

Zilka Spahić-Šiljak

**WOMEN, RELIGION AND POLITICS**

Sarajevo, 2010.

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Impact analysis of interpretative religious heritage of Judaism, Christianity and Islam on the engagement of women in public life and politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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## PREFACE

This book *Women, Religion and Politics* is a modified version of the research for my doctoral thesis performed from 2004 to 2007 under the same title. The research in fact was more than a mere doctoral research. In my career of working with government and nongovernment sector, but also through my academic study of women's human rights, I concluded that it is tremendously important to illustrate what is the role of religious interpretative heritage of monotheistic traditions in relation to civil and political rights of women. Although religion was pushed aside during socialism, today it is very important and present in human lives. Therefore, it is indispensable to question its impact on the dynamics of gender relations, which is still deeply interwoven in and constrained with traditional, cultural and religious norms.

On one hand my wish was to open up a floor for debate and academic discussion about gender policy in religious discourse which has been absolutely neglected and suppressed by other more important issues; and on the other hand, to raise awareness about the importance of introducing the religious perspective in the creation of a more progressive gender policy and implementation of positive legal regulations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I intended to illustrate - through theological anthropology and exegesis of the sacred texts, as well as through empirical findings - the need for reconstruction of patriarchal religious heritage which for centuries was shaped by the masculine elite and excluded women from the process of creation of the theological and legal thought in religious traditions by defining them as secondary, and very often as pertaining to the second class.

I would like to use this opportunity and thank everyone who supported and encouraged me, professionally and privately, since without the support of many people, I would not have been capable of doing this research alone and in a relatively short time. Primarily, I would like to mention the support of my mentor, Prof. Zorica Kuburić, and co-mentors Prof. Svenka Savić and Prof. Milan Vukomanović, who led me through the entire process of preparation of my thesis.

I also owe my gratitude to Dr. Nada Ler-Sofronić, who helped me design the framework of my research work. As well, I would like to thank Prof. Jasna Bakšić-Muftić, Prof. Enes Karić, Prof. Jasminka Babić-Avdispahić, Dr. Rebeka Anić, Prof. Rachel Adler and Dr. Milica Bakić-Hayden for their support and review of the book and their wholehearted acceptance of this task. I would also like to thank my respected colleagues Dr. Rebeka Jadranka Anić, Rabbi Izak Asiel and Marcie Lee for their expertise offered for the parts of the book relating to Christian and Jewish tradition.

But, to be even able to perform this research in 20 cities and villages in BiH, I needed material support as well. This was ensured by the Norwegian government, through IMIC Centre Sarajevo.

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Sarajevo provided funding for the English edition of the book and I would like to use this occasion to extend my gratitude for their generous support.

IMIC Centre and Mr. Marko Oršolić also placed at my disposal all other necessary resources and contacts so that I would be able to perform the research in the easiest possible way and therefore I owe them a very special thanks. Also, I want to thank all organizations and individuals in the field who organized interviews and meetings with the respondents and who contributed to this publication.

In the end, I thank dear God for health, strength, wisdom and gifts which I received in my colleagues, friends and family.

The Author

Zilka Spahić-Šiljak

## INTRODUCTION

Sociological, politological and anthropological research and analyses during last years in the countries of former Yugoslavia have shown that traditional and cultural values represent significant obstacle for a complete political participation of women, i.e. that the separation into private (female) and public (male) sphere mirrors the (under)representation of women in government structures.<sup>1</sup> It is also being pointed out that religions are contributing to such separation, due to their clearly established models of male and female roles, and that in this way, indirectly, and sometimes also directly, they deny women the right to be politically engaged.<sup>2</sup> In Bosnia and Herzegovina, in a specific multicultural context, coexist four traditional religious communities (Orthodox, Catholic, Islamic and Jewish), and therefore it is suitable to perform a comparative research within the Abrahamic heritage through the ethical principles of these religious traditions. Since "the religion reflects, but at the same time shapes, the cultures and civilizations in which it lives"<sup>3</sup> its influence is visible in the display of gender relations and definitions of desired roles for women and men. Nevertheless, the data about it is scarce, and there are no empirical verifications that would support such argumentation. This was a reason enough to do a research about the way in which the religions form human attitudes and value systems, and the measure in which they influence the status of women in society and their engagement in public life using the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although religion was marginalized during communism, the status of women was not significantly different, "since the traditional values presented in a society were only added to the set of new socialist values" (Sklevicky, Lidia 1996). Therefore, at the beginning of 90's, national and ideological programs, largely intertwined with religious matrixes from Christianity and Islam, supported the reaffirmation of traditional cultural and religious values and suppression of women into the privacy of their homes and family. This policy also mirrored itself in conservative and rigid inter-

