Center for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe - Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE)

MINORITIES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Muslims of Macedonia

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MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS

State

Republic of Macedonia

Name (in English, in the dominant language and -if different- in the minority language)

Muslims

Is there any form of recognition of the minority?

The Islamic Community and the Islamic Dervish Religious Community are officially registered by the state.

Category (national, ethnic, linguistic or religious) ascribed by the minority and, if different, by the state.

Religious

Territory they inhabit.

Muslims in Macedonia belong to five ethnic groups. These are Albanians, Turks, Roma, Muslim Macedonians (also known as Torbeshi, Pomaks or Poturs) and Bosnians. Albanians live in compact areas in the western part of Macedonia, bordering Albania. They also live in the northwest, close to Yugoslavia's province of Kosovo, and in the capital Skopje (World Directory of Minorities, 1997:234). In some towns, such as Gostivar and Tetovo close to the Albanian border, they constitute the majority of the population. The ethnic Turks live in the western and northwestern parts of the country too (Poulton, 1993:8). There is a big concentration of Turks in Skopje, the towns of Debar, Gostivar and Strumitsa (Milosavlevski, Tomovski, quoting census data, 1997:294). Big communities of Macedonian Roma are present in the towns of Chair, Tsentar, Prilep, Debar, Vinica and also in the capital Skopje (Milosavlevski, Tomovski, quoting census data, 1997: 295). For the most part, the Macedonian Muslims (Torbeshi) live in the western part of the country (HRW, 1996:80). The Gorans --a group closely associated with them-- lives in the upland regions of Shar Planina in Western Macedonia (Poulton, 1998:16). Bosnians live between Skopje and Veles in central Macedonia (Fraenkel, 1999).

Population

The last 1994 population census recorded 581,203 Muslims in Macedonia out of a total population of 1,935,034 (Ilievski, 1998:11). 441,104 of them are Albanians (22.9% of the total population), 78,019 Turks, 43,707 Roma, 6,829 Bosnians (Friedman, V., quoting 1994 census data, 1998:2) and 15,418 Muslim Macedonians (Ilievski, 1998:11). It must be noted that the census registered only citizens and not residents. However, many minority representatives have faced enormous political and technical problems in acquiring citizenship after Macedonia's independence. It is difficult to give independent data on the real number of the Muslims in Macedonia. The leaders of the respective ethnic communities give the following estimates: Albanians constitute 40 per cent of the population (CSCE, 1992:13), Turks -- between 170,000 and 200,000 people (HRW, 1996:68), and Bosnians -- around 60,000-80,000 people (Muhic, 1999). Unofficial estimates state that there are some 200,000 Roma (MRG, 1997:235). Macedonian Muslim activists claim that the number of their religious brethren is much larger, especially when one keeps in mind that there are no data on some of them, e.g. the Gorans (HRW, 1996:80).

Name of the language(s) spoken by the minority (in English, in the minority language and -if different- in the dominant language).

Albanian, Turkish, Macedonian, Romani, Bosnian.

Is there any form of recognition of the language(s)?

Dominant language of the territory they inhabit.

Macedonian

Occasional or daily use of the minority language.

Access to education corresponding to the needs of the minority.

Religion(s) practiced.

Islam. The majority adheres to Sunni Islam, while some belong to the Shiite Bektashi order.

Is there any form of recognition of the religion(s)?

Both religious communities --of the Sunni and the Sufi (Dervish) orders-- are officially registered by the state. Religious instruction is officially allowed in the private religious schools, but not in the public schools.

Communities having the same characteristics in other territories/countries.

Muslims predominate in around 30 to 40 countries. They are present from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, along the belt that stretches across northern Africa to the southern borders of the former Soviet Union, and the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent. Arabs account for less than one fifth of all Muslims (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1992:102). Muslims in the Balkans are a majority in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Turkey, while they are minorities in the predominantly Orthodox countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Macedonia, Romania and Yugoslavia, as well as in the predominantly Roman Catholic countries Croatia and Slovenia.

Population of these communities in other territories/countries

There were around 400 million Muslims in the world at the time of the Second World War, whereas there were around 1 billion of them in 1985 (Atlas on Religions of Encyclopaedia Universalis, 1990:14). In the neighboring states: Muslims in Albania make up 70 per cent (Human Rights Without Frontiers, 1996:9) out of a total population of 3.4 million. There are around 1,110,295 Muslims in Bulgaria, out of a total population of 8,487,317 people, according to the last 1992 population census (Cohen, Kanev, 1998). In Greece there are around 100,000 Muslims living in Western Thrace, around 500,000 in the rest of the country, mainly living Athens and Thessaloniki and who are composed of immigrant populations.

PRESENTATION

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. *Important historical developments*

Muslim Communities, Islam and the Ottoman Empire: The Ottomans conquered the Balkans in the late 14th century. The conquest introduced Islam to the formerly Christian land in line with the Ottoman State's main concept of forging a "holy war" for the spread and defense of Islam. Despite the interest in "religious war," however, the goal of the conquest was not to destroy the subjected peoples, but to dominate them in a manner that is advantageous to Islam. Thus, if a city or a region surrendered without resistance, the population was allowed to retain its religion, otherwise it ran the risk of being enslaved or massacred (Jelavic, 1983:39).

There are generally three different theories on the spread of Islam in the Balkans. The first one suggests that the Ottoman conquest was followed by genocide over the indigenous populations and, thereafter, by an intensive colonization by Turks from Anatolia. (Zhelyazkova, 1997:14). Another thesis --supported by a number of nationalist Balkan writers-- suggests that Islam was spread in a coercive way. This thesis puts a lot of emphasis on the forceful recruitment of Christian boys (*devshirme*) to participate in the Ottoman *janissary* institution (14th-18th c.) (Mutafchieva, 1994:10). A third thesis suggests that conversion took place only on a voluntary principle, because non-Muslim subjects had economic incentives to do so. By adopting the new religion, they eliminated several restrictions discussed below (Jelavic, 1983:40). This thesis is supported by a substantial number of western scholars.

The Ottoman Empire divided its subjects along confessional lines, and not along their ethnicity or language. There were four administrative units, the *millets*, which regulated the religiously different subjects. The *Umma* dealt with the affairs of the Muslims (Poulton, 1995:28). There were also the Christian, Armenian and Jewish *millets*, which were given a relative autonomy to manage their own affairs (Poulton, 1998:8).

Muslims and non-Muslims were not treated equally. The Ottoman legal system incorporated two kinds of laws -- Islamic law (*sheriat*) and Civil law. The first one, based on ecclesiastical texts, applied only to Muslims. The second one was designed to cover other details that evolved in the political life of the state and was pursued by the decrees of the Sultan, which were called *kanuns* (Jelavic, 1985:40). In many cases the *kanuns* were the ones that laid the foundation for the discrimination of the non-Muslim population (Kanev, 1999). Moreover, the *cizye* tax was imposed on every non-Muslim in the Empire. This tax was quite high and provided a third to a half of the state budget (Eminov, 1997:37). Non-Muslims were also not allowed to join the military and the high-level state administration. These posts could provide them with a higher social status, but they had no access to these professions.

However, the Ottoman official records did not divide the Muslims according to their ethnic or linguistic affiliation (Karpat, 1985:55). Therefore, it is quite difficult to determine the real number of the different ethnic groups that comprised the Islamic community in the Ottoman period. In some cases, however, the Ottoman principle of regarding people in terms of their religious identity was violated due to requirements of the administration, state management and the military. For their needs, the cadasters offered a more precise information, giving data even on the ethnic identity of the described people. Consequently, Muslim Roma were differentiated from the others and thus they were levied the *cizye* tax along with the other "infidel" subjects (Zhelyazkova, 1997:45).

During the Ottoman time, territorial Macedonia belonged to Rumelia, the European province of the Empire. In the 14th century, frontier regions such as Thrace, Eastern Bulgaria, Macedonia and Thessaly became zones where Turkish emigration and culture predominated (Inalcik, 1994:14). Different forces drove the spread of Islam in those areas. The cities --such as Skopje-- were mostly settled by Sunni Muslims, while the various adherents of folk Islam started settling in the rural areas (Fraenkel, 1999). They belonged to different Sufi orders (*tarikates)*. Sufi orders that found fertile soil for their activities in Macedonia were the Helveti, Naksh-Bandi, Rufa'i, Qadiri, Malami, etc. The Bektashi, unlike the other Sufi orders in the Balkans, though officially Sunni, are to be regarded as essentially Shiite (Norris, 1993:89).

Most of the mosques on the territory of the present-day Republic of Macedonia were erected between the 15th and the 16th centuries. The most prominent of them are the Isa Beg Mosque, the Mustafa Pasha Mosque and the Sultan Murat Mosque in Skopje, and the Aladzha Mosque in Tetovo. Among the most prominent of the Sufi orders' religious objects -- *tekkes* (a lodge of a Sufi order, inhabited by the Shejh or the Baba of the dervishes) and *turbes* (mausoleum of a Shejh) -- are the Helveti Tekke-Mosque in Strouga (Islamic Community Brochure, 1997:79) and the Bektashi-Tekke in Tetovo.

In the 1830s, the Ottoman Empire started reorganizing itself politically in order to cope with its domestic political and economic problems resulted from the mounting European pressure and the repercussions of the Russo-Turkish wars. This reform process is known as the "Tanzimat" reforms, marked by the reform edicts of 1839 and 1856 and the Constitution of 1876. These legal acts committed the government to a policy of change, greater justice, equality among the citizens, and the rule of law (Quataert, 1994:762-765). Thus, with the granting of full legal equality between Muslims and non-Muslims during the Tanzimat era, Muslims started to lose their privileged status in the Empire.

Their status deteriorated further when they became minorities in the newly established Balkan states. Since territorial Macedonia remained under Ottoman rule until the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), it became a "magnet" for the Ottoman Muslim subjects, who either stayed in Macedonia for short or longer periods of time, or sought their way into the heartland of the Empire.

Muslim Communities from the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) until the End of Communism: Macedonia became a major battlefield during the Balkan Wars and the two World Wars. In 1919 it was ultimately divided between Bulgaria, Greece and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Royal Yugoslavia). Vardar Macedonia, which became the basis for the independent Republic of Macedonia, remained under the rule of Royal Yugoslavia, but was considered "southern Serbia" by that time.

The religious organization of the Muslims in Royal Yugoslavia was originally divided into three regions. The Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia were administered by the *Reis-ul-Ulema* in Sarajevo, whereas the Serbian and Macedonian Muslims fell under the jurisdiction of the *Reis-ul-Ulema* in Belgrade. The *mufti* (district head) of Stari Bar was the leader of the Montenegrin Muslims. However, in 1930, as part of King Alexander's centralization program, Muslim religious interests were united in the Supreme Council of the Islamic Religious Community located in Belgrade. Two leaderships were maintained in Sarajevo and in Belgrade until 1936, when the various institutions were merged into one organization based in Sarajevo (Friedman, F., 1996:107).

In Royal Yugoslavia, even though there was no official state church, there was no separation between church and state. The major religions (including Islam) performed different functions for the state. They kept the registers for birth, marriages and death and had jurisdiction over matrimonial disputes. The churches maintained also some primary and secondary schools. Freedom of creed was guaranteed and religious education --in the faiths of the recognized minorities-- was a compulsory subject in these schools (Alexander, 1979:209). However, religious freedom was only limited, since the 1931 Constitution banned proselytism (Kanev, 1999).

