Muslim migration to these parts of Europe continues as follows: after the demise of labor migration—in general in the mid-1970s—refugees appeared from war-torn countries such as Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, former Yugoslavia, Sudan and Somalia. Through family reunification policies from the 1980s on, Muslim refugees and residents became visible in a variety of ways. In Sweden, for example, in 1986 when the conference on the new Islamic presence in western Europe took place, Muslim women had already been “discovered.” They—and Muslim men—were associated with patriarchal family structures which encouraged, it was believed, specific phenomena such as sex segregation, endogamy, forced marriages and honor killings. The degree to which such problems are attributed to economic and social factors such as unemployment and discrimination, or to “culture and religion” is still hotly debated. As early as 1983 a conference on “Islam, Family and Society” took place in Denmark, sponsored by the Danish Research Council. About a third of the 17 articles in the conference publication focus on Muslim immigrants to western Europe and problems of integration. In 1996 Naser Khader, a Danish citizen who was born and brought up in the Middle East, published a book in Danish whose title translates into English as *Honour and Shame: The Islamic family and life-patterns from the cradle to the grave*. The title of the Swedish translation (1998) was less eye-catching: *Family life and patterns of living among Muslims of the Middle East*. Khader emphasized not only that Scandinavians lacked knowledge about the backgrounds of Muslims, but also that Muslim migrants were ignorant of the lives of native Scandinavians, even if they had lived in Scandinavia for a long time. Similar publications, often with the explicit mission of bridging so-called cultural gaps, appeared in other parts of western and northern Europe. Thus, differences between “Muslims” and “Europeans” have been underlined in public and popular discourse rather than similarities emphasized.

The narrative of Muslim refugee migration typically focuses on northern and western Europe and is flawed in at least two ways. First, labor migration has continued, particularly to southern Europe, and second, it has continued in especially informal and unregulated arrangements. But unlike labor migration that was facilitated by agreements between states, labor migrants in recent decades have relied on social networks and personal contacts. The boundary between refugee and laborer is furthermore

not exact. Female labor migration from the southern rim of the Mediterranean to southern Europe has mainly been destined for jobs in the domestic sector. Turkish women, as noted earlier, came alone to Germany in the 1960s and 1970s and “pulled” male relatives along. In the late 1980s and early 1990s Moroccan women started to migrate alone to Italy, not always in order to facilitate the migration of a husband, son or brother (Salih 2003, 37).

### *Transnational Migration*

There is thus a need to fill in the gaps concerning the historical narrative on “Muslim” labor migration in order to reconceptualize Europe and its boundaries and to reconceptualize gender and migration. A great stride forward has been made with the development of a transnational perspective on migration. Researchers working within this perspective are theoretically diverse but they share an interest in both the “sender” and the “receiving” nation and analyze if and how social, economic and cultural relationships are sustained across national borders. Ruba Salih’s work on female Moroccan migrants in Italy (2003) is one example, as she collected material in both countries. Her informants expressed different reasons for working in Italy and also had varying dreams and hopes for the future. Salih also shows that many of her informants have networks of kin and family members extending across many countries in Europe. Women in Moroccan villages and Moroccan women in Italy thus have opinions about, and sometimes experiences with, a number of countries.

There is a great deal of interest among researchers in transnational migratory patterns, in female domestic work, in so called care-chains, and in the links women have to their families in “sending” countries. But there is a lack of research focusing on domestic work itself. This might be linked to difficulties of access; employers are not keen to open their homes to scrutiny. Researchers focusing on women and migration underline that a transnational perspective is helpful in the understanding and analysis of how family and kinship ties are sustained across time and space. It is theoretically possible to follow migrants and their transnational links across a number of national borders, but transnational research has shown that this is not so easy from a practical or a methodological point of view. Most research is thus still typically conducted with a focus on one particular national category of migrant in one or two particular national arenas. While many migrants are able to maintain transnational connections,

it is important to underline that not all are able to do so or wish to do so. Sustained family obligations may affect especially female migrants in negative ways.

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, research on Muslim women in Europe has shifted from an interest in work and labor conditions to a concern over identity politics. As noted earlier, this shift is linked to the fact that “Muslim women” were discovered as Muslim women after large-scale labor migration came to an end. Researchers underline that Muslim migrants face discrimination on the job market and that employment is crucial for successful integration into the majority society. Yet paradoxically there is less interest in studying those who actually have jobs than those who are without. Since the late 1990s, however, there has been a renewed interest in the links between labor migration and economic development—or lack of it—in sender and receiver countries. Perhaps we will see a return to theories of gender and political economy as used in the 1970s among researchers focusing on domestic modes of production.