- 
- 1 See Tomić-Koludrović, Inga and Kunac, Suzana. *Rizici modernizacije: žene u Hrvatskoj devedesetih* (*Risks of Modernisation: Women in Croatia during nineties*), NGO „Stope nade“/“Footprints of Hope“, Split, 2000; Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka. *Political Representation of Women in Croatia: Analysis of the Socio-cultural, Socio-economic and Political Obstacles for Full Representation of Women in Politics*, MA at the CIPS Sarajevo (International Master Program Sarajevo-Bologna), 2001/2002, and Helms, Elissa. *Gendered Visions of the Bosnian Future: Women's Activism and Representation in Post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2003.
  - 2 See Anić, Rebeka Jadranka. *Više od zadanoga: žena u Crkvi u Hrvatskoj u 20. stoljeću* (*More Than Given. Women in Church in Croatia in 20th century*), Franjevački institut za kulturu mira/Franciscan Institute for Peace Culture, Split, 2003.
  - 3 Swidler, Leonard and Mojzes, Paul. *The Study of Religion in the Age of Global Dialogue*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 2000, p. 1.

pretations of churches and religious communities, which during the war supported *pro-life* policy, glorified the role of a woman as mother and nurturer – the mother of the Nation; and minimized the significance of women's engagement in the public sphere of the society. The result of this was such that the representation of women in the political sphere was 2% at higher, and up to 5% on lower levels of government (Bakšić-Muftić, Jasna. 2001)

In the post-war period, women's movements in BiH managed to win the fight over introduction of a "female quota" at election lists of political parties in 1997, as well as the adoption of the *Gender Equality Law* in 2003 (*The Official Gazette of BiH*, No. 16/2003). Nevertheless, women are still underrepresented in all segments of public life, especially at decision-making positions. The legal framework for systematization of gender issues has been adopted; still what is lacking is the alteration in cultural codes, which are inseparably linked to religion. Codes and behavioral patterns are conditioned by religious values, which are largely intertwined with culture and customary tradition so that sometimes it is very hard to recognize the religious in them. Since family as a primary socialization factor has one of the most important roles in formation of a personality (Kuburić, Zorica. 1996), and that the values transferred to children include religious and traditional norms, it was important to investigate in which way these values shape the attitudes of a believer, atheist and agnostic. Although atheists and agnostics verbally do not acknowledge God and religious values' system, still, their upbringing incorporates fundamentals that include ethical norms of religious traditions, so that their attitudes are for the most part indirectly conditioned by religious legacy.

The first chapter describes the notion of religion, its function and bases of religious teaching of monotheistic traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, with fundamental sources of religion offering thus a broader, more comprehensive pursuit of the topic of this book.

The following three chapters of this book offer theological anthropology of the woman in monotheistic traditions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – which influences education, economic status, and participation in religious and political life from the perspective of traditional and feminist interpretations.

The fifth chapter speaks about the issues relating to pursuit of political rights of women in BiH – from the point when they got the right to vote in 1946 to first, multi-party elections in 1990 – including the participation of women in the post-war period from 1990 to 2006.

In the sixth chapter, I will present the frame of the empirical research: objectives, methods, the sample and statistical data processing for the research performed in 20 cities and villages, among the citizens declaring themselves as Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics, Jews or as atheists and agnostics.

In the seventh chapter, I processed the results of the empirical research. In the first part of this chapter I analyze the results relating to attitudes of respondents toward women, their role in the family and society, education of female and male children, economic status of women, participation of women in religious life, their engagement on key positions in religious communities, and participation of women at decision-making positions. In the second part of this chapter I will offer analysis of the attitudes of religious communities which I performed by interviewing religious officials and analyzing the content of religious magazines (*Preporod*, *Pravoslavlje* and *Katolički tjednik*<sup>4</sup>).