During the Communist period, the doctrine of "Yugoslavism," based on the principle of *bratstvo i jedinstvo* ("brotherhood and unity"), was represented in the federation's constitutions. Citizens had equal rights and duties regardless of their ethnicity or religion. (Lampe, 1996:232). The ethnically diverse populations were ranked in line with a three-tier system. First were the "peoples," which had their republics within Yugoslavia. The Macedonians belonged to this layer. Second came the "nationalities," which had kin-states outside the borders of Yugoslavia. Such were the Muslim Albanians and Turks. Third were the "ethnic groups" such as the Roma --the majority of whom are Muslim-- who had their own ethnic identities, but no kin-states.

The Muslims of Macedonia were an integral part of the Yugoslav Muslim community, headed by the *Reis-ul-Ulema* in Sarajevo. The Islamic Community in Yugoslavia was divided into four administrative regions: the Sarajevo region, the Pristina region, the Skopje region and the Titograd region (Poulton, 1993:41). The three main groups of Islamic minorities in socialist Yugoslavia lived in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Muslims amounted to more than one and a half million people (Popovic, 1990:25) and in 1991, there were 1,905,829 of them (MRG, 1997:206). In Kosovo, the Muslims were mostly Albanians, amounting to at least two

million people (MRG, 1997:252) and there were around ten thousand Turks (Popovic, 1990:25). In Macedonia, there were 279,871 Albanians, 86,591 Turks and 39,513 Macedonian Muslims (1981 census data, quoted by Friedman, V., 1998:2). In addition, there were 89,932 Muslims (1991 census data, quoted by MRG, 1997:254) and 40,000 Albanians in Montenegro (Poulton, 1993:75). There were also several thousands of Muslim Roma all over Yugoslavia (Popovic, 1990:25).

Muslims in Yugoslavia enjoyed greater level of freedom than their co-religionists of the other socialist countries. Between 1945-1948, all religions in Yugoslavia were treated almost on the same footing as in other socialist countries, according to the communist slogan "religion is opium for the peoples." However, after the Stalin-Tito split of 1948, the situation changed (Popovic, 1990:20). Relative religious liberalism was launched, because through promoting a religious identity, the authorities were able to control the development of the different ethnic identities in the multi-cultural Yugoslavia.

There were at least two other reasons for the toleration of Islam in Yugoslavia. Firstly, there was the domestic reason in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was created specifically as a *modus vivendi* for the three main groups living there -- Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Muslim Slavs. Historically, they have been ethnically mixed and both Serbia and Croatia claimed that those territories and people belonged to them. In the 1970s, the Muslim nationality --as a distinct Yugoslav nationality-- was created in order to counter Serbian and Croatian claims over the Slav Muslims in Yugoslavia (Poulton, 1993:39-41). Second, the Cold War put Yugoslavia in a peculiar position between the East and the West. Thus, it searched for political space among the "independent states" beyond the East-West block confrontation model, and many of those states were Islamic ones (Popovic, 1990:20-21).

However, some claim that Muslims in Socialist Macedonia were not given a lot of leeway to promote their religious identity. This is possibly because with the creation of the Macedonian Orthodox Church --which did not exist before the formation of the SFRY, and it was separated from the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1967-- Macedonia's Orthodox population started to enjoy special treatment. The Orthodox religion was used to foster a Macedonian ethno-national identity and loyalty to Yugoslavia. However, this did not apply to the Muslims under Tito's regime (Fraenkel, 1999).

After Tito's death in 1980 and the collapse of the Yugoslav economy, Yugoslav politics started to become more and more "ethnicized." In the late 1980s, the regime of Serbia's president Slobodan Milosevic changed the ethnic and religious balance in Serbia (MRG, 1997:251). A special target of the authorities was the rising Albanian nationalist discontent, which had its roots somewhere in the 1970s. The Albanians' demands for the republican status of Kosovo were violently suppressed during the 1981 unrest in Prishtina. Thus, in 1989, the Serbian Parliament went so far as to revoke the autonomous status of Kosovo and Vojvodina granted by the 1974 Constitution (MRG, 1997:251, Poulton, 1993:60-61).

In the 1970s-1980s, the Macedonian authorities launched a number of initiatives to prevent the Muslim community of Macedonia from being "Albanianized." The fears came from the rise of Albanian nationalism in Kosovo and the fact that the Albanians in Macedonia were the biggest Muslim minority which supposedly could exert pressure on the smaller Muslim minorities along religious lines. In 1970, the Association of the Macedonian Muslims was formed with the blessing of the authorities (Poulton, 1997:94). In 1981, a scientific circle was established in Gostivar in order to research on the Muslims in Macedonia. The "Isa Beg" Medrese was reopened in Skopje. A Muslim newspaper --*El Hilal*-- was launched in three languages: Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish. The official state TV-Skopje issued a documentary on the Muslims in Macedonia (Popovic, 1990:25-26).

After the 1989 political changes and the 1991 proclamation of Macedonia as an independent republic, the Islamic community of Macedonia split from the Islamic community administered from Sarajevo (Selimoski, 1999). The institutional break-up brought serious problems to the registration of the new Islamic communities within Macedonia (See more in 4.1.4.).

1.2. *Economic and demographic data*

Demographic data: During the Ottoman rule, big demographic changes occurred in the Balkans. With the Ottoman conquest of the late 14th century, big waves of Turkic nomadic tribes came from Anatolia and settled in the Balkans. Many of them were used as cannon-bearers by the Ottoman army or navy (Dimitriadis, 1986:12). Scholars still argue on the reasons behind this migration, it is usually referred to as "the Turkish colonization." The Bulgarian historian Zhelyazkova claims that their migration was spontaneous and was provoked by the difficult political and social situation in Anatolia, while Turkish historiography views the colonization as a consequence of a special demographic policy of the Ottoman Empire (Zhelyazkova, 1997:16). According to the Macedonian historian and a leading Muslim Macedonian figure Limanoski, the colonization was pursued both in a forceful and in a voluntary way (Limanoski, 1984:19). In the 17th century, Yüruks in Rumelia (the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire including the capital) are estimated to have amounted to 190,000-220,000 people (Zhelyazkova, quoting Limanoski, 1997:20).

The colonization brought different populations into the rural and the urban areas. The appearance of Islam in the rural areas was brought by the Yüruks, Ghazis and various adherents to folk Islam (Fraenkel, 1999). In the regions, which are part of the present-day Republic of Macedonia, a large number of Yüruks settled around Ovche Pole, Stroumitsa, Kochani, Radovish (eastern Macedonia), and around Gorna and Dolna Zhupa and Debar (western Macedonia) (Limanoski, 1984:19-20). The Ottoman colonization had its greatest impact on the urban centers. The latter became focal points of the Turkish administration, while the Christians gradually moved to the mountains (Eminov, 1997:27-28). The colonizing population was mainly Sunni Muslim (Fraenkel, 1999). The 17th century, towns, such as Shtip, Kratovo, Kostur, Bitola, Kriva Palanka, were defined as "purely

Turkish" towns. The Turkish colonization ended in the 18th century with the beginning of the Ottoman Empire's demise (Limanoski, 1984:19-20).

A process of "Islamization" took place during the Ottoman period. Part of the indigenous Slavs, Albanians and Roma were converted to Islam. The Ottoman state had a twofold interest in that process: first, to increase the loyalty of its subjects on its European territory and, second, to enlarge its army, which was required for its westward expansion. Islamization was enforced usually in two ways -- through coercion and through the offer of economic benefits. The first way is strongly emphasized by the national poetry and literature of the Balkan peoples. A special attention is paid to the military recruitment of Christian boys (*devshirme*) for the Ottoman *janissary* institution existing between the 14th and the 18th centuries. The second way of Islamization is a subject of a relative consensus among more open-minded historians, who call it also a "voluntary" one. They agree that a Christian had interest to convert to Islam, since with the conversion, he was relieved from the *cizye* tax and got a chance to join and grow in the administration and the army (Eminov, 1997:33-48; Mutafchieva, 1994:9-10; Zhelyazkova, 1997:14). In line with these arguments, another thesis suggests that the Ottomans were even more interested in retaining their Christian population precisely because of the higher taxation rate. Conversion was generally discouraged. However, it was not always possible for the central authorities to monitor this, since Istanbul lost ever-greater control over the provinces and the provincial governors, which projected a strong tendency to impoverish the Christians through over-taxation (Fraenkel, 1999).

Islamization reached mass dimensions in the second half of the 16th century and became even stronger in the next two centuries. Successive Ottoman military defeats by the Habsburg Monarchy and Russia in the late 17th and 18th century weakened the Empire internally. The consequences were the increase in taxation and an ineffective government (Sokolski, 1984:64-68, Jelavich, 1985:110-113). The population, which was pressed financially, started converting to Islam *en masse*, in order to avoid the economic hardships, as well as the plunder, exerted on the Christian population by the *janissaries* and the Ottoman administrators, who became less and less controllable by the central authorities (Sokolski, 1984:64-68).

The demographic picture of the Macedonian land changed even more with the Albanian colonization. According to Macedonian sources, quoting Bulgarian historians from the first half of the 20th century, Muslim Albanians settled in the place of the Slavic population, which migrated from Serbia and northern Macedonia to the Habsburg territories after the Ottoman-Habsburg war of 1689-1690 (Limanoski, 1984:22). Mass Albanian migrations to Macedonia started only in the second half of the 18th century. By the end of that century, 1,500 families settled in 30 settlements in western Macedonia. Another wave of 50,000 settlers arrived in western Macedonia in the mid-19th century (Limanoski, 1984:22; Purvanov, 1992:142-143). However, when considering these data one should take into account that Albanian sources offer historical and historical linguistic arguments that suggest Albanians were present in geographical Macedonia in pre-Slavic time (Fraenkel, 1999).

The Ottoman loss of its northeast territories in the late 17th century led to the migration of many Muslims from the north to the south in the next centuries. After Serbia received its autonomous status in 1830, ethnic Turks and other Muslims arrived in Kosovo and Macedonia where Islam prevailed, since the Ottoman Empire was still the ruling state there (Zhelyazkova, 1997:21).

This drain of the Muslim element in the Empire was countered by an incoming migration of Tatars and Cherkez (Circassians) from Crimea and the Caucasus after the Crimean War (1853-1856). Czarist Russia defeated the Ottoman Empire in that war. Nevertheless, victor and vanquished found a common interest. Russia was keen on the expulsion of a large number of Muslim people from the newly acquired land, while the Ottoman Empire wanted to strengthen the Muslim element in its European territory (Pandevska, 1993:88, Kaprat, 1985:70). Many such Muslims were thus settled in present-day Bulgaria, while mainly the Cherkez migrated further southwest and reached different parts of the Macedonian land. There is no reliable historical data on whether the Tatars reached Macedonia (Pandevska, 1993:87-91).

The demographic picture in Macedonia was further changed by the migration of Muslim Slavs from Bosnia-Herzegovina. After the Berlin Treaty of 1878 stated that Austria-Hungary had the right to interim rule over Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosnian Muslims, who had enjoyed a privileged position among all the Muslims in the empire in Ottoman time, were not comfortable with the prospect of Austro-Hungarian rule. Therefore, around 50,000 of them emigrated to the southeast, targeting the Ottoman heartland via Macedonia. Some of them settled in Macedonia permanently (Pandevska, 1993:101-104).