A transnational perspective has not made national classifications obsolete. The criticism of methodological nationalism (where social, political, economic and cultural phenomena seem to neatly end at a national border) among proponents of a transnational perspective does not mean that nation states are deemed irrelevant. Many researchers in this field, on the contrary, underline that national laws and policies are vital to the understanding of contemporary migration processes. There are over 40 countries in Europe and while the Muslim population (widely defined) is almost non-existent in some, it constitutes a significant minority in Bulgaria, France, Macedonia and Russia, and the majority in Albania and Kosovo.

This variation and heterogeneity in terms of economic and political conditions makes it a daunting task to delineate research on Muslim women in Europe. One possible approach is to map research in a historical and geographical manner along variables of Muslim settlement and migration and along the variable of the national context of the researchers themselves. From this perspective, taking into account the specific national contexts of Muslim women, the setting and the researcher, the dearth of easily available research on Muslim women in eastern and southeastern Europe becomes clear. The strong migratory and transnational links between Germany and Turkey, France and Algeria, and Great Britain and South Asia also stand out, and it becomes equally clear that Moroccan and Turkish migrants are found in large numbers in many Western European countries.

Another way to discuss research on Muslim women in Europe is to use academic disciplines, methods used and theoretical tools as variables. It then becomes clear that since the late 1980s, political economy, sociology, social anthropology and ethnology are no longer the main disciplines in which such research takes place, and that theoretical debates on religion, identity and agency have become more salient. Research on Muslim women in Europe—as native or immigrant Muslims—has shifted away from stressing the importance of “folk” practices and rites of passage embedded in particular regional, national or linguistic contexts and towards research on more formal, scholarly and organized religious practices. This shift reflects not only research interests but also what has been, and still is, happening on the ground in many places in Europe, as well as in countries where Muslims constitute the majority. Discourse analysis and postcolonial theories have become pervasive and even quasi-hegemonic since the late 1990s; material is typically collected through interviews or through study of mass media. The following discussion is organized around themes rather than according to disciplines, methodologies or country-specific issues. Themes have been selected because they say something important not only about research on Muslim women in Europe but also about Europe itself. The major themes can be summarized as bodies, beliefs and family law. The bulk of the research discussed has been published since the mid-1990s and the selection of works, it must be underlined, covers only a small part of what has been published in the vast and growing research on Muslim women in Europe.

### *Bodies*

In most parts of Europe the “new” Muslim presence has been increasingly debated through women and their bodies. We are all familiar with the harem as an aesthetic trope of the colonial period reflecting fantasies of female sexual availability, and the veil as a symbol of the hidden and obscure Orient itself. The contemporary dismantling of such Orientalism has not stopped this obsession with Muslim sexuality and female bodies. Depicting “new” Muslim women in Europe as oppressed and in need of liberation is common not only among Islamophobic political parties and organizations of the far right but also in mainstream discourse. Public discussions about female dress, female bodies, forced marriages and so-called crimes of honor are closely associated with Islam in contemporary Europe. Most serious researchers in the social and cultural sciences



wish, and try, to dismantle or go beyond stereotypes of Muslim women in Europe as (passive) victims of patriarchy. Researchers in the social and cultural sciences often act as explicit or implicit spokespersons or champions of Muslims. But this also creates epistemological paradoxes. All too often a focus on redressing a balance may be counter-productive. The more Islam and Muslims are “explained,” the more generalized and homogeneous the categories of “Islam” and “Muslims” appear to be. Stefano Allievi makes a very important theoretical point when he calls for the need to “de-Islamize the study of Islam and Muslims” (2006, 142).

### *Fashion and Veiling*

Emma Tarlo (2010) has found a balance for the dilemma brought about through overexposure of phenomena associated with Islam or Muslims. Her *Visibly Muslim: Fashion, politics, faith*, based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out mainly in or close to London, demonstrates the incredible variety of meanings attached to “Islamic dress” by those who wear it. The book is also about the rapidly changing sartorial landscape of Islamic fashion in Europe. The many illustrations and photographs bear witness to this. Many opponents and proponents of Islamic dress claim that it makes the wearers invisible but Tarlo, on the contrary, underlines that it makes Muslim women not less but more visible when living as a minority in Europe (2010, 9). When women publicly appear as visibly Muslim they take part in and respond to ideas about gender, citizenship, politics and consumption among both non-Muslims and Muslims in Europe today. Tarlo makes use of a variety of informants and social and political contexts, as well as a variety of theoretical and methodological entry points. There are sartorial biographies, a discussion of how the hijab is used and “read” by different kinds of people in a city such as London, and a chapter on how young and fashionable Muslim women actively work to find their own particular style. There is also an analysis of how Hizb ut-Tahrir, an international organization founded in the 1950s and banned in many countries, has used “radical dress activism” (Tarlo 2010, 118) to lay claims to represent true Islam by contrasting the difference between modest Muslim female dress with immodest and improper “secular” Western female attire. An organization such as Hizb ut-Tahrir thus depends on, and mirrors, claims in the majority society about gender and sexuality and the links between sexuality and dress. Tarlo also discusses Islamic fashion as design and consumption and the availability of merchandise in both virtual and physical shops. She concludes that in an arena and time

of rapid change most Islamic fashion designers and owners of businesses want to reconcile their faith with their interest in mainstream fashion.