In the eighth chapter, in an abridged version, I present conclusions of the entire research.

Through the insight into the religious-interpretative legacy of monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), the status of women in family and society, the results of the research performed among the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina by examining their attitudes toward these issues, as well as the analyses of religious magazines and interviews with religious officials – this book will offer a frame for understanding the interconnectedness between the religion and the status of woman in political life of BiH.

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4 Transl. note: These magazines are “Preporod” (*Rebirth*) Muslim, „Pravoslavlje” (*Orthodoxy*) Orthodox and „Katolički tjednik” (*Catholic Weekly*) Catholic periodicals.



## 1. RELIGION

"Four faiths live in this narrow, hilly and parched piece of land. Each of them is exclusive and strictly separated from others. All live under the same sky and from the same soil, but the centre of the spiritual life of each of these four groups is far away, in a foreign land, in Rome, Moscow, Mecca, Jerusalem, and God alone knows where else, but at any rate not here where the people are born and die. And each group considers that its well-being is conditioned by the disadvantage of each of the other three faiths, and that they can make progress only at their cost. Each of them has made intolerance the greatest virtue. And each one of them is expecting salvation from somewhere outside, each from the opposite direction."(Andrić, Ivo, "Bosnian Chronicles")

### 1.1. Notion of Religion

To define the notion of religion is not an easy task; it requires multiple theoretical and methodological approaches. One of the most prominent sociologists dealing with the phenomenon of religion, Max Weber, considered that this definition could be given only after completing the study of religion.<sup>5</sup> Others claimed that offering the definition at the very beginning of discussion about certain issue or notion is of utmost importance for us so that we know what exactly the subject of the analysis is. Đuro Šušnjić, nevertheless, considers that definition could be understood more as "a guide for reflection about a certain notion than a way in which the essence of the notion is ascertained."<sup>6</sup> Whatever is the way in which we understand this problem of defining religion, for the sake of this book it is important to mention these definitions so that it would be easier for us to approach the given issue about the influence which the religion has on the status of women in public life and politics. When studying religion, a sociologist must, as Ivan Cvitković puts it, "search for a neutral definition" – which still does not mean that the researcher must be an atheist, but that he or she should try to be professionally fair and objective.

Thus, numerous scholars found it necessary to define what religion is and is not. Because of this today, there is a whole spectrum of definitions coming from different perspectives: anthropological, sociological, philosophical, historical, theological, etc. However, before quoting some of them, it is important to highlight that the nature

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5 Weber, Max. *The Sociology of Religion*, Menthuen, London, 1965, p. 1.

6 Šušnjić, Đuro. *Religija I (Religion I)*, Čigoja Štampa, Belgrade, 1998, p. 44.

of religion is essential in determining cultures and civilizations. Renowned sociologist Emile Durkheim speaks about it:

Religion has given birth to all that is essential in society. We have established the fact that the fundamental categories of thought and consequently of science are of religious origin. In summing up, then it may be said that nearly all the great social institutions have been born in religion.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, if we want to understand cultures and civilizations - as well as relations among human beings within them - it is important to understand what religion is, and what is its role in emergence of cultures and civilizations in which it exists. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, vivid discussions were led about the essence of religion and the manner in which this term could be defined. Definitions of religions could be systematized in different ways, but for the purpose of this book, I will introduce three groups of definitions:

- substantive,
- functional,
- symbolic.

**Substantive** definitions attempt to determine the core, spirit, essence of religion, and in relation to this Edward Tyler offered a minimalistic definition: "*Religion is belief in spiritual beings*".<sup>8</sup> This definition is insufficient, since it neglects the existence of ritual customary practice representing a constituent part of most religions. Emile Durkheim, while trying to determine what the essence of religion is, gave a different definition that includes ritual practice. Still, the crucial point in his definition is the distinction between the sacred and the profane:

Religion is a unified system of belief and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart are forbidden-belief and practices which unit into one single moral community called Church a Church all those who adhere to them.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, anthropologists questioned Durkheim's statement that religion deals with the sacred, and therefore Goody, instead of it, introduced notions of *natural and supernatural spheres*,<sup>10</sup> after him, Spiro introduced the category of *superhuman beings*,<sup>11</sup> while Rudolf Otto, on the other hand defined religion as and experience of holy and numinous.<sup>12</sup>

7 Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1915, p. 48.