During the Russo-Turkish War and the period immediately after the 1878 Berlin Treaty which left the Macedonian land under Ottoman rule, many Muslims from the newly freed Bulgaria and Serbia again found refuge in the south. Many Cherkez, Slav Muslims, Turks and Albanians settled in the Sandzhak and Kosovo, while others reached the Macedonian region. From Bulgaria, they emigrated via Kyustendil and Dupnitsa (in Pirin Macedonia) to Kriva Palanka and Skopje (in Vardar Macedonia). The overall number of the Muslim refugees in the Macedonian towns and villages of that time can be estimated at around 50,000 to 60,000 people (Pandevska, 1993:104-115).

Steady migration of Muslims to the Ottoman (and later Turkish) heartland via Macedonia continued throughout the first half of the 20th century. Bosnian Muslims migrated after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Habsburg Empire in 1908. During the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), as well as by the end of the First World War, when Macedonia was partitioned between Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece, many Muslims living on its territory left for Asia Minor (Pandevska, 1993:101-143). Another mass emigration wave of Muslims was observed in 1923-1924. A Greco-Turkish Convention on the Obligatory Exchange of Populations in 1923 made some 390,00 Muslims --mostly Turks, but also some Pomaks (Torbesi)-- leave for Turkey (Ortakovski, 1997:133).

Between 1953 and 1966, there was a big emigration wave of Turks from Yugoslavia to Turkey. According to Yugoslav sources, around 80,000 people emigrated; according to Turkish sources, around 150,000. However, many of them did not know Turkish and were either Muslim Albanians or Slavs, who presented themselves as Turks in order to leave the country (Poulton, 1995:138). Some scholars claim that Albanians did not voluntarily present themselves as "Turks," but were forced to do so by the Interior Minister Alexander Rankovic, who was interested in expelling as many Albanians as possible to any place but Albania. The only way Albanians could get exit visas was to declare themselves Turks. En route to Turkey, many of these Albanians came from Kosovo to Macedonia and remained in Macedonia (Fraenkel, 1999). As far as the Turks are concerned, this emigration is generally attributed to their discontent with the nationalization of their property. Turks had been rich town-dwellers since the Ottoman time.

The independent Republic of Macedonia (internationally recognized in 1992) has received Muslim refugees from the recent two wars in the former Yugoslavia. Around 30,000 Bosnian refugees arrived in Macedonia during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the early 1990s and settled between Skopje and Veles. The majority of them have been already repatriated, except for some orphans, who still live in camps for children (Fraenkel, March 1999). Another wave of between 200,000 and 360,000 Kosovo Albanian refugees arrived in 1999 (ICG Report on Macedonia, 17 May 1999; Fraenkel, December 1999) during the large-scale ethnic cleansing operations launched by the regime of the Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. After the end of the war in June 1999, the majority of the Kosovo refugees, accommodated in camps in Macedonia, returned. Roma refugees have stayed behind, and have even increased since the end of the war. However, they represent a very small increase in the overall number of Roma in Macedonia (Fraenkel, 1999).

***Economic data*:** Due to their Islamic religion, the Muslims in the Ottoman Empire enjoyed a privileged status in comparison to the Christian, Jewish or Armenian populations. They did not pay the *cizye* tax, unlike the other non-Muslim subjects of the empire, and were also allowed to join the army and to occupy positions in the state administration. Muslims gained economic advantage from both the social and religious division of the society. Under the Ottoman regime, the population was divided mainly into two social groups. On the one hand, the Ottomans (*askeri*) were town dwellers who were Muslim whether by birth or by conversion. They were the military and administrative class, which performed public functions such as the delegates of the Sultan, and therefore did not pay taxes. On the other hand, the non-Ottomans (*reaya)* included most rural Muslims and the Christians, who were merchants, artisans and peasants. Since they pursued productive activities, they had to pay taxes (Fraenkel, 1993:28-29; Inalcik, 1994:16).

Although the general principle was that individuals should remain in their status groups, there was a certain degree of mobility between these groups. There were recognized ways for the *reaya*, both Muslim and Christian, to become military. One of the ways was the *devshirme* system, which gave Christian boys the opportunity to join the military *janissary* corps by converting to Islam. The Muslim *reaya*, on the other hand, was able to join the military by a special decree of the Sultan, if they wanted to be volunteers along the

Empire's borders, or if they had done something outstandingly courageous (Inalcik, 1994:16-17).

The Ottomans benefited also from the high level of corruption spread within the public sphere. The selling of offices became part of the public administration system and a source of public revenue. The logic behind those dealings was shaped by the perception that public service was a privilege securing material gain, and thus was negotiable for compensation (Inalcik, 1994:74). With the decline of the Ottoman Empire around the end of the 17th century, the level of corruption in the state administration increased significantly.

The different Muslim ethnic groups earned their living from activities connected to the urban and rural styles of life. The Ottoman Turks occupied positions mainly in the administration of the cities (Eminov, 1997:27-28). The Yüruks --a Turkish nomadic tribe that started settling down in the 17th century-- were predominantly rural Muslims (Eminov, 1997:27-28). Many Albanians settled in big farms and joined the landowning class (Brailsford, 1971:80). Some of them converted to Islam in order to guard their wealth, others gained wealth after converting, while a third part of them did not do either (Fraenkel, 1999). However, there were some Albanians who had the title of *beys* and ruled over the Slav villagers in some of the most fertile provinces on the territory of present-day Macedonia (Brailsford, 1971:80).

During communism three major processes changed the overall economic situation in Macedonia, affecting the Muslim minorities as well. First, with the nationalization laws issued between 1946 and 1958, the land and other real estate were expropriated (Alexander, 1979:210-219). This policy affected many Turks who had been well off citizens since the Ottoman period. To a great extent, nationalization was the reason behind the large emigration wave of Turks and other Muslims from Macedonia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia to Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s. Second, urbanization intensified in the 1950s, although it was present in Macedonia even earlier. In search for better living conditions, many rural Muslims sought employment in the towns. Third, many male Turks, Roma and Albanians, along with other Yugoslav citizens, took advantage of the opportunity to work as "guest workers" in Germany and other western countries. Thus, many of them made money on low qualification jobs, because they were paid well according to the Yugoslav standards (HRW, 1996:89-96, ERRC, 1998:13). However, it must be noted that the *gurbet* ("working abroad") tradition in Macedonia pre-dates the socialist time and can be traced back at least to the turn of the 20th century (Fraenkel, 1999).

1.3. *Defense of identity and/or of language, and/or of religion.*

According to the historian and leading Muslim Macedonian figure Nijazi Limanoski, during the Ottoman time, in some cases Islamized Christians remained bi-confessional for as long as around a century. In public, the converts declared themselves as "Muslims," while at home they used their Christian names, and even let the Orthodox Christian clerics

baptize their children. In other cases, it was only the head of the family who converted to Islam in order to relieve his family from the taxes, while the rest remained Christian in faith (Limanoski, 1984:35-36).

Since the 1970s, the Macedonian Muslims (Torbeshi) made some attempts to defend their identity from the assimilation carried on by other Muslim minorities. With the blessing of the authorities, in 1970 they formed an Association of the Macedonian Muslims. The organization claimed that since the Second World War other Muslim groups had assimilated more than 70,000 Macedonian Muslims, most notably by the Albanians (Poulton, 1997:94-95). A 1979 meeting set up the organization of the so-called "manifestations of scientific and cultural activities" of the Macedonian Muslims. The period between 1979-1984 was very intensive in this respect. There were fourteen meetings on cultural, scientific and folklore topics. They were attended by the Communist authorities or were developed in cooperation with their respective institutions. The leader of that movement was the above-mentioned Macedonian Muslim historian and activist Limanoski (Todorovski, et al., 1984:5-10). (On another "Albanization" attempt see in the educational section in 6.5.2.).

Although the "manifestations" seemed to be relatively successful in the early 1980s, a feeling of an "assimilation threat" became persistent. In August 1990 the chairman of the Torbeshi association wrote a letter to the chairman of the Party for Democratic Prosperity, dominated by ethnic Albanians. In this letter he accused the PDP of abusing Islam for political ends and using it for the "quiet assimilation" of the Torbeshi and the "Kosovization" and "Albanization" of Western Macedonia (Poulton, 1997:94-95). Furthermore, in early 1993 the presidium of the Muslim Macedonian's organization issued a statement alleging that the Democratic Party of the Turks stood behind the "pan-Turkish" ideas professed in a school in the Debar region. In 1992, a number of Tobershi requested schooling in Turkish, not in Macedonian, which is the language they speak. The state authorities turned down that request (Poulton, 1995:195).

2. ETHNIC OR NATIONAL IDENTITY

2.1. Describing identity

2.1.1. Cultural characteristic(s) differentiating it from the dominant group
2.1.2. Development of the minority's awareness of being different
2.1.3. Identifying this difference as ethnic or national

2.2. Historical development of an ethnic or a national identity

2.2.1. The minority's resistance to or acceptance of assimilation
2.2.2. The minority's resistance to or acceptance of integration
2.2.3. Awareness of having an ethnic or a national identity
2.2.4. Level of homogeneity in the minority's identity

2.3. Actual political and social conditions

2.3.1. Relations with the state
2.3.2. Relations with the dominant ethnic/national group in society
2.3.3. Relations with other minorities if any
2.3.4. Relations between the regions inhabited by the minority and the central authorities

The last 1994 population census shows that there are 581,293 Muslims in Macedonia. According to cross-calculated data from the same census, there are 425,218 Muslims among the Albanians (out of total of 441,104 Albanians), 73,633 Muslims among the Turks (out of a total of 78,019 Turks), 40,035 among the Roma (out of a total of 43,707 Roma), 15,110 among the Macedonians, they are also known as the Torbeshi or Poturs (out of a total of 15,418 Muslim Macedonians). The rest are Bosnians, Macedonians and Serbs (Friedman, V., quoting 1994 census data, 1998:2 and Ilievski, 1998:11). The data of the Muslims among the ethnic groups are obtained through extracting the percentage of the number of the Muslims from the total number of the respective ethnic groups as quoted by Ilievski (Ilievski, 1998:11).

It must be noted that the census registered citizens and not residents. This meant that after Macedonia's independence in 1992, many Muslim minority representatives have faced serious political and technical problems in acquiring citizenship. That is the first reason why almost all Muslim communities claim to have a greater number of members in their groups than the ones that are in the census. However, there is another reason as well. Many minorities, especially the Roma, claim two identities simultaneously, or in parallel, which they justify with different arguments. Roma claim to be Turks, Albanians or Macedonians instead of Roma, in order to avoid the social stigma (Kanev, 1999). Many other Muslims claim to be Turks, because of the elevated social status this gives them. This is valid even for some vocal nationalist Albanians who come from families that spoke Turkish at home (Fraenkel, 1999).

The Albanians are the ones who have consistently claimed that their absolute number is greater than the one in the census (Fraenkel, 1999). Around 150,000 people, predominantly Albanians, were not registered by that census, since they were not able to meet the requirements for acquiring the Macedonian citizenship (Gaber, 1997:104). The majority of Albanians are Muslim. However, there are some exceptions: some Orthodox Christian Albanians live in a few villages around Lake Ohrid and the town of Strouga, and some Roman Catholics live in Binach (Vitina District), around Skopje. The late Mother Teresa is the best known among the Roman Catholics in Binach (Gaber, 1997:103; Poulton, 1993:71), although she was also claimed by the Roma as being a Rom (Poulton, 1999).