### *Head-Scarf Fear in France and Elsewhere*

Some researchers try to combat stereotypical depictions of Muslim women in Europe by working very closely with a few informants and then featuring their voices in excerpts from interviews. Another way to approach the complex issues of the position of Muslim women in Europe is to analyze debates or discourses about women classified as such. Analyses of discourses about Muslim women in Europe can contribute to our understanding of the political culture in contemporary Europe and the nationally specific concerns and fears. Joan Wallach Scott's *The Politics of the Veil* (2007) and John R. Bowen's *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves* (2007) both exemplify this approach, by focusing on France and the 2004 law which made it illegal to wear clothes showing religious affiliation in public schools. The law was very clearly directed towards visibly Muslim female dress. Both authors are interested in delineating and understanding how ideas and discourses of *laïcité*, a particular French type of secularism that regulates relations between the public and the private domains, has been used to channel fears about increasing Islamic extremism and political use of Islam among French Muslims. Both authors underline the need to understand French colonial history and republican universalist ideology to pinpoint and explain why female Muslim dress galvanized politicians and intellectuals from across the political spectrum. France is an interesting and important European country for anyone interested in the "new" Muslim presence in Europe, since it has the largest percentage of Muslims (broadly defined) in the European Union.

Earlier hijab incidents in France are important to the understanding of the development towards the ban in 2004. In 1989, for example, three girls were expelled from a public school in a small town outside Paris for wearing hijabs. This incident quickly became a media event where the headscarf became iconic. It was turned into "a veil" and even into "a chador" in the imaginations of many secular French. In 1989, with the 200th anniversary of the French revolution, many public intellectuals fueled the concern over "Iran-type" mobilization in France. Bowen (2007) pays a great deal of attention to how France has regulated religion through law and how the lives of Muslim migrants have been regulated in France. Wallach Scott (2007) analyzes what she sees as French racism and its strong link to ideas about sexuality. While many French feminists before the affairs of

the headscarves had been critical of how dress in contemporary consumer society reduced women to sex objects, they generally changed their view when the “veil” came under scrutiny. The Islamic headscarf was deemed as a symbol of an inferior way of organizing gender and practicing femininity. Banning the Islamic headscarf was thus, in this logic, a way to underline and safeguard a French (universalist) gender equality.

In Europe today, different countries latch on to different symbols connected to women and women’s bodies to demonstrate the inferiority of Muslims. In Sweden, for example, so-called honor killings are attributed to Islam. In the United Kingdom and Norway, so-called “limping marriages” and forced marriages are linked to Muslim migrants. In France, as shown by Bowen, Wallach Scott and others, the covering of the female Muslim body is deemed a threat not just to individual women subjected to this, but to the nation itself. The same is true in other countries. There are now laws in Belgium, France and the Netherlands banning the use of face-veils in public places. In the Dutch case Annelies Moors (2009) shows how public debates after the turn of the century became increasingly heated although the actual use of face-veils were—and have been—very rare. Face-veils, she underlines, have become a threat to public security and they create a sense of discomfort among many Dutch. The signal sent to Muslim women in the Netherlands is paradoxical. On the one hand they are told that in a liberal society they have the right to self-determination and freedom of expression. But when they exercise this in a manner not deemed suitable, they are stigmatized and seen as simultaneously oppressed and threatening.

But not only “white” non-Muslims campaign against what they see as misogynist Islam in Europe. In many European countries, there are organizations founded by women with an Islamic background who laud liberal secular Western traditions as the liberators of women including themselves. One such well-known organization is the French *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* (Neither whores nor doormats), which has received a great deal of attention in media and among researchers. The organization has become transnational with branches in Sweden and elsewhere. *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* was founded in 2002 to combat violence and discrimination against “migrant” women by “migrant” men in the French suburbs. In 2003 Fadela Amara, one of the founders of the organization, published her autobiography (with the same name as the organization), which has been widely sold (and translated into, for example, English and Swedish). In 2004 it won the French National Assembly’s political book prize. Amara is a “publicly secular Muslim” and her book, Mayanthi Fernando

(2009) argues, is very welcome for those who want to deny the structural problems in the French suburbs, such as unemployment and social segregation. Instead, the problems in the suburbs are linked to Islam and lack of gender equality. Yet, argues Fernando, although Amara became the darling of the French establishment by underlining her allegiance to the republic and its “universalist” values, she was still labeled and seen as a Muslim, albeit a secular one. Thus she, like women labeled as pious Muslims, will continue to be seen as different and as not really French (Fernando 2009, 390).