8 Tyler, Edward. *Primitive Culture*, Murray, London, 1903, p. 424.

9 Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1915, p. 47.

10 Goody, J. *Religion and Ritual: the Definitional Problem*, British Journal of Sociology, 12, p. 155.

11 Spiro, M. E. *Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation*, in M. Banton ed. *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, A.S.A Monograph, No. 3, London, Tavistock, p. 96.

12 Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy*, translated by W. Harvey, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1924.



Friedrich Schleiermacher as early as at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century defined the essence of religion as “feeling of absolute dependence”.<sup>13</sup> Respected philosophers and thinkers like Kant, connected religion to ethics and morality.<sup>14</sup>

Functional definitions of religion consider what religion does or should do. Numerous scholars accepted this manner of defining religion since it does not include ethical principles of good and evil, fairness, responsibility etc, but it rests on the question of whether and how does the religion satisfy the needs of its followers. This is an inclusive definition since it includes wide scope of different phenomena. The most famous is Jinger’s definition: “Religion is a system of beliefs and practices by means of which group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life.”<sup>15</sup>

Still the problem was to determine what the essential problems of our lives are, and who has the legitimacy to do it. Therefore, this inclusive definition is quite broad since it encompasses different quasi-religious systems and ideologies like nationalism or communism. One of the ways to avoid deficiencies of functionalistic definitions about the essence of religion was the polythetic approach of defining religion offered by Southwold M. He believed that more religion defining aspects should be taken into account. They should be similar, but not common to all religions; like: relations of the Devine with human beings, beliefs which cannot be proven empirically, ethical rules derived from belief, implementation of the Holy texts and oral tradition, rituals, existence of clergy and religious elites, reward and punishment, belonging to a moral community.<sup>16</sup>

Based on this list of aspects it is possible to avoid falling into a trap of creating strict boundaries between what religion is and is not. At the same time, this approach is quite undetermined since it does not specify how many of these aspects should a religion have in order to be eligible for the title, and whether there are priorities in the selection. Numerous scholars of different orientations advocated for the idea that religion should be defined and understood as a way of living our everyday lives, therefore William C. Tremmel tried to offer a comprehensive definition of religion:

Religion is a complex form of human behavior whereby a person (or community of persons) is prepared intellectually and emotionally to deal with those aspects of human existence that are horrendous and non-manipulable.

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13 Swidler, Leonard and Mojzes, Paul. *The Study of Religion in the Age of Global Dialogue*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 2000, p. 3.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 3-4.

15 Yimger, M. *The Scientific Study of Religion*, Routledge, London, p. 7.

16 Southwold, M. *Buddhism and the Definition of Religion*, Man, NS 13, p. 362-379.

From his definition it is possible to conclude that a person who believes and practically applies his or her beliefs by using different religious techniques like myths, doctrines, theology, moral value system and legal rules, can:

- transcend the life-negating traumas of human existence and a sense of finitude, and not only deal with religious problems but also experience a great satisfaction and immense personal worth.

Religion is not only something people “do” and “use”; it is also something that happens to them. It is an experience, and even, at times, an experience of sheer ecstasy.<sup>17</sup>

**Symbolic** definition underscores the significance and role of symbols in a religious experience. Most encompassing definition of this kind was offered by Klifford Geertz. He sees religion as

- a system of symbols which acts to establish, powerful persuasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of faculty that the moods and motivations seems uniquely realistic.<sup>18</sup>

Symbols indicate most desirable models of life, but also have a psychological effect on believers and make them feel safe and content no matter the circumstances. Along with this, religion satisfies intellectual needs of human beings, since it offers answers related to the sense and purpose of life, due to which they try to follow and implement in practice the ethical and legal principles prescribed in their sacred texts. In the end, it should be stated that religious rituals and symbols give to believers the sense of existence of a deeper reality behind a certain repeating ritual, thus making symbols and rituals exceptionally important in lives of believers.