The Turks are the second largest national minority in Macedonia. Just as in the case of the other ethnic groups, the Turkish minority's leaders claim that their real number is much higher. Erdogan Sarac, General Secretary of the Democratic Party of the Turks, claims

that they number between 170,000 and 200,000 people (HRW, 1996:68). Others estimate them at around 100,000 people (Brunner, 1996:76). In religious terms, the Turks are more homogeneous in their Muslim identity than the Albanians.

Roma are an ethnic minority, which originated in India and migrated to the Balkans from Asia before and during the Ottoman conquest. The vast majority of the Roma are Muslims by religion -- around 91,6 per cent (Ilievski, 1998:11). There are some Orthodox Christian Roma, as well as Adventist Roma, Baptists or Jehovah's Witnesses (Mustafa, 1999). Also the Roma leaders claim that their community exceeds the official number. Unofficial estimates put the number of Roma in Macedonia at 200,000 people (MRG, 1997:235).

The Macedonian Muslims (Torbeshi) are officially recognized as a separate ethnic group by the Macedonian state, unlike their ethnic brothers the Pomaks in Bulgaria and Greece. The Torbeshi are a Slavic, Macedonian-speaking population, which converted to Islam during the Ottoman period.

There are also some Bosnians in Macedonia. Some of them have been living in territorial Macedonia since the 19th century (Muhic, 1999). Muslim sources in the Sandzhak (Serbia) claim that many of the present-day Torbeshi are former Serbo-Croat-speaking migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandzhak. Many of them went to Macedonia in order to take advantage of the 1950 emigration agreement with Turkey, but on their way, they decided to settle in Macedonia for good (Poulton, 1997:93). There were also about 30,000 war refugees in the early 1990s (IHF, Annual Report, 1992), but the majority of them have already left Macedonia (Fraenkel, 1999).

The 1994 census registered 6,829 Bosnians (Friedman, 1998:2). However, they were counted only under the column of "Others," since the Macedonian state is reluctant to recognize them as an ethnic group separate from that of the Torbeshi (Poulton, 1997:96; Muhic, 1999). In 1993, a Muslim Congress had taken place in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It changed the former Yugoslav "Muslim" identity into the "Bosnian" one. In line with these new developments, some of the Slavic-speaking populations in Macedonia became "Bosnian," while others continued to project their old "Muslim" identity (Muhic, 1999).

In Macedonia, there is also a small group of Slav Muslims who call themselves Gorans. Their number is unknown. They live in the upland regions over Sar Planina in western Macedonia (and above Prizren in Kosovo, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). They see themselves as different from the Torbeshi, but share many customs with them. Their identity is based on their religion and on their narrow village communities. Their language is Slavic -- a mixture of Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian and also includes some Arabic words (Poulton, 1998:16).

3. LANGUAGE

3. 1. Describing the language

3.1.1. Linguistic family
3.1.2. Dialects and unity; linguistic awareness
3.1.3. Instruments of knowledge: description of the language and norms (history of the written form and of its standardization)

3.2. The history of the language

3.2.1. Origins
3.2.2. Evolution
3.2.3. Cultural production in the language (literature, oral tradition)

3.3. Actual sociolinguistic data

3.3.1. Territory in which the language is used
3.3.2. Number of persons using this language (in territory and among emigrants)

3.4. Freedom of expression in the minority language

3.4.1. Level of acceptance or resistance to the minority's language

3.4.2. Ways in which the state protects or impedes the use of the minority language

Language is one of the main pillars of ethnic, but not religious identification. The Muslims in Macedonia do not speak just one language, since there are several ethnic groups professing Islam. Albanian is used mainly by the Albanians, but also by some Roma. In the southern reaches of Macedonia near the Albanian and Greek borders, the Tosk dialect of Albanian is the native language of several Roma communities (Fraenkel, 1993:34). The Gheg and the Tosk dialects are the two major dialects of the Albanian language, but there are also some regional sub-dialects within both of them (Fraenkel, 1999). Turkish is used mainly by the ethnic Turks, but also by some Turkish-speaking Roma in southern Macedonia (Fraenkel, 1993:35). The Turkish spoken in Macedonia belongs to the so-called Balkan dialects of the Turkish language. Romani is spoken only by the Roma in Macedonia. Romani has been in a process of modern codification since the World Romani Congress in 1972 (Fraenkel, 1993:95). The *Arlija* dialect is spoken by the majority of the Roma in Macedonia, but there are also three other dialects -- the *Dhzambaz*, *Gurbet* and *Bugurdhzia* ones (Friedman, 1998:6). The Bosnians speak the Slavic Bosnian language (Rexhepi, 1999).

4. RELIGION

4.1. Identifying a religious minority

The Muslims in Macedonia are a religious minority. Among the 18 religious communities and religious groups existing legally in Macedonia at present, the Macedonian Orthodox Church predominates with around 1,350,000 worshippers (or 66.66 per cent), seven

dioceses and around 2000 churches, monasteries and chapels, including those which have been built in Australia, Canada and the US (Nikolovski-Katin, 1997:92; Nikolovski-Katin 1999). By contrast, the Muslim community has only 581,203 worshipers, according to the last 1994 census. The number of their houses of worship is 470, some of which are still under construction (Ilievski, 1998:11-12).

The Muslims in Macedonia are not homogeneous in religious terms. The majority of them are Sunni Muslims, belonging to the Hanafiyya Islamic school. A minority of them, of which there are no official number, belong to six Sufi (Sunni) orders -- the Helveti, Qadiri, Sinani, Rufa'i, Naqsh-Bandi, Malami (Shejh Ibrahim Murteza, 1999). There are also some Bektashi, which are Shiite Muslims, although they have initially developed from Sunni Islam (Selimoski, 1999).

The Islamic Community and the Muslim Religious Community are the organizations of the Sunni's. The Sufi Orders are organized in the *Islamic Dervish Religious Community*. In practice, the *Bektashi Community* does not belong to any of those religious organizations, but has an independent status. Nevertheless, the Islamic Community --which is the most powerful religious institution of the Muslims-- claims to be the legitimate ruler over all Muslims in Macedonia. It has a dervish (*taricates)* section, although the Sufi's have their own organization. This section is the Council of Dervish Elders (*Meshihat na Tarikatite*), which is supposed to take care of all the Sufi orders, including the Bektatshi in Macedonia (Rexhepi, 1999) (See more on the registration problems in 4.2.3.).

The officially registered Islamic Community is ruled by its 1994 statute, which is its highest normative act (Rexhepi, 1999). The Islamic Community has four main organizational bodies: the Institution of the *Reis-ul-Ulema*, the Executive Council (*Meclisi Sura*), the Financial-Legal Council (*Meclis*) and the Mufti's Offices (Islamic Community Brochure, 1997:67). The *Reis-ul-Ulema* is the head of the Islamic Community and has strong executive power.

The Executive Council consists of 23 members and works in six main sectors: religious education, science and culture, information and publications, administrative, financial sector and the sector dealing with the property of the *vakifs* (pious foundations) (Islamic Community Brochure, 1997:67). It is comprised of all the muftis, the Director of the Islamic High School, the Rector of the Islamic Theological Faculty, the director of the Humanitarian Organization "El Hilal," all the directors of the six sectors mentioned above, the president of the Association of the Imams, and five lay people, who are selected personally by the *Reis-ul-Ulema*. They are experts in law, economy, social sciences, politics and humanitarian issues. The other administrative body, the Financial and Legal Council, is comprised of 13 members, who are only secular people and professionals in either the economic or the legal sphere. They are elected by the 13 Mufti's Offices in Macedonia (Rexhepi, 1999).

The statute of the Islamic Community provides for a five-year mandate for all of its organs. They are elected in the following way. First, the elections start from the

supporting body, the *mosque council*, which plays the role of the chain that connects the worshipers with the clerics. The worshipers of every mosque elect the mosque council, which must be approved by the Mufti's Office. Second, the *mufti* is elected by the *council (meclis) of the mosques* -- another supporting body dealing with all mosques. The *Meclis* consists of one *imam* (the leader of the prayers) and of the president of the mosque council from each mosque. (Thus, if in a given area there were 100 mosques, the *council of the mosques* would consist of 200 people, who would elect the Mufti.) The Mufti takes up his post after he is approved by the *Reis-ul-Ulema.* Third, the *Reis-ul-Ulema* is elected through an interim organ, the *Election Council*, which consists of 41 members: four of them are the muftis from the diaspora in Switzerland, Germany, the Scandinavian countries and the US. The others are the 13 muftis from Macedonia, and the rest are secular people. The *Reis-ul-Ulema* is elected for five years and there are no restrictions for the renewal of his mandate (Rexhepi, 1999).

The current *Reis-ul-Ulema*, Hadzhi Rexhepi, claims that the Islamic Community unifies all Muslims in Macedonia, regardless of their ethnic origin or branch of Islam: Sunni, Sufi Orders or Bektashi. However, there are credible claims that his institution unifies mainly Albanians and much less so of the people from other ethnic groups due to its political connection to the Albanian Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP).

Thus, the Muslim Religious Community (MRC) is viewed as the rival organization to the Islamic Community (IC), since the former not only unifies the Torbeshi, Turks, Bosnians and Roma, but also some Albanians. However, the MRC has not been registered yet (See also 4.2.3.). MRC's head is Jakub Selimoski, who was the last spiritual head --*Reis-ul-Ulema*-- for all Muslims in the Former Yugoslavia (between 1991 and 1993) and a Chief Mufti in Macedonia before that period. He claims that his organization finds the Islamic Community's statute too authoritarian, allowing the *Reis-ul-Ulema* to have a lot of power in his hands, since there are no efficient collective organs for the community's management. He also claims that the Islamic Community is too politicized, but that even the Albanians do not like a politicized religious community. Thus, in recent years many Albanians have allegedly joined his MRC. He claims that there are mosques under MRC's jurisdiction in Skopje (the Sultan Murat Mosque) and in the regions around Prilep, Bitola, Ohrid and Debar (Selimoski, 1999).

According to Shejh Ibrahim Murteza, spiritual head of a Rufa'i tekke in Skopje, the dervish orders (*taricates)* of Macedonia are distributed geographically as follows: the *Helveti* live in eastern and western Macedonia in Ohrid, Strouga, Kichevo, Gostivar, Kochani, Vinitsa, Stip, Radovish and Stroumitsa. In western Macedonia live the *Qadiri* (Debar) and the *Bektashi* (Kichevo and Tetovo). The rest live in eastern Macedonia: the *Naks-Bandi* live in Veles and Stip, the *Malami* live in Radovish and Stroumitsa and the *Rufa'i* live in Veles, Kochani, Vinitsa, Radovish and Stroumitsa.

In regard to the organization of the *taricates*, it is yet unclear how many of them are organized by the Council of the Dervish Elders within the Islamic Community, and how

many of them belong to the other officially registered community in Macedonia, the Islamic Dervish Religious Community (IDRC).

Significant parts of the *taricates* are members of the IDRC. These are the Helveti, Qadiri, Sinani, Rufa'i, Naqsh-Bandi. The IDRC has branches in the Skopje district Shuto Orisari (inhabited mainly by Roma) and in eastern Macedonia -- Prilep, Kumanovo, Kochani. Ethnically, the IDRC is comprised mostly of Roma, but there are also some Albanians, Turks and Torbeshi (Dzemail, 1999).