### *Beliefs*

“Publicly secular Muslim” women receive a lot of media attention in many European countries, as do women who have chosen to convert to Islam. Such converts are the focus of a growing body of research and are typically based on narratives of conversion (for example, Jensen 2006, Mansson McGinty 2006, Sultán Sjöqvist 2006, Niewkerk 2006, 2008). These researchers see conversion as an on-going process rather than a single event, and there is interest in how converts make meaning of their lives both before and after conversion. Anna Mansson McGinty uses the term “targeted selfhood” (2006, 183) to underline that her Swedish informants reflect on the often negative attitudes they confront as converts. Converts, many researchers stress, are just as heterogeneous as women who are brought up as Muslims. There is an image that European women convert to Islam because of pressure from a partner, but this is not corroborated by research (for example, Niewkerk 2008, 446). Gender relations and sexuality are, however, frequently talked about in such narratives, not least because of expectations that these are central issues in how non-Muslims view Islam.

Swedish female converts interviewed by Madeleine Sultán Sjöqvist underlined that Islam had liberated them from the dominant gender expectations in society. They had actively chosen to live in patriarchal family arrangements. Since these women stress their active role and agency in conversion and in practicing Islam, she interprets this religiosity as a choice of life-style and “both part of and as a reaction to the demands of late modern life” (Sultán Sjöqvist 2006, 287).

### *Muslim Female Converts*

Research on converts straddles the themes of bodies and beliefs. The kind of Islam converts engage in is of interest to researchers, as well as how

they reflect on religious beliefs and organizations. Here the availability of Islamic organizations clearly plays a role. In Denmark, for example, there is no umbrella organization gathering all Muslims. In her research on Danish female converts, Tina Gudrun Jensen (2006, 655) found an organizational flux with both mobilization and conflict about how to practice "true Islam." The converts she interviewed often changed organizational allegiances and Islamic orientation. While believers who had been brought up as Muslims underlined the need to coach the Danish converts along a "true" path, the converts themselves displayed an often eclectic trajectory in their development as practicing Muslims and many did not want to be associated with any particular group (Jensen 2006, 653). In Jensen's analysis, religious authority and personal autonomy are intertwined for these converts. It can be said that converts express and reflect issues that are central also in the majority society. The attention researchers give to Muslim female converts does not reflect their numerical importance, but rather the importance which is attached to them by both pious Muslims and non-Muslim Europeans critical of religion in general and Islam in particular. It is also interesting to note that this research demonstrates the emergence of national differences in being a convert. Danish, Swedish and Dutch converts speak to and reflect on discourses which are nationally particular. More comparative research in Europe is needed to deepen and broaden this line of analysis.

Converts are also active in researching gender and Islam in contemporary Europe. Anne Sofie Roald is a Norwegian-born and Swedish-educated convert with long research experience in Europe and elsewhere. For *Women in Islam: The Western experience* (2001) she studied Islamic texts and also used questionnaires, interviews, group discussion, and participant observation to analyze how a selection of Arabic-speaking well-educated Sunni Islamist female and male migrants view the challenges and changes for gender roles in a minority situation. Roald (2001, 300 ff.) concludes that attitudes towards women are changing among Islamists in Europe, due to the minority situation and due to globalization more broadly. She focused on Arabic speakers because, in her mind, such speakers are able to make more independent and critical textual analyses than Muslims who are not able to read the Qur'an and other important sources in Arabic. Well-educated Arabic-speaking Muslims have, she believes, theoretically the "best resources" for reinterpreting the classical sources (Roald 2001, 59). Muslims with other linguistic backgrounds might object to this assumption, but it does reflect a kind of "ethnic" hegemony quite prevalent in the Islamic world.

*Fatwas on Muslim Families in Europe*

Texts and handbooks in classical *fiqh* (jurisprudence) do not systematically sort issues along variables of family or gender. But among contemporary Islamic scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926), closely associated with the theology of the Muslim Brotherhood, this is now taking place. The views and fatwas of this Egyptian scholar are well known in the Arab world and also among (Arabic speaking) Muslims in the European diaspora. His fatwas on family and women have been very influential, disseminated through his programs on the Al-Jazira channel as well as the website Islam Online. He has also become associated with “minority jurisprudence,” the study of how Muslims should, and can, live as Muslims in the West.