After a short overview of the notion of religion I should say something about the functions which religion has in our lives, about creation of identity, value systems and relations in society. Considering the fact that in this book I will be analyzing the impact of interpretative monotheistic heritage on the status of women in public life and politics, it is also important to establish what are the functions which religion has in the lives of my respondents, in which way do they define their religious identity, how much do they practice their religion and its ethical norms, as well as how much are their thoughts and attitudes about gender policy conditioned by religion.

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17 Swidler, Leonard and Mojzes, Paul. p. 6.

18 Geertz, Klifford. *The Interpretations of Cultures*, Basic Books, 1973, p. 89.

## 1.2. Functions of Religion

Human history observes traces of religion since the birth of humanity, thus confirming its longing to answer the questions of origin, purpose of life, metaphysical reality and other issues being discussed even today. In addition, I have been trying to “offer a final response to essential tendency of human beings which is reaching for the Perfection through the medium of our imperfection.”<sup>19</sup> In their search for the meaning of life and explanations about its purposefulness, human beings always found answers in religion. For believers religion is not only explaining the final purpose of human lives; it also offers a prescription on how to live them. It offers a way through which people can practice ideas and principles fundamental to the religion. From a believer’s perspective, religion represents a constant moral corrective, which guides human beings toward submissiveness to God’s laws and norms understood as guidance, truth, light, comfort, hope, and above all, salvation.

Philosophic approach to religion tries to offer a rational understanding of religion, and *ratio* has a key role in this process. Out of many definitions of philosophy of religion, I decided to choose the definition by Edgar S. Brightman who says that “philosophy of religion is an attempt to discover by rational interpretations of religion and its relations to other types of experience, the truth of religious beliefs and the value of religious attitudes and practice.”<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, not all philosophers followed strict directions of reason, so for example, Soren Kierkegaard questions the usefulness of reason in religion, while Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* concludes that pure reason cannot lead to definite religious knowledge but that one should lean on *practical reason*.<sup>21</sup>

Psychological approach to religion deals with the issues of individual relations of human beings with God, or that what the person believes in; as well as with the meanings of his or her experience of religious symbols and myths which help us overcome everyday frustrations, help us fight our fears, anxieties, and find peace, satisfaction and happiness for us and people around us. Religion, therefore, offers general and absolute values which, as Đuro Šušnjić explains, represent “psychological support, balance and safety for humans in hard and complicated situations”.<sup>22</sup>

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19 Kuburić, Zorica. *Religija, porodica i mladi (Religion, Family and Youth)*, Teološki institut za obrazovanje, informacije i statistiku/Theological Institute for Education, Information and Statistics, Belgrade, 1996, p. 29.

20 Swidler, Leonard and Mojzes, Paul. p. 45.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

22 Šušnjić, Đuro. *Znati i verovati (To Know and to Believe)*; Teorijske orijentacije u proučavanju religije i ateizma/Theoretical Orientations in the Study of Religion and Atheism, Kršćanska sadašnjost i stvarnost, Zagreb, 1982, p. 43.

Sociological understanding of the function of religion as Peter Berger explains is to connect human society with the entire cosmos, legitimizing in that way the social order, but also to determine the worldview of people in service of maintaining of social order.<sup>23</sup> However, Berger emphasizes the importance of dialectical relationships between humans and society, because religion serves as “world-maintaining and world-shaking force”.<sup>24</sup>

In this book I will also speak about the function of identity and identification, function of interiorized control and ideological function of religion,<sup>25</sup> since it is my aim to establish what effect does religion have in lives of believers and how is that reflected onto social relations, and especially inter-gender relations.

**Function of identity and identification** is very important for believers, since it is the religion that offers us personal and collective identity, but also answers to essential existential issues.<sup>26</sup> But, in order to be able to define who and what we are, we should mirror ourselves in others, and in relation to others who are different from us we should build our identity and our personality. This may be achieved only “through the process of social communion: it is there that we acquire the awareness of differences and it is there that the boundaries are erected (real, symbolic or invented), and this is something that could be called opening and closing up at the same time.”<sup>27</sup> Collective identity, on the other hand, represents belonging to a certain group or community offering a frame for common identity for all followers or members identifying themselves with it. The issue of collective identity in the Balkans, especially during last 15 years of war and post-war period, became one of the most important issues. Additional burden to it represents the fact that religious and national identities are compatible, further fostering thus development of nationalistic awareness in the Balkans.<sup>28</sup> This mirrors itself in retraditionalization of gender roles, glorifying and equalizing motherhood with the homeland and moral paradigm.<sup>29</sup>

**Function of interiorized control** is related to the control which society or community imposes on their members and is reflected in different ways. Social norms which I speak about in this book represent a very influential power tool, “no matter if they are represented as a law (legal norm), customary norms (supra-individual patterns), ideological norms (programs of political parties), moral

23 Berger, Peter. *The Social Reality of Religion*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973, p. 34-37.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 105-106.