The IDRC was established in 1992. According to its statute, the head of the community is called *Shejh-ul-Ulema* and is elected for a term of four years with the possibility to be reelected. IDRC's founder was Shejh Serbez Fazli, who was also the first *Shejh-ul-Ulema*. In early 1999 there was no person occupying this position. The IDRC has two collective organs. The first is the *Chairmanship* organ, dealing with the administration of the community and with all people who have not been initiated to *dervishes* yet (*dervish* is a person who is already spiritually initiated in the rules of the Sufi order). The second organ is the *Council of Elders* (*Meshihat*), which fulfills only religious functions and deals with the *dervishes*. The *Meshihat* is elected by the Shejhs (spiritual heads of the *dervishes*, who have a life-long occupation of that position). The Meshihat, on its part, elects the *Shejh-ul-Ulema* (Dzemail, 1999).

Finally, the Bektashis deserve a special attention. They are organized in a separate religious entity although the latter is not registered yet. Its head, Baba Tahir Emini, is based in Tetovo. Besides Tetovo, Bektashis live also in Gostivar, Kichevo, Ohrid, Strouga, Kanatlartsi, Bitola and Resen. Ethnically, most of the Bektashis are Albanians. There are also some Turks and Torbeshi, but no Bosnians. According to Emini's estimates, there are about 5,000 Bektashis in Macedonia, but there are no official statistics on them (Baba Tahir Emini, 1999).

Unlike the religious services of the other *taricates* in Macedonia, the Bektashis are closed to the public, but open to the women within their order. Women can participate in the religious ceremonies together with men. This is not the case with the Sunni Muslims and the Sunni Sufi Orders, where men and women are separated during the prayers in different parts of the mosque or in different rooms. Also the Bektashis --along with some of the other Sufi Orders, but unlike the Sunni Muslims-- allow the faces of Muslim saints to be exposed to the open in their *tekkes* (Baba Tahir Emini, 1999).

The question of the extent to which Islam today unites Muslims in Macedonia remains open. One thesis suggests that the widely pronounced function of Islam to unify worshipers from different ethnic groups is not valid in present-day Macedonia (Muhic, 1999). This argument is supported by the fact that there are numerous divisions within the organization of the Muslims in Macedonia. Another thesis suggests that all Muslims are united when confronted with Orthodox Christianity, but not necessarily internally among the different schools of Islam (Fraenkel, 1999).

4.2. Religious freedom enjoyed

Interviewed religious leaders find that the religious practices of the Muslims in Macedonia are recognized and not impeded by the state. The majority of the mosques in Macedonia are open, and prayers are held five times a day. Most of the worshippers attend the Friday prayer, and take part in the three main religious festivities -- Ramazan, Kurban-Bayram and Seker-Bayram. After the achievement of independence of Macedonia in 1991, around 50 mosques were renovated and another 20 new mosques were built (Rexhepi, 1999). However, the state impedes Islam in Macedonia in some administrative ways (See more in 4.4..).

There are some tensions among the different ethnic groups of Muslims in Macedonia due to a developing trend to use predominantly the Albanian language in the mosques, even in neighborhoods where the population is ethnically mixed (Selimoski, 1999). This is especially visible in western Macedonia, where the Albanian population is the majority while there is also a large concentration of Turks (Sheh, 1999). There are serious claims that the Islamic Community is politically connected to the Albanian Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP), which was represented in the government of Macedonia until fall 1998 (Selimoski, 1999).

However, the leader of the Islamic Community, Hadzhi Sulejman Rexhepi, fiercely denies such allegations, saying that different languages are used according to the ethnic structure of the neighborhoods of the mosques. He gives the following examples. Out of the 18 functioning mosques in Skopje, there is one --the Sultan Murat Pasha Mosque-- where the service is always in Turkish, and another one --the Aladhza Mosque-- where the service is occasionally in Turkish. Services are held in Macedonian in the villages of Tsvetovo, Drzhilovo, Kolichani, Ogniyantsi, where the population is Torbeshi, and in Bosnian in some villages around Skopje and Prilep, where the population is Bosnian (Rexhepi, 1999).

Hadzhi Jakub Selimoski, the leader of the unregistered Muslim Religious Community, uniting mainly Torbeshi, Bosnians, Turks and Roma, claims that different languages are used in the mosques under the jurisdiction of his MRC. He gives the following examples. In the mosque of the village of Banitsa near Gostivar in western Macedonia, where the population is Turkish, the service is held in Turkish. In Kichevo, Lisicheni and Plasnitsa, where the population is Torbeshi, the service is carried out in Macedonian, and in the village of Kopanitsa near Skopje, where the population is Albanian, the service is carried out in Albanian. In one of the mosques in Kichevo, where Albanians and Torbeshi live, the service is carried out both in Albanian and Macedonian. He also claims that the “Sultan Murat” Mosque in Skopje --where Turkish is the language of the services-- is under the jurisdiction of his MRC (Selimoski, 1999).

4.3. Relations with the dominant religious community and the other communities

According to several Macedonian sociologists, the traditional high level of religious tolerance in Macedonia diminished in the period 1992-1993 due to the emergence of a

myth combining the notions of “Muslim conspiracy” and “endangered Orthodoxy.” This political mythology appeared at a time when radical state and society transformations were taking place and when certain political solutions were “not convincing enough” for social action to be provoked. Thus, a political mythology of the “enemy” (the “Muslims conspiracy”) and the “victim” (the “endangered Orthodoxy”) was needed in order to motivate action (Najceska, et al., 1996:84-88).

There are two main reasons behind the emergence of that myth. First, Macedonia is a new state, only being recognized internationally in 1992. When the world was still speculating on how Macedonia should be recognized, the myth played the role of an integrative force for the Macedonian people, who feared that their nation might disappear. The confessional unity of the Orthodox Macedonians was much easier to manipulate than was their national identity. This was due to the fact that confessional unity produced the image of “unity without options” which people related to very easily. Second, the regional environment in the early 1990s provided fertile soil for the flourishing of that kind of mythology (Najceska, et al., 1996:86-88). Macedonia is a country emerging from the former Yugoslavia. Politicians in other former Yugoslav Republics, such as Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, tied the concepts of “nation” and “religion” and put them into a single nationalist “melting pot.” Similarly, in Macedonia the opposition between Christian and Muslim became an attractive element for political marketing. There were attempts to appeal to the Orthodox Macedonians that the Muslims, in this case the Albanians, were the common enemy (Gaber, 1997:106).

Nevertheless, this myth was a new import in Macedonia. Unlike the other former Yugoslav countries, Macedonia did not fall wholeheartedly into the trap of myth-producing politics. It only experienced the “political memory of the society” manifesting itself in the “national romanticism,” typical for countries embarking on independence (referring to Burke, Najceska, et al., 1996:85). Thus, the appeals, based on the mythology of the “endangered Orthodoxy,” gradually subsided and did not play a major role in the 1994 general elections (Gaber, 1997:106).

No matter how old or new that myth was, it had a damaging effect on the Christian-Muslim relations. It led to the “closing in” of the confessional groups, as well as to the relative diminishing of the importance of the factor “nationality” as compared to the factor “religion” (Najcevka, et al., 1996:88). Nevertheless, on the whole “ethnicity” is the one type of identity that overrides other identities, and therefore religion is secondary to ethnicity in relations between people in Macedonia (Fraenkel, 1999).

In 1993 and 1994, the Skopje-based Center on Ethnic Relations conducted opinion polls on the prejudices among Christians and Muslims. While the first poll questioned around 1,000 people, mainly Macedonians and Albanians as representatives of the respective religious communities, the second poll focused on around 1,200 citizens drawn from all the major ethnic groups -- Macedonians, Albanians, Vlachs, Serbs, Turks and Roma (Najceska, et al., 1996:91, Gaber, 1997:107). A short summary of their results is available below.

In 1992-1993, there was an increase of the inter-confessional prejudice, strongly indicated by the change of attitude towards mixed marriages. While in 1992 only 20 per cent of the Orthodox respondents had negative attitude towards the Christian-Muslim marriage, in 1993 the figure raised to 70 per cent for both Orthodox Christians and the Muslims. Clearly, the sharp rise of that percentage within one year indicates that the prejudice is not religious in nature, but is rather the result of political manipulation. This is because the survey data also showed that a mere 30 per cent of the nominally Orthodox population can be perceived as devout Christians (Najceska, et al., 1996:88-91). However, one should note that there are no enduring cultural habits for mixed marriages in Macedonia. For example, to marry a person from another ethnic origin or religious affiliation was a common practice in the territory of the old communist Yugoslavia. However, in Macedonia there were not many mixed marriages (Gaber, 1997:105).

Muslims and Orthodox Christians trust their own religious organizations, but not those of the other religious communities. 91 per cent of the Muslims and 67 per cent of the Orthodox Christians estimated that their religious organizations play a positive role in the inter-ethnic relations. However, 63 per cent of the Muslims and 64 per cent of the Orthodox Christians thought that the religious organization of the other community plays a negative role in the inter-ethnic relations (Najceska, et al., 1996:92). In 1994, the trust of the Macedonians and Albanians in their own religious organizations remained the same. Roma showed a very positive approach towards both religious communities: 80 per cent assessed positively the role of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, and 78 per cent did so with regard to the Islamic community. By contrast, the Turks were ignorant of the role of the two communities. 88 per cent of them answered “don’t know” on the role of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, and 78 per cent of them answered “don’t know” on the role of the Islamic religious community (Gaber, 1997:107-110).

Regardless of the somewhat negative picture, there are some positive indicators. At least 75 per cent of the confessional groups do not refuse working for a private employer of another nationality. Over 70 per cent of both groups declared that they do not feel hatred towards the other confessional community. More than 80 per cent of the Christian and the Muslim populations would never think of starting a conflict based on religion or ethnicity. These numbers clearly indicate that the social distance is still on a superficial level (Najceska, et al., 1996:92-93).

Apart from the poll results, which did not pay special attention to the Macedonian Muslims (Torbeshi), one should also look into their place in the inter-confessional relations in Macedonia. This population speaks Macedonian, but is Islamic in faith. Historically, they did not suffer from pre-mediated coercion, unlike the Bulgarian Muslims, although there were some attempts to bring them back to the “Macedonianness,” especially in the 1970s (See also 1.3.). There were also political attempts to make the Christian Macedonians accept the Macedonian Muslims as their co-nationals. However, this process has been rather difficult. Although the two communities share the same language, Macedonian Christians presume one cannot be “Macedonian” without being

Orthodox Christian. They view Orthodoxy as a necessary, if not a sufficient, component of the Macedonian cultural and communal identity (Fraenkel, 1995:154).

In some cases, the Christian Macedonians tend also to ascribe a monolithic character to Islam as a religion to all Muslims. There is a common usage of the word "Turk" referring to all "Muslims." This is not any ascription of race or language, but a symbol of the ethnically undifferentiated face of Islam -- an attitude inherited from the Ottoman time (Fraenkel, 1995:156).

The attitude of the Macedonians towards Islam as a way of life and to the Muslims as a religious group is generally negative. Any rise of Muslim religiosity has been perceived by the ordinary Macedonians and by the government authorities as an omen of "fundamentalism" or of Albanian "irredentism." Macedonian press and political leaders further accuse the Albanians and their politicians of coercing the Macedonian Muslims, due to the Albanians' interest to increase their constituency during the various elections (Fraenkel, 1995:157-161).