Religious authority is fundamental in Lena Larsen’s research (2011) on fatwas and the challenges Muslim women face in western Europe. Like Roald, Larsen combines text-oriented research with qualitative social science methods. She participated in sessions of the Dublin-based European Council for Fatwa and Research between 2002 and 2006, took part in the yearly meetings of the Union des Organisations Islamiques de France in Paris, Cairo and Istanbul between 2004 and 2009, interviewed religious scholars, and in general immersed herself in sites where Islamic legal issues were debated, produced and disseminated, especially Great Britain and France. Larsen is a Norwegian convert and has been active in Scandinavian and European Islamic circles, which opened many doors for her during her research. Her analysis is clearly dependent on both her knowledge of *fiqh* and on her understanding of the social context of contemporary fatwa-making in Europe, but her research is not mainly directed towards the Muslim community.

Pious or believing European Muslim women—like Muslim women in many other places—are pulled between two conflicting sets of norms, according to Larsen. On the one hand they are faced with a gender ideal where women and men have complementary roles stressing obligations rather than rights and where women are subordinated to men. On the other hand they are faced with ideals stressing the rights of women and gender equality. Believing women try to find religiously acceptable solutions to this dilemma and Larsen scrutinizes fatwas given after 1992 on women-related issues by dominant Islamic scholars in Europe, to ascertain whether they are able to reconcile Islamic tradition with gender equality. The vocabulary used to characterize “fatwas” varied; for some it was framed as an “answer” to a “question” and to others it was at times

framed more as a “decision.” The contexts of fatwa-giving differ between the nationally oriented Union des Organisations Islamiques de France and the more broadly based European Council for Fatwa and Research. The development of these organizations shows how important both national and transnational contexts are for the emergence of different European forms of Islam where France and the United Kingdom have represented different approaches to immigrants, religious pluralism and social cohesion. Most fatwa-givers in Europe are men but women with religious authority are emerging.

Larsen found that most fatwas related to women and family were concerned with marriage and how to reconcile Islamic prescriptions with legal frameworks in various European countries. Very little discussion has so far emerged concerning *mahr* (bridewealth) and inheritance. Larsen also found that the different legal contexts in multicultural United Kingdom and republican France influence the Islamic scholars when giving fatwas. Following Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Larsen classifies the opinions of most of the scholars as neo-traditional (Larsen 2011, 308); women and men do not have the same rights but they have the same value. But she also finds a tendency towards gender equality in fatwas on ritual practice. Many fatwas underline the right of women to be present in the mosque or to make a pilgrimage. But there are also fatwas stressing the need to follow national laws for marriage in order for Muslims to be recognized as properly married. Larsen indicates that gender equality may thus enter European Islamic jurisprudence through the back door. Although most fatwa-givers in her research see men as heads of the family, they also acknowledge that Muslims in a minority situation in western and northern Europe live in social contexts that differ from Muslim majority societies.

#### *Organized and Non-Organized Muslim Women*

Transnational links are obvious in both Roald's and Larsen's material. They also show that theological influence not only flows from the Arab or Islamic world to western Europe, but that debates on Shari'a and *fiqh* in western Europe also flow in the other direction. The development of “immigrant” (and “convert”) Islamic organizations, and the methods they use to attract members, vary from one country in another in western and northern Europe. The extent to which believers of different national, ethnic or linguistic background join the same organizations also differ. But, generally speaking, Muslim women in Europe have entered these

religious organizations and have made their presence felt in mosques. Most researchers focusing on “formal” Islam see this development as positive in contrast to much populist and media discourse in many European countries. Based on interviews from the early twenty-first century among young Muslim women in France and Germany who had joined Sunni organizations, Jeanette Jouili and Schirin Amir-Moazami (2006), note how these women underlined the importance of religious knowledge. This enabled them to return to “pure” or “true” Islam different from the traditions of their parents. The women did not challenge the complementary gender roles prescribed in the mainstream Islamic organizations they had joined, but claimed that “knowledge” was a duty which enabled them to become better mothers and citizens.

Muslims who are, or have been, members of formal organizations are clearly over-represented in research on beliefs and “new” Muslim women in Europe. It is clearly easier to find and to interview women who have reflected on what it means to be a Muslim and who are able to articulate ideas of beliefs and practice to a researcher. But, as Lene Kühle (2011) reminds us, there are also “practicing” Muslims who are not members of organizations and who do not take part in collective religious celebrations. Surveys in various countries try to pinpoint and classify if, how, and in what ways Muslims are “religious.” Such classificatory efforts can clearly be understood in terms of forms of governance which non-Muslims in Europe are subjected to as well. Surveys generally show that the vast majority of “minority Muslims” are not members of religious organizations. But even for non-organized Muslims in Europe, “religious” family arrangements may remain, or become very important, especially for individuals with transnational family links and arrangements. This importance can also be seen in the rapid development of research on “Muslim” family issues, family law and legal pluralism in Europe.