25 Šušnjić, Đuro. *Religija I (Religion I)*, p. 381-453.

26 Šušnjić, Đuro. *Religija I (Religion I)*, p. 381.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 382.

28 Hastings, Adrian. *Gradnja nacionaliteta (Nation Building)*, translated by Jančić Miroslav, Buybook, Sarajevo and Adamić, Rijeka, 2003, p. 113-132.

29 Kesic, Vesna. *Gender and Ethnic Identities in Transition: The Former Yugoslavia – Croatia*, in: Rada Ivekovic and Julie Mostov, (eds.) *From Gender to Nation*, Longo Editore Ravenna, 2001. p. 80.

norms (categorical imperative), or religious norms (Ten Commandments)".<sup>30</sup> Prescribed patterns of behavior of men and women in our society, expressed through customary and religious norms have a powerful symbiotic effect, due to which people do not dare to violate them – at least not publicly– and go out of prescribed behavioral frames. Each attempt of such kind is sanctioned by a public condemnation. This creates extra burden for women when it comes to struggle for their equal position in the society.

**Ideological function of religion** is present in all societies, and especially in those where ethnical and national identities coincide with religion thus influencing development of religious ideology which is, as Šušnjić Đuro puts it, "wrongly interpreted religion".<sup>31</sup> Since all religions speak about love, mercy, justice, acceptance and support, equal responsibility for good and evil before God - no matter the gender, race or class – it is hard to understand how such messages in this interpretation become their opposites creating ideologized religion. Ideologically conditioned interpretations of relationship between men and women and justification of hierarchical relations, discrimination and exclusion of women from religious interpretative processes and institutions, are of crucial interest for this research.<sup>32</sup>

## 1.3. Fundamental Sources of Religion and Teaching

### 1.3.1. Judaism

Judaism is one of three monotheistic Abrahamic religions. These religions are considered the religions of the Path.<sup>33</sup> Judaism is connected to revelation of the *Torah* to the prophet Moses (Musa); he led the Jews out of Egypt and invited them again to believe in one God (JHVH) whom they had forgotten about. Judaism belongs to "rare national religions", since God made a covenant with the chosen Jewish people on the Mount Sinai. Its sources are the Word of God and rich rabbinical interpretative heritage that developed through centuries. Jewish sacred texts cannot be observed as a monolith manuscript but as a collection of texts reflecting the spirit of different historical periods in which the Jews created their spiritual legacy.

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30 Šušnjić, Đuro. *Religija I (Religion I)*, p. 435.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 451.

32 See: Schussler Fiorenza, Elizabeth. *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology*, Orbis Books, New York, 1996. p. xxvi-xxxv.

33 Swidler, Leonard and Mojzes, Paul. p. 8.

**The Torah** (Hebrew: teaching, instruction, law) – the *Holy Book* considered by Jews to be the revealed Word of God. It was revealed to Moses on the Mount Sinai and it contains five books (*Pentateuch*): *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*.

However, the integral **Jewish Bible** (*TaNaKH*)<sup>34</sup> contains also the *Prophets* (*Nevi'im*) and the *Writings* (*Ketuvim*) which Christians adopted under the name of the *Old Testament*, complementing it with the *New Testament* (the *Gospel*). Maimonides considers “the Torah as a rationalizing force warring against superstition, imagination, appetite and idolatry.”<sup>35</sup>

Along with the Hebrew Bible, the following sources are also very important for the Jewish tradition:

**Talmud** – stories, laws, medicine, moral dilemmas discussions and other issues. It has two parts – the commentary - the *Mishnah* and commentaries on the *Mishnah* (*Gemara*). There are two *Talmuds*: Jerusalem (400 CE) and Babylon (500 CE)

The **Mishnah** – was compiled around 200 CE, and it contains 6 “orders” where oral tradition is recorded.