4.4. Ways in which the state protects or impedes minority religious activities

The Macedonian state protects the Muslims within its territory in many respects. The religious practices of the Muslims are not impeded by the state. Private TV stations have Muslim religious programs. The publication and printing of religious materials face no problems (Fraenkel, 1999). Also, Muslim religious leaders do not complain of the restrictions on the import of Islamic literature. According to a law inherited from the time when Macedonia was a republic within the former Yugoslavia, the police have the right to seize printed material originating from abroad. In line with this law, in 1997-1998 documents of human rights activists and Jehovah's Witnesses were confiscated (IHF, 1998:145).

However, there are some administrative obstacles that hamper the normal development of Muslims in Macedonia. These are the registration problems, the lack of legislation on the restitution of the religious communities' property and the lack of religious instruction in the municipal schools.

From the institutional point of view, the government Committee for Relations with the Religious Communities and Groups (henceforth referred to as "Committee on the Religious Issues") regulates the relations between the state and the religious communities in Macedonia. Besides the ones on the national level, there are also committees dealing with religious questions formed on the municipal level, although they act mostly on an *ad hoc* basis (Najceska, 1994:164).

After the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the formation of the independent Republic of Macedonia, the Ministry of the Interior was responsible for the registration of the religious entities. With the new 1997 Law on the Religious Communities and Groups, which substituted the former Yugoslav Religious Law, the government committee for the

religious communities and groups became responsible for the registration. Thereafter, the Ministry of the Interior handed the registration archives to the government committee. The Constitutional Court issued a Decision on December 24, 1998, which abolished the article stating that the religious communities had to be registered by that government committee. Thus, it opened a loophole in the legislation related to the issue of which institution should be responsible for the issuing of the registration in the new situation (See more on that decision and on the restrictive character of the 1997 law in 5.2.).

The *Islamic Community* and the *Islamic Dervish Religious Community* were officially registered with the governmental committee after the new religious law was adopted in 1997 (Nikolovski-Katin, 1999). However, there are problems with the registration of the Macedonian *Muslim Religious Community* and the *Bektashi Community*.

The *Muslim Religious Community* was registered with the Ministry of the Interior in 1996, but not with the governmental committee. The Ministry of the Interior did not hand in the file of the Muslim Religious Community (MRC) to the governmental committee until January 1999 (Selimoski, 1999). Thus, its registration has been prevented so far.

It seems that the authorities were not interested in registering the MRC due to two main reasons. First, the MRC was legally viewed as a religious entity parallel to the Islamic Community (IC). The 1997 Law, even after the 1998 amendments of the Constitutional Court, does not allow more than one community to be registered for just one denomination. Both the IC and the MRC organize mainly the Sunni Islam worshipers, unlike the Islamic Dervish Religious Community, which organizes the Sunni Sufi Orders. Second, there are claims that the IC had close relations with the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) of the Albanians, which participated in the previous coalition government with the Social Democratic League of Macedonia (SDSM) before the last governmental change of November 1998. Thus, the legal motivation was reportedly based on political reasons.

The *Bektashis* who had a registration in Kosovo in the former Yugoslavia (Nikolovski-Katin, 1999), applied for registration in 1993 with the Ministry of the Interior in line with the old Yugoslav Religious law (Baba Tahir Emini, 1999). However, the Macedonian Ministry of the Interior only issued a certificate that they have applied for registration, but did not register them. Their registration is still pending (Nikolovski-Katin, 1999).

Deputy Chairman of the Committee for the Religious Communities Slave Nikolovski-Katin claims that there is an opportunity for the *Muslim Religious Community* and the *Bektashis* to register as religious “groups”. However, they refuse to do so, since it would not put them on an equal footing with the two already registered Muslim religious organizations (More on the difference between religious “community” and religious “group” in 5.2.).

Lacking a law for de-nationalization, the state can raise many administrative obstacles upon the Muslim community concerning issues of religious property. All the property of

the Islamic Community was taken by the former Communist system -- land, houses and even some mosques were turned into museums or stores. A law on the restitution of the citizens' property was passed by the National Assembly in the early 1990s, but it did not mention the religious communities, and not even all the concerned citizens could benefit from it (Rexhepi, 1999). Although a law on the restitution is highly expected by all religious communities in Macedonia, there are no measures taken to draft such a law so far (Selimoski, 1999).

The lack of religious instruction in the municipal schools is another grievance of the Islamic community. According to *Reis-ul-Ulema* Sulejman Rexhepi, the compulsory religious instruction has to substitute the subject "Marxism," which was studied during the Communist time. The subject "Religion" should be focused on Islam and Orthodox Christianity separately. Thus, the children of the Islamic faith would take the subject "Islam" and it would be taught by people from the Islamic Community. The children of the Orthodox faith would take the subject "Orthodox Christianity" and it would be taught by Orthodox theologians. Rexhepi does not exclude the possibility for the subject "Religion" to have some comparative aspects, but explicitly says that it does not have to include all religions.

In some respects it seems that there is a gap between what the state and society put on paper, and what happens in practice. As Orthodoxy has again been allowed freedom of expression in independent Macedonia, the ethnic Macedonian population has used this as a greater public marker of identity than it did during the former Yugoslav time. Orthodox symbolism is found all across Macedonia, and is seen by most Macedonians as synonymous with Macedonian identity, whereas Muslim symbolism is not. A telling example was a UNPREDEP-sponsored concert in the mid-1990s, which was meant to be an event recognizing Macedonia's diversity. It featured Albanians, Turks, and Roma as well as Macedonians, but the backdrop on stage was an Orthodox church. Also, there are far more Orthodox clergies attending public events than their Muslim counterparts. Sometimes this happens at the expense of the Muslim representation. Nonetheless, *Reis-ul-Ulema* Hadzhi Rexhepi is often invited and attends public events alongside Orthodox bishops (Fraenkel, 1999). The Muslim community complains about the placement of crosses on the facades of some public buildings in some towns. They also criticize the reproduction of Christian cultural monuments such as churches and crosses on the national currency, the Denar (US Department of State, 1994:967).

5. GENERAL LEGAL STATUS

5.1. *Past*

The 1878 international Treaty of San Stefano and the Berlin Treaty, signed after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, provided mainly for the protection of the freedoms of the religious minorities, since religion --and not ethnicity-- was the major factor of differentiation. However, since the Vienna Congress of 1815 special clauses concerning the defense of ethnicity have also entered international legislation (Kanev, citing

Thornberry, 1998:69). Moreover, the change of the place of religion within the Ottoman state ideology changed after the Tanzimat reforms. The Muslims were no longer the absolute superior population in the Empire, nor was the Christian millet (*Rum Milleti*) a monolithic one any longer. With the pressure of Russia and the Western European countries, the different national churches were recognized throughout the 19th century (Fraenkel, 1999).

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, territorial Macedonia was partitioned between Bulgaria, Greece and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (henceforth -- Royal Yugoslavia). The 1919 Treaty of Saint Germain --defining the international obligations of Royal Yugoslavia after the War-- provided for different rights for the racial, religious and linguistic minorities. They concerned equality before the law, equality of access to public services, free use of their mother tongue in private, in confession and in the press and the right to found and manage, at their own expense, some welfare, religious or social institutions (Ortakovski, 1998:121-122).

In addition to that, the Muslims in Royal Yugoslavia were explicitly mentioned in the Saint Germain Treaty, similarly to the Muslims in Greece (1919 Treaty of Sevres, signed with another victor of the war, Greece), but unlike the Muslims in Bulgaria (1919 Neuilly Treaty, signed with defeated Bulgaria). Article 10 regulated the protection of the Muslim inhabitants of the Kingdom. Issues of family law were to be regulated in accordance with the Muslim customs. Royal Yugoslavia was supposed to "undertake measures to ensure the nomination of the Muslim's spiritual head *Reis-ul-Ulema*," as well as to "the protection of the mosques, graves and other Muslim religious institutions." It was supposed to ensure "favorable conditions for the existing Muslim confessional foundations and their welfare institutions" (Ortakovski, 1998:122-130).

After the Second World War and the formation of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, the new 1945 Constitution separated the church from the state. In line with that, it placed the affairs of marriage and family under the jurisdiction of the state institutions. The new constitution guaranteed also freedom of belief and the equality of all citizens regardless of their religion, nationality or race, as well as their right to establish religious schools to train their clergy, under the general supervision of the state. The 1963 Constitution had similar provisions concerning religion. It explicitly pointed out that the religious communities have the right to own real estate. This right was previously held implicit, since the houses of prayer of all religious --including the Islamic Community-- had been affected by the expropriation laws of 1945 (especially the Law on the Agrarian Reform and the nationalization laws, issued between 1946 and 1958) (Alexander, 1979: 210-219).

The 1951 Criminal Code affected the religious communities in several aspects. Those who incited national or religious hatred, were considered as endangering the unity of Yugoslavia. In practice this provision stated that not only the clergy but also anyone offending the national or racial unity had to be punished severely. Although the Criminal Code provided for punishment of those who obstructed the performance of religious

ceremonies, it was rare for somebody to be punished because of having insulted a priest or a believer (Alexander, 1979:220).

The affairs of the Muslims in Macedonia, along with those of the other denominations, were regulated by the Law on the Legal Status of the Religious Communities, passed on the federal level in 1953. Art. 1 defined religious affiliation as a private affair of the individual. Art. 3 stated that all religious communities have equal legal status and that they are separated both from the state and the educational system. Art. 6 stipulated that one's membership in a particular religious community cannot be the reason for any restrictions of his/her rights, and it does not allow him/her to enjoy special rights. Religious communities were free to have their own press, carry out religious instruction and collect donations. They were prohibited from spreading religious hatred and intolerance. Their activities could not be used for political purposes (Najceska, et al., 1996: 77). A harsh provision of that law was Art. 22, stipulating that a seminary can be closed if any of its students or faculty are infringing upon the laws of the state in any serious way. This provision was removed with the revision of the law in 1965, which aimed at bringing it in conformity with the 1963 Constitution (Alexander, 1979:221-225). This law remained functional in Macedonia until the promulgation of the 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups.

5.2. *Present*

The relations between the Macedonian state and the religious communities are regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, and by the Law on the Religious Communities and Religious Groups. Art. 9 of the 1991 Constitution guarantees the equality of all Macedonian citizens regardless of their sex, race and religious beliefs. Art. 19 provides for the freedom of religion both in private and public. There is no "official" religion. However, in the same article of the Constitution, the Orthodox Church --the religious organization of the majority-- is explicitly mentioned, unlike the religious "communities" and "groups," which are defined in general terms. They are given the right to freely "establish schools and other social and charitable institutions, by ways of a procedure regulated by law." Both the Orthodox Church and the other religious communities are allowed to freely establish their religious schools and other social and charitable institutions by procedures regulated by law. Art. 54 of the Constitution stipulated that the freedoms of citizens can be restricted only in cases of war or emergency determined by the Constitution. Otherwise, freedoms --including religious freedom-- may not be restricted (Macedonian Constitution, 1991).

The domestic law that builds upon the constitutional provisions is the Law on the Religious Communities and Groups, adopted in 1997. It divides the religious denominations into two groups -- "communities" and "groups." Art. 8 (1) defines the religious "community" as a "voluntarily organized non-profit community of adherents of the same denomination," while Art. 9 (1) defines the religious "group" as a "voluntary non-profit organization of believers of the same religious faith, who do not belong to any registered religious community" (The Law on Religion, 1997). The law treats the citizens'

religious rights on a collective basis. Rights are given to the communities and groups as judicial bodies, thus, everybody who wants to practice his religion is free to do so only if he belongs to one of these communities or groups, which, on their part, have to be registered by the state (Kanev, 1999).