### *Family Law*

In February 2008 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, gave a talk which created an enormous stir and controversy in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in western Europe. Dr Williams talked about the rights of religious groups in secular states. He did not advocate for parallel legal systems where, for example, British Muslims would be consigned to an “Islamic” legal framework, but this is how many interpreted his talk. “Shari‘a courts” were in the headlines of most English newspapers. In a well-argued response to Dr Rowan’s talk and to the public debate, Samia



Bano (2008) delineates several very important points. The heated arguments against Dr Rowan show that many commentators think that while “Islamic law was unreasonable and patriarchal,” Western law was seen to be “both secular and egalitarian” (Bano 2008, 285). The hostile presuppositions were such, Bano continues, that it made any kind of level-headed debate almost impossible. But she also critiques Dr Rowan for failing to address the complex ways Shari‘a manifests itself among Muslims in Britain. Perhaps the archbishop thinks that all Muslims—because they are Muslims—actually want and demand “Shari‘a” in Britain? Bano underlines that Muslim identity in Britain is not fixed and Muslim identity is not a question of all-or-nothing. Finally she stresses that “the experience of British Muslim women” was not addressed in the talk (Bano 2008, 309). It seems that the history of Muslim women in Europe has not yet been recognized at large for its depth and complexity.

*Shari‘a Courts, Shari‘a Councils and Limping Marriages*

The fear of Shari‘a courts is widespread in many countries in Europe but officially recognized courts of this sort exist in only one European country, Greece. In 1881, an agreement was made between Greece and the Ottoman authorities whereby Greece promised that Muslims in the country would be allowed to follow Islam in matters of marriage, divorce and custody of children. This agreement is still in force for the approximately 100,000 Muslims who live in western Thrace. While the Turkish Republic removed all Shari‘a and church courts from its legal system in 1926, religious courts are still present in Greece. For Muslims in Turkey religious marriages are not legally recognized by the state, but among Thracian Muslims in Greece—which is a member of the European Union—it is different. Aspasia Tsaoussi and Elena Zervogianni (2008) are critical of this minority arrangement and claim that over time it has reinforced a regional Thracian Muslim subculture detrimental to women. They would rather see a system where culturally sensitive mediators could be used for family conflict, much like the Shari‘a councils already found in the United Kingdom.

Shari‘a councils emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1980s and are often closely associated with specific mosques. The most common questions relating to how to reconcile national European legislation with Islamic prescriptions concerned marriage and divorce, according to Larsen, as already noted. Councils are often used when Muslims need to have a religiously sanctioned divorce, perhaps to be able to marry again or to have the divorce recognized in their country of origin. Especially women

turn to the councils when they find themselves in so-called “limping marriages.” Their husbands may have left them but will not agree to a full and final divorce, Islamic or “secular.” While the councils may force women into accepting endless and unwelcomed efforts at reconciliation, women also get support by being released from unhappy or abusive marriages (Bano 2008). While media debates depict Shari’a councils and “Islamic law” as a great threat to secular and liberal values, legal scholars such as Lisa Pilgram (2012) stress that in practice there is an incipient legal field containing practices of British Muslim family law, and this legal field needs to be studied rather than condemned outright.

“Limping marriage” is a phenomenon that underlines the fact that there is no equality between women and men in access to divorce or to dissolution of marriage. It is closely—and wrongly—associated with Islam and hotly debated in different European countries. In 2003, Norway passed a law that all persons wanting to marry in Norway had to sign an agreement that both spouses have an equal right to divorce. The overt aim of the law was to help Muslim women in Norway with what was depicted as a problem on an enormous magnitude. But as Berit Thorbjørnsrud (2005, 10) noted, the Norwegian lawmaker had not realized that the real opposition to this law did not come from Norwegian Muslims but rather from representatives of the Catholic and Orthodox churches. A faithful Catholic or Orthodox Christian cannot enter a marriage on the premise that it can be dissolved.

Questions of limping marriage and forced marriage are emotionally charged issues and stigmatize mainly Muslims in Europe. These issues also directly point to the intersection between family law in Europe and transnationally connected members of Muslim families. This area covers large and complex phenomena studied, analyzed and interpreted from many different perspectives. One important aspect is how citizenship is gendered and interpreted and how various national laws meet or collide when citizens migrate and settle in new countries. Another important issue is how various states handle parallel or plural jurisprudence in the field of family law. Finally, it is crucial to study not only formal law but also how people actually practice family relations across national borders (Rabo 2011).