**The Gemara** – contains commentaries of rabbis from 200 to 500 CE, which are interpretations of the *Mishnah* in light of historical, religious, legal, sociological and other arguments.

Jewish law, path and the way of life are called **Halakha**. Jewish authorities were shaping it through centuries’ long process. Therefore **Halakha** cannot be considered a compendium of uniformed rules but a path paved with efforts and understanding of numerous rabbinic authorities who incorporated in the Law their own experience and wisdom of the time in which they lived. Hence, this makes it an unfinished job, since believers are obliged to have an active relationship towards the Biblical text and to contribute to easier and more efficient application of the Gods message through their own understanding (*Midrash*).

Explanations, commentaries and interpretations of the *Bible* are in the Jewish tradition called *Midrash* – from Hebrew word *darash* – seek, ask.<sup>36</sup> The *Torah*, as primary source represents “Wisdom or a life-giving tree, the source of happiness for all who hold on to her” (*Proverbs*, 3:18). To be alive and lively does not mean to

34 **TaNaKH** is an acronym formed from initial Hebrew letters: **Ta** from the *Torah* (*Pentateuch*), **Na** from *Nevi'im* (“Prophets”: Joshua, Judges, Samuel (2), Kings (2), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi..) and **KH** from *Ketuvim* (“Writings”: including *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Job*, *Song of Songs*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Ruth*, *Esther*, *Daniel*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Chronicles*).

35 Neusner, Jacob and Alan J, Avery-Peck. *Judaism*, Blackwell Publishers, 2001, p. 165-166.

36 There are two types of *Midrash*: legal, with commentaries of legal texts and practice, and homiletic, not of legal nature. Opposed to the *Talmud* representing commentary of the commentary of *Mishna*, *Midrash* is direct commentary of the Biblical text.

remain isolated within one's own circle but to leave space for the growth of new sprouts and space for new interpretations and understanding of God's messages. The *Torah* contains stories about the origin and life of the Jews, their laws and moral teachings, but it also speaks about obligations and relation between man and woman.

Jewish teaching is based on the belief in one God whose name is not pronounced since it is believed that human beings are not worthy of pronouncing the name of their Creator. When Moses asked Him what he should tell his people when they ask him what the name of the God that is revealing Himself to them is, God told him:

**"I am the eternal God. So tell them (People of Israel) that the Lord whose name is "I Am," has sent you. This is my name forever, and it is the name that people must use from now on....the God who was worshiped by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Exodus, 3:15)**

In the *Torah* the Lord (Yahweh) explains himself as the God asking people not to worship other gods but him, not to attribute any image to him; he says that he is jealous and that he punishes, but more so forgives to the ones who love him (*Exodus*, 20:4-7). He demands from them to love Him with all their beings by following His law in their lives. Moses brought to Jews the Ten Commandments (*Decalogue*), revealed to him on the Mount Sinai. Jews are not the only ones following these Commandments, Christians and Muslims follow them too. These Ten Commandments represent a frame of moral and ethical norms (*Halakha*). Rituals and prayers represent an important part of the Jewish tradition and they are present from the birth of the child - through the act of circumcision (*Brit milah*) for men symbolizing welcoming in the covenant and ritual readiness,<sup>37</sup> - till the death when ritual and prayer bid farewell to the soul of the believer. Prayer is performed three times a day: in the morning, noon and evening, with obligatory blessings and thanks to God. Men are obliged to go to the synagogue, and women are allowed to do their prayers at home but they are in principle excused from this obligation. Women are excused from some obligations related to precisely determined time, e.g. prayer. Out of total 613 commandments from the *Torah*, men and women are obliged to respect 365 negative commandments (prohibitions), while only men are obliged to respect 248 positive commandments (orders).