The Macedonian Helsinki Committee points out that this law is very restrictive. It favors the traditional religions, such as the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Islam and the Catholic Church. However, it discriminates against the non-traditional and "new" religions, although both types of religions carry out similar activities, including religious services and religious instruction (IHF, Annual Report, 1998: 149). The law is regarded as allowing the arbitrary conduct of the authorities towards the religious groups (MHC, Annual Report, 1999). Many religious groups complained that the law has vested the governmental Commission for Religious Issues too much undefined power (IHF, Annual Report, 1998:150).

There are several restrictions on the religious freedom in that law. The access of foreign preachers and missionaries to Macedonia is restricted. The violation of that provision carries a penalty of 50,000 DEN (USD 950), equivalent to six times the average monthly salary. Foreigners are subjected to penalties if they practice religious activities without permission or if they organize religious instruction for children under the age of 10 without the knowledge of their parents. Minor penalties are envisaged for nine other activities, such as proselytism (which was restricted by other provisions of the law), collecting money or carrying out activities outside the registered places of worship. The Ministry of the Interior has consistently made reductions in the number of publications allowed for import in Macedonia -- a practice which the Jehovah's Witnesses have suffered the most (IHF, Annual Report, 1998:149-150, The Law on Religion, 1997).

In December 1998, the Constitutional Court abolished the following articles, which were regarded as discriminatory. 1) Art. 3 (1) stated that religious rituals could be officiated only by a registered religious "community" and "group." 2) Art. 10 stipulated that a religious group wishing to be registered could be formed by a minimum of 50 founders who are permanent residents of Macedonia. 3) Art. 11 (2) states that the registration application of the religious groups should contain the names of all the 50 founding members, the addresses of their meeting places and the names of the persons that would organize the meetings. 4) Art. 13 stipulated that the religious group, founded according to the law, should be registered in the register of the organ, dealing with the problems of the religious communities and groups, i.e. by the Committee for the Religious Issues, which administers the register. 5) Art. 14 ascribed the communities and groups a judicial status. The "group" becomes a judicial body just after it is registered according to Art. 13. The "communities" and the "groups" can found social and charitable organizations according to a procedure regulated by law. 6). Art. 22 (2) stipulated that if a religious group wants to construct or appropriate property intended for the performance of religious services, it has to receive the approval of the aforementioned governmental committee (The Law on Religion, 1997; Decision of the Constitutional Court, 1998).

The Macedonian Helsinki Committee finds that there are some other discriminatory provisions, which are still in power. 1) Art. 8 (2) states that "there can be only one religious community for one religion." 2) Art. 19 stipulates that religious services may be performed at various premises accessible to the citizens, but they first have to receive the approval of the Committee for the Religious Issues (MHC, Annual Report, 1999; State Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, 23/7/1997:1427). Art. 5 is also restrictive. It allows foreign citizens to perform religious activities or rites only after the previous approval of the Committee for the Religious Issues. Thus, it restricts the access of foreign missionaries to Macedonia (IHF, Annual Report, 1998:149; State Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, 23/7/1997:1426).

The Criminal Code protects the rights of the Macedonian citizens. Among these rights is the right to religious affiliation. Art. 50 defines as offenses any breaches of the law on equality of citizenship where people are discriminated against because of their religion. Art. 134 (18) penalizes those who cause religious hatred, discord and intolerance (Najceska, et al., 1996:77). However, it is unclear to what extent that provision of the law is being observed in practice and how many people who have resorted to religious hatred have been ever sued or tried.

6. AVAILABILITY OF EDUCATION FOR THE MINORITY

6.1. Brief history of the system of education in relation to the minority

During the Ottoman period until the first Balkan War in 1912, *mektebs* (primary religious schools) and *Medreses* (secondary religious schools) existed in Skopje, Bitola and Tetovo. The most prominent of those religious schools was the "Isa Beg" Medrese in Skopje. After the Balkan Wars, religious instruction continued mainly in the mosques or in private circles (Sherif, 1999).

After the First World War and the establishment of the Yugoslav Kingdom, Vardar Macedonia was considered as "South Serbia," and education there was strongly "Serbianized." But the Muslims, mainly the Turks, resisted sending their children to the Serbian schools. This movement was especially strong in the beginning of 1919 in the village of Kavadartsi and the area around it, and threatened to spill over in other districts. Thus, the Ministry of Education issued an act in May 1919 stating that the subject "religion" must be taught by special Muslim teachers to all Muslim children in the primary schools. Furthermore, Muslim children were no more obliged to attend the same religious classes as the Orthodox children, nor to take part in religious ceremonies of the Orthodox Church in or outside the schools. This decision did not play a significant role, since the parents of the Muslim children did not accept the Muslim teachers selected by the ministry. A Muslim Congress at the end of 1919 demanded educational autonomy from the state. However, this was not given, since it contradicted too much with the official policy. Thus, by the early 1920s the educational demands of the Turks have already become a political question, since the Turks barred their children from going to school (Jovanovic, 1983:239-240).

In order to suppress the discontent, in 1924 the Yugoslav Kingdom created the Great Medrese "King Alexander I" in Skopje. It provided both secular and religious instruction. It aimed at the creation of pro-Serbian loyalists, who in a short period of time would become Muslim religious clerics and would go all over Vardar Macedonia. Many of the secular subjects were taught in the Serbian language. There were also students from Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Bosnia. This school operated until the Second World War (Sherif, 1999; Jovanovic, 1983:246).

Parallel to the state-sponsored Great Medrese, there were also private Muslim religious schools in Skopje, Gostivar and other settlements. The *mektebs* were attended by four to fourteen-year-old children, who learned the Koran by heart. The *Medreses* gave education to young people who entered them when they were fourteen to sixteen years of age and usually stayed there until the age of 25. They received instruction about the Arab language, commentaries of the Koran and other religious books. Its graduates became the Muslim clerics -- *hodjas, imams* and *muezzins*. Both kinds of religious schools found rooms in private buildings close to the mosques and were attended by a large number of rural boys (Jovanovic, 1983:247).

In 1932 the "Isa Beg" Medrese re-opened in Skopje. It was established in the 15th century after the arrival of the Ottoman Turks on those territories. It is named after its founder, Isa Beg, who had lived in Skopje and left his property for religious, humanitarian and educational purposes. This school was one of the most prominent in the European Ottoman province of Rumelia. However, it had stopped working on several occasions. For the first time this happened in 1689, when during one of the raids of the Habsburg army, Skopje was burned to the ground. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, on the initiative of some intellectuals and the Islamic clergy, the school was rebuilt in 1932 and in 1936 it received the status of a secondary school (Islamic Community Brochure, 1997:68-72). The students of this school were mainly Turks, who were opposed to the secular, pro-Serb education pursued in the Big Medrese of King Alexander (Sherif, 1999).

After the Second World War the "Isa Beg" Medrese stopped its activities once again. This continued until 1979, when the Islamic Community managed to obtain permission for the building of new premises. It was erected in the village of Kondovo near Skopje. The first academic year after the long break was 1984/1985. The school continues its activities at present (Islamic Community Brochure, 1997:68-72).

The history of the "Isa Beg" Library developed almost parallel to the history of the "Isa Beg" Medrese. It also was established in the 15th century. There are no historical data on whether the library was functional after the 17th century. The initiative to re-establish it dates back to 1932. It was done on behalf of the Vakif Association that existed at the time. The library was re-opened in 1936 and was accessible to all, irrespective of their social status. Until the Second World War, the library was a center for the Muslim religious, cultural and political life of Skopje, where many discussions took place. It stopped working in 1941 and during the Communist period most of its library funds were

brought to the Public Library, the University Library, and to the "Tsvetan Dimov" Library (Islamic Community Brochure, 1997:72-73).

6.2. Availability of teaching material for the minority

6.3. Official position

6.4. Activists' initiatives

The Humanitarian Organization "El Hilal" ("New Moon") operates under the organizational structure of the Islamic Community. "El Hilal" was founded in 1991 as an association of the Muslims and was transformed into a humanitarian organization in December 1993. It has five branches in Skopje and other nine outside the Macedonian capital. Its main activities are the distribution of humanitarian aid, support to cultural activities and refugees, and aid to the education of the financially disadvantaged children.

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina sent many refugees to Macedonia. "El Hilal" helped 70 per cent (out of the total of 30,000) of the Bosnian refugees with accommodation in state-owned and private places, guaranteeing food, clothing and health care, as well as with their repatriation back to Bosnia. In 1993 the organization helped repatriate 250 persons, in 1994 - 720 persons and in 1996 - 940 persons ("El Hilal" Brochure, 1996:7-37).

In the sphere of education, "El Hilal" has helped with the distribution of education materials, books, and notebooks, provided by educational institutions and donors from Europe and the USA. In the 1994-1995 academic year, the American organization Catholic Relief Services provided support to the "El Hilal" project for the creation of school kitchens in 33 schools in Macedonia ("El Hilal", Brochure, 1996:17).

6.5. *Present situation on different levels:*

6.5.1. Nursery school and primary education

There is no special Islamic school for children at this educational level, nor is there any religious school for the Christian Orthodox children. The Macedonian Orthodox Church has long been trying to introduce Orthodox religious instruction in the public schools, but without success (Fraenkel, 1999).

6.5.2. Secondary education

The "Isa Beg" Medrese is the only secondary school providing Islamic religious instruction in Macedonia at present. It operates under the organizational structure of the Islamic Community, but its exact status is yet unclear. Students enter the school for four years after they have completed eight years of primary school. The *Medrese* provides both religious and secular instruction. Thus, upon graduation, students can apply to universities

other than the Islamic faculty, if they want to continue with secular instruction at the undergraduate level (Rexhepi, 1999).

There are 29 subjects taught in the "Isa Beg" Medrese. The religious subjects are the Koran, Reading of the Koran, commentary of the Koran, Islamic ethics, Islamic philosophy, Shari'a law and others. The secular subjects include mathematics, sociology, pedagogy, logic, history, languages, rhetoric and others (Rexhepi, 1999). Five languages are studied: Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish are studied as first languages, and Arabic and English are studied as foreign languages (Islamic Community Brochure, 1997:69).

The schooling in the "Isa Beg" Medrese is free of charge. There is a boarding school for 270 students. In 1997 the number of the full-time students was between 250 and 270 people, and there were also some 300 distance-education students (who do not attend regular classrooms instruction, but participate in the educational process through exams on the respective subjects). From the foundation of the school in academic year 1988/1989 until 1996/1997 (the year of the latest data available) there have been some 384 full-time and 85 distance students. Most of the latter were female (Islamic Community Brochure, 1997:69).

In 1998, the Macedonian Helsinki Committee reported on an "Albanianization" attempt within the Secondary Theological School "Isa Beg" Medrese based in the village of Kondovo near Skopje. The process of ethnic homogenization was observed in the trend to exclude the usage of the Turkish, Romani and Macedonian languages from the curriculum. These processes went even as far as to reach the prohibition of the above mentioned languages in the mosques. The politicizing of this act was manifested also through the placement of the Albanian flag as unifying all members of the Muslim religion (MILS News, 3 February 1998).