### *Mobile People, Immobile Laws*

Mobility across national borders and family law with links to more than one national legal system are not novel phenomena. The traditional tool

used to solve problems arising from cross-border conflicts is private international law. But this tool is becoming less useful in a world of increased transnational connections and the increased possibilities of double citizenship. Where do the litigants actually belong and which national law should be applied? The drive towards a convergence of family law can be seen as one way to address the difficulty of multiple national belongings. Discussing legal pluralism and its limits in European family law Andrea Büchler (2011, 130), concludes that some form of Islamic law is already applied as a result of the existence of private international law. Although European countries may be facing similar difficulties in developing acceptable pluralism, the legal solutions might differ because of past history and legal culture. Sweden, for example, has developed a legal tradition where domicile is the most important criterion for judging family cases involving people who reside in Sweden but who might have strong links to Iran or Iraq, for example. Germany has typically not paid the same attention to domicile. These differences also reflect that obtaining citizenship is easier in Sweden than in Germany, and that persons with permanent residence permits in Sweden are regarded as *de facto* citizens. In Germany immigrants may be judged by the family laws of Morocco, Egypt or Pakistan even if they have been residents for decades. In Germany Shari'a is present through private international law.

### *Family Reunification*

In many countries family reunification has become the most important way to gain access to northern or western Europe. There is a widespread idea in Scandinavia that young Muslim women are forced to marry relatives from the "homeland" in order to bring them to Scandinavia, or that young Muslim men marry from the "homeland" in order to obtain a docile virgin untainted by the sexual laxity in Scandinavia. Family reunification as a field of research in Europe points to the need to combine an analysis of migration law and family law. Family reunification is deemed as a human right by, for example, the European Court of Justice, but since the late twentieth century restrictions have been increasing. In 2002 the criteria for family reunification in Denmark were changed in response to moral panics about forced marriages and increased "integration" of immigrants from Turkey and Pakistan, in particular, who brought spouses from their "homelands." Couples wanting to reunite needed to be older than the formal marriage age in Denmark, the Danish partner had to have housing, a certain stable income, financial collateral and "national

attachment” to Denmark. Mikkel Rytter (2010) analyzes these criteria in terms of the dominant Danish kinship ideology where “the family of Denmark” emerges. The law has been readjusted a number of times so that the “right” kind of Danes—for example, those who had lived abroad for many years as diplomats or employees for Danish firms—would not suffer. But, as Rytter points out, while “the family of Denmark” connotes certain characteristics today—white, nuclear, heterosexual families—these are changing as families in Denmark become more heterogeneous. In the future this might lead to a definition of “the family of Denmark” that includes citizens with an immigrant background. As of 2010, however, Rytter (2010, 317) notes that opinion polls show that the majority in Denmark support the exacting criteria for family reunification.

The strict law in Denmark has forced thousands of people to leave the country and settle in Sweden which until now 2012 had more liberal rules for family reunification. Mikkel Rytter (2012) has conducted fieldwork among Danish-Pakistani couples who live in a kind of Swedish-Danish borderland. The “Danish” partner often commutes to Denmark to work and some couples actually live clandestinely with relatives in Denmark but maintain an official residence in Sweden. These couples live in a semi-legal condition (Rytter 2012, 97) which creates tensions and worry. It is difficult for many of his informants to understand why they are not allowed to live in Denmark when Danish companies are allowed to bring non-European Union labor migrants into the country on special contracts. Rytter also demonstrates how some couples enjoy or take advantage of being separated from larger kinship networks in Denmark. Political relations between the bordering countries are also affected by the differences in family reunification policies. In Denmark the “multiculturalism” of Sweden is denigrated by certain political actors and the Danish policies are called “silly and discriminatory” by some Swedish politicians (Rytter 2012, 104). But the differences in law and the ease of obtaining Swedish citizenship, especially for persons with Danish passports, creates a situation of family life that straddles the two countries. The European Court of Justice passed a verdict against Denmark because its strict law of family reunification blocks mobility inside the European Union (Rytter 2010, 317). Thus the EU aim to enhance mobility for its citizens, while simultaneously locking its borders against, for example, Muslim non-citizens from Asia and Africa, is complicated by the rights of immigrant residents or “new” European citizens.

The question of family reunification is, as demonstrated by research, a very sensitive issue. Gender relations and family arrangements have strong

symbolic value as indicators of democracy, progress or cultural authenticity (Rabo 2011, 31). Thus a stress on the superiority of the “Scandinavian” way of organizing family life may easily turn family law into a battleground of morality. Anniken Hagelund (2008) shows how such moral accounts in Scandinavia have led to strident demands that the state intervene to save the women and children of mainly Middle Eastern or Muslim migrants. “Native” women are subjected to hegemonic ideas of individual capability, of choice and autonomy, while Muslim women are weak and incapable and need to be saved from their families. Liberal democracies in contemporary European countries are faced with a dilemma concerning family law. Researchers emphasize that the rights of religious minorities must be safeguarded but that family law must protect the weaker parties, typically women and children.