One of explanations for this, which can be found in classical commentaries of the *Torah* as well as in contemporary rabbinical interpretations, is:

Obligations of a man in family and society, most of the time, allow for planning; can be adapted, can be postponed and are not intensive and continuous – there-

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37 Cvitković, Ivan. *Religije suvremenog svijeta (Religions of the Contemporary World)*, 2nd edition, DES, Sarajevo, 2002, p. 156.



fore it can be required from a man to dedicate himself to metaphysical reality at a precisely determined timing. At the same time, raising children – a task intended for a woman – is most intensive and continuous imaginable human engagement, the continuity of which cannot be ensured by any type of legislative act since neither the fear from punishment nor promise of any rewards can be a motivation for acceptance of such task.<sup>38</sup>

This represents customary positioning of male-female roles, and is well rooted in already well known division of male/culture, female/nature, which is, again, interwoven and connected to Biblical story about the creation of man and woman that will be mentioned in the following chapter since it represents the source and frame encompassing the entire history of (inter)gender relations, not only in Jewish tradition but also generally in today's modern contexts of understanding of these relations.

### 1.3.2. Christianity

Christianity also represents the Path and the Way of Life, since during the first years of Christianity Jesus' followers did not call themselves Christians but the *Followers of the Way* (Greek: *hodos*), as it is written in the Greek version of the New Testament (*Acts*, 9:2, 19:9, 23, 22:4, 24:14, 22).<sup>39</sup> Jesus brings the same message as previous Messengers, demanding belief in one God, merciful, loving and forgiving, requiring justice and forgiveness. God who will one day create *God's Kingdom* on Earth. The fundamental principle of Christianity is acknowledging faith in one God, Father, Jesus Christ, His Son and the Holy Spirit – Holy Trinity. Jesus has two natures: divine and human, therefore he is considered unique. Jesus resurrected after the crucifixion and Christians are waiting for his return when the *Kingdom of God* will be established on Earth.<sup>40</sup> Also, Christians believe the immortality of the soul, the afterlife and answering before God – who rewards the good, and punishes the evil. Humans can come closer to God through good deeds, prayers and fasting. Prayers are performed in church, but also at home, with the Sunday mass being obligatory. Along with Sunday, masses are celebrated everyday and also during Christian holidays. Christians accepted Jewish *Sacred texts*, known as the *Old Testament*, although it is more correct to use the term the *Hebrew Bible* in order to avoid the implication that these earlier sacred texts have lesser value or are even derogated by the arrival of these new *Sacred texts*.

38 Papo, Eliezer. *Judaizam i ljudska prava (Judaism and Human Rights)*, Pravni centar/ Law Center, Sarajevo, 1998, p. 73.

39 Swidler, Leonard and Mojzes, Paul. *The Study of Religion in the Age of Global Dialogue*, p. 9.

40 France, Richard. *Isus, u Religije svijeta: Enciklopedijski priručnik (Jesus in Religions of the World: Encyclopedic Manual)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1987, p. 340-346.



**The Holy Scripture or the Bible** is a book comprised out of 46 books of the *Hebrew Bible* according to Catholic classification, or 39 books of the *Hebrew Bible* according to Protestant classification and 27 books of the *New Testament*. The relation between these two is complementary, since the Jewish texts are prior to others and are preparing humans for the arrival of new texts which have the same essential monotheistic message and moral principles (compare with Celestin Tomić, *Pristup Bibliji (Approach to the Bible)*, Provincijalat franjevacica konventualaca/Conventual Franciscan Provincialate, Zagreb, 1986, p. 13-14)

**Gospel** is considered to be the revelation from God, which Jesus' disciples (the Apostles) preached; and later their followers - according to inspiration and oral traditions - wrote down. In the period from 50 to 95 CE several Gospels were written, but only four were canonized: Mathew, Luke, John and Mark. Writers of the New Testament texts were Jews and therefore the books were originally written in Aramaic, but they reached us in Greek, one of the official languages of the Roman Empire.<sup>41</sup>

**Acts of the Apostles** - along with the *Gospels*, the *New Testament* contains the *Acts of the Apostles* as well, which together with the *Gospel of Luke* represent a composite work which mostly speaks about first thirty years or the Christian community.<sup>42</sup> The *Acts* also have apologetic tendency since they explicate Christianity principally with the reports on conversions.<sup>43</sup>

Paul's and other epistles- Paul was a grand missionary. From Jesus' persecutor he became most celebrated ambassador of Christianity. Fourteen epistles in the *New Testament* are attributed to