6.5.3. Higher education and research

The Faculty of Islam is based in the district of Kondovo near Skopje. Like the "Isa Beg" Medrese, it also operates under the organizational structure of the Islamic Community. Its aim is to provide further education to the students who graduate from the religious secondary school and to give them a Bachelor's degree. The faculty was founded in 1997/1998. Due to the lack of a higher Islamic education faculty before that time, there were around 50 students who continued their studies abroad -- in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lybia, Jordan, Syria, Iran (Rexhepi, 1999).

It is possible to pursue research on Islam in the "Isa Beg" Library in Skopje, which also operates within the framework of the Islamic Community. It was founded in 1991 in a building in the old town in Skopje. The books and the other funds have been re-collected since the late 1970s from the libraries, to which they had been distributed during the Communist period. At present, there are many manuscripts in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Persian, French, Turkish, Albanian, Macedonian, Bosnian and Serbo-Croatian. Around

1,000 books cover modern history and some 2,100 cover earlier periods (Islamic Community Brochure, 1997:73).

7. COMMUNICATION AND AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA

7.1. Legal situation

The electronic media in Macedonia operate under the 1997 Broadcasting Act. The Council on Broadcasting, constituted in September 1997, is responsible for the regulation of the media (MHC Annual Report, 1999). As far as religion is concerned, the law prohibits religious communities or religious groups to found radio-television entities (Art. 11). It also states that radio and television programs cannot be used for the spread of national, racial or religious hatred among the citizens. They should allow all citizens to enjoy the same rights and freedoms, regardless of their sex, race, national origin, social status or religious belief, among other things (The Law on Radio-Diffusion, 1997).

7.2. Press

The *El Hilal* (*Young Moon*) newspaper is the only publication of a Muslim religious entity in Macedonia, the Islamic Community. The newspaper was founded in 1987. It is published twice a month in the Albanian language with a circulation of 4,000 copies, and once a month in Turkish and Macedonian with 1,500 copies in each language. It offers a forum for information and discussion of the religious, scientific, economic, cultural and moral aspects of Islam. It covers the activities of the Islamic Community, the Islamic festivities, the opening of new religious sites in Macedonia and the current situation of the Muslims abroad (Islamic Community Brochure 1997:78-79).

Islamic issues are covered occasionally by the newspapers of the Albanian and Turkish minorities in Macedonia (*Flaka* and *Fakti* -- in Albanian, and *Birlik* -- in Turkish). The *Zaman-Macedonia* newspaper, which is part of the Istanbul-based chain of *Zaman* newspapers (the main one published in Turkish and in Turkey), is issued in 14 different languages. Occasionally, it covers Islamic holidays, even though the main issues covered are secular (Emin, 1999).

7.3. Radio

There are no Islamic radio stations in Macedonia. The law prohibits the foundation of such radio stations (See 7.1.). Occasionally, some materials on Islamic holidays appear in the state and private media of the different ethnic groups. There are sections within the State Radio that are broadcast in Albanian, Turkish and Romani. In addition to them, there are several Albanian private radio-stations: Radio “Vati,” Radio “Fama” and Radio “24” in Skopje, Radio “Visar” and Radio “Fama” in Tetovo, Radio “Ars”, Radio “Emi”, Radio “Pro FM 92”, Radio “Rumeli FM” and Radio “Rekaton” in Gostivar, Radio “Arbana” in Koumanovo, Radio “Merilin” in Debar, Radio “Rinia” in Prilep, “Radio “Flora” in

Krushevo, Radio “Uskana” in Kichevo. Radio “Cherenia” in Stip broadcasts mainly in Macedonian, but sometimes also in Romani (Gligorovska, 1999).

7.4. Television

There are no Islamic TV stations in Macedonia. There is a prohibition on them by the law (See 7.1.). Islamic holidays are covered by the ethnic sections of the State Television -- Albanian, Turkish, Romani-- and by the private televisions. There are several private Albanian television channels and two Romani ones. There are no Turkish TV channels. The Albanian TV stations are: TV “Era” in Skopje, TV “Art” and TV “Koha” in Tetovo, TV “Globus,” TV “Zeri I Cegranit” and TV “2” in Gostivar, TV “ Festa” and TV “Hana” in Koumanovo, TV “Kaltrina” in Strouga, TV “Gura” and TV “Uskana” in Kichevo. Radio “Spektra” in Strouga has a Macedonian language broadcast targeting the Macedonian Muslims. The Romani TV stations are “Shutel” TV and Radio TV “BTR,” both based in Skopje. The Macedonian TV “Zora” in Koumanovo sometimes broadcasts in Romani (Gligorovska, 1999).

7.5. Internet

There are no Internet sites of the Islamic religious organizations in Macedonia.

8. CONCLUSION

The Muslims in the Republic of Macedonia are ethnically and religiously heterogeneous. In ethnic terms, they are the Albanians, Turks, Macedonian Muslims (Torbeshi), Bosnians and Roma; with the Albanians being the predominant majority. In religious terms, the Sunni Muslims are the dominant part of the population. There are also six Sunni Sufi Orders and one Bektashi Sufi Order, which is the largest Sufi order in the Balkans.

Nowadays there are four religious communities in Macedonia. Two of them --the Islamic Community and the Islamic Dervish Religious Community-- are officially registered with the Macedonian governmental committee dealing with religious affairs. The other two -- the Muslim Religious Community and the Bektashi Community-- are not registered there. The Muslim Religious Community was registered with the Ministry of the Interior in 1996 in line with the 1953 Yugoslav law, which ceased to be in power after the adoption of the new Macedonian religious law in 1997. The Bektashi Community applied for registration with the Ministry of the Interior after 1989, but has not received any positive answer yet.

At the organizational level, Islam in Macedonia is divided among the different ethnic groups. Although the religious leaders of the Islamic Community claim to unite all Muslims in Macedonia, it is a public secret that the Islamic Community unites mainly the Albanians, while the Muslim Religious Community unites mainly the non-Albanians such as the Turks, Torbeshi, Bosnians and some Roma. On its part, the Islamic Dervish Community unites mainly the Roma, while the Bektashi Community is again Albanian-dominated (Traditionally, the Albanians make up the largest number of the Bektashi

throughout the Balkans and not only in Macedonia). These divisions create problems within the Muslim community itself, the biggest among them being the unequal distribution of power among the different ethnic groups in favor of the Albanian minority and the consequent domination of Albanian-language services in the mosques.

Traditionally, the inter-confessional relations of the Islamic Community with the Orthodox Church and the Macedonian majority have been distant. Moreover, in the first years of Macedonian independence (1992-1993) they have been strained even more. At that time, the myth of the "Muslim conspiracy," which allegedly "endangered Orthodoxy", emerged in the public space and was used as a political marketing tool. Experts see this myth as an import from Serbia -- a state, which saw itself as the Orthodox Christian stronghold in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992-1995. The strong opposition between Orthodox Christians and Muslims gradually subsided after 1993, but politicization of religion seems to have remained. There are allegations that the Islamic Community --the main religious community in Macedonia-- advanced pro-Albanian politics due to its strong connections with the Albanian Party PDS, which participated in the Macedonian government until the fall of 1998.

The social distance between Muslims and Orthodox Christians remains quite tangible. In some cases, Orthodox Macedonians tend to see all Muslims as a monolithic group and refer to them as "Turks" -- an attitude inherited from the Ottoman time. The Muslims feel as "second-class" citizens in their own country. Muslims and Orthodox Christians trust their own religious organizations, but not the religious organization of the "other." Also, mixed marriages between Muslims and Christians are exceptional, especially after Macedonia achieved its independence.

At present, the religious practice of the Muslims is not impeded by the state. Muslims enjoy the right to attend everyday prayers, to participate in religious festivities and to wear traditional clothing, among other rights. A number of new mosques have been built since 1989.

However, the state still impedes the activities of the Muslims in Macedonia through its reactive, rather than proactive approach to Islam. On the one hand, this is due to the import of the political mythology of the "Muslim conspiracy" as a result of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the other hand, it is due to the public identification of Islam with Albanian political ambitions. The state has posed registration problems to some of the Muslim communities and is yet to adopt a law for the restitution of Muslim ecclesiastic property. State policy affects the other religions as well. For example, the lack of religious instruction in the public schools and the adoption of the new law on religions, are seen as a deficiency. Muslim religious leaders, as well as human rights activists find that the 1997 religious law, although amended by the Constitutional Court in December 1998, is still very restrictive. It makes a distinction between a religious "community" and a religious "group," putting the latter under the strict supervision of the state authorities.

In terms of education, the Muslims in Macedonia can receive religious instruction in private schools -- at the high school level in the "Isa Beg" Medrese and the graduate level in the Faculty of Islam, both of them based in the district Kondovo on the outskirts of the capital Skopje. The Humanitarian Organization "El Hilal," although focusing mainly on humanitarian issues, assists some of the students and provides them with school material. The Islamic communities have no electronic media. Since the 1997 radio-diffusion law, there is an explicit prohibition on media ownership to all religions. The Islamic community has a bi-monthly newspaper --*El Hilal*-- published by the officially registered Islamic Community in three languages: Albanian, Turkish and Macedonian. The state and the private media publish and broadcast news concerning Islamic holidays, but their orientation is rather secular.

ADDRESSES

1. **Cultural institutions and/or associations founded by the minority**

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- Tetovo Mufti's Office of the Islamic Community
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- Gostivar Mufti's Office of the Islamic Community
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- Koumanovo Mufti's Office of the Islamic Community
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- Kichevo Muftis' Office of the Islamic Community
  22, Isen Akioski St., Kichevo,
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- Strouga Mufti's Office of the Islamic Community
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  Republic of Macedonia
  Tel: (+389 96) 72-743,

- Ohrid Mufti's Office of the Islamic Community
  53, Gotse Delchev St. Ohrid,
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- Bajrami Dzemail
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- Baba Tahir Emini
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- Shejh Ibrahim Murteza
  Head of a Rufa'I Tekke in Skopje
  78, Chairska St.,
  91 000 Skopje,
  Republic of Macedonia
  Tel. (+389 91) 614-041

1. **Minority institutions and/or associations concerning education**

- "Isa Beg" Medrese
  Kondovo District, Skopje,
  Republic of Macedonia
  Tel: (+389 91) 118-054, 238-540
  Fax: (+389 91) 117-364,

- Islamic Faculty
  Kondovo, Skopje,
  Republic of Macedonia,

- "Isa Beg" Library
  61, Bitpazar St. Skopje,
  Republic of Macedonia,

- Humanitarian Organization "El Hilal"
  52, Chairska St, Skopje, 91 000
  Republic of Macedonia
  Tel: (+389 91) 117-410, 117-412 ext. 108, 121, 124
  Fax: (+389 91) 117-748.

3. Political parties and/or associations founded by the minority

4. Minority media

Radio Stations

Newspapers

- *El Hilal* (*Mlada Mesechina*) Newspaper
  52, Chairska St. Skopje, 91 000,
  Republic of Macedonia
  Tel: (+389 91) 117-410, 117-412 ext. 108, 121, 124
  Fax: (+389 91) 117-883.

Magazines

Television Stations

Internet Web Sites

Publishing Houses

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MAIN LITERARY WORKS OF DIFFERENT PERIODS

AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL

Shejh Ibrahim Murteza (Erol Baba), Spiritual Head of the Rufa'i Tekke in Skopje, allowed **CEDIME** to distribute information about his own collection of audio-visual material on the Rufa'i Tekke in Skopje. He can be contacted for information, publication and research purposes.

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