#### *Fieldwork Immersion in Old and New Muslim Communities*

Research on Muslims in Europe and Muslim women in Europe is, as has been discussed throughout this entry, a very good entry point from which to detect and analyze national similarities and differences. Europe itself appears different through this research, which also indicates how “Europe” has taken on new ideological meanings in the past decades. The fall of the Soviet Union and the “new” Muslim presence have contributed to the emphasis on (an imaginary) Europe. But while the “new” presence of Muslim women constitutes a large and growing field of research, no matter how we define “Muslim women,” accessible research on Islam and gender in the former Soviet bloc is lacking. The Muslim—including female—presence in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the communist period is documented within folklore and in studies where religion and traditions regarded as “backward” were seen to disappear as modernity and socialism developed. Hence the monographs by Tone Bringa (1995) and Kristen Ghodsee (2010) are very important contributions to the anthropology of Islam in former communist countries. Bringa’s ethnography, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way*, focuses on a village with a mixed Muslim and Catholic population in Bosnia where she collected material mainly in the Muslim part of town at the end of the 1980s. For a long time the Catholics and the Muslims had lived together, but at one point Muslims were attacked by Croat forces and were forced to flee. Bringa returned with a film crew in 1993 to depict the fate of the village and to try to find surviving Muslim villagers who had fled. Ghodsee did fieldwork in 2005–2008 in a region

of Bulgaria where Pomaks—“Bulgarian” Muslims—live. *Muslim Lives in Eastern Europe* is set in a former mining region which saw rapid change in the socialist period. Miners were regarded as communist heroes and their living standard increased dramatically.

The fall of communism destroyed this privileged and masculine economy and people in this region faced great hardship. Islam in former Yugoslavia and in socialist Bulgaria was recognized but also denigrated. In Bulgaria for example, Muslims were forced to change their names. In both cases the state controlled Islam through salaried religious leaders and kept a tight control of the religious educational institutions. “Traditional” forms of worship, and life-crisis rituals where women had skills and knowledge, were especially stigmatized as old-fashioned or simply wrong. Both books are important in offering analysis of an “old” female Muslim presence in Europe, and how these women are rooted in—and also become uprooted from—local and regional histories. Both Bringa and Ghodsee also show the impact of political and economic turmoil—and war, in the case of Bosnia—on religious identity. Islamic revivalism—transnationally linked to the Middle East—has spread among the Pomak Bulgarians, resulting in increased gender segregation.

In order to examine changes towards more formal and scholarly religious practices in many places and among many Muslim women, the context of these practices needs to be described and analyzed. Assessing the development of research on Muslim women in Europe clearly affirms the potential of “traditional” anthropology to enrich our understanding of human action and human thought through an immersion in the lives of others, whoever they may be and wherever they might live. Such research immersion, as demonstrated by Bringa and Ghodsee, is perhaps more difficult in situations where Muslim women constitute a minority or where “Muslim space” is both limited and sharply delimited. But Marianne Pedersen Holm shows that immersion is not impossible, even among Muslim women in a minority situation. In *Practices of Belonging: Ritual performances and the making of place and relatedness among Iraqi women in Copenhagen* (2009), she describes her informants as firmly linked in time and space to Copenhagen, to specific named quarters, and to other parts of Denmark where some lived before moving to the capital. But her informants—and their family members—are also firmly tied to localities in Iraq: to Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf. They also have strong links to other parts of the world where family members live. Holm Pedersen has visited both Jordan and Syria where there are many Iraqi refugees. All these contexts and all these localities are crucial for her analysis and

her understanding of how her adult informants make sense of their place and purpose in the world. Holm Pedersen contends that there has been too much emphasis in European research on young Muslim migrants or citizens. By focusing on adults who have migrated she is able to understand how her informants vary in their responses to processes of change and continuity.

Holm Pedersen is concerned with the importance of rituals for the women in their everyday lives in a migrant setting; many of her informants emphasize that life in Copenhagen has made them practice Islam more faithfully. Some claimed this was a result of new increased possibilities and their own increasing age. Others said it was linked to exile and a sense of being outsiders in a rather hostile Danish environment. Still others stressed the importance of teaching their children how to be righteous in a society with too many “Danish” temptations. For Holm Pedersen the different rituals should be analyzed as addressing—in a rich and multifaceted manner—questions of belonging. Thus she is able to show that although her informants are part of the new Islamic presence in Europe, they share worldly and deeply existential issues that are similar to those of European women in general.

From the discussion presented here it is clear that more historical research on Muslim women in Europe is needed to reconceptualize Europe and its boundaries. Comparative historical research is also needed in order to analyze the development of patriarchy in Europe, not least to understand if, how and when family law becomes an instrument for the oppression of women or gender equality.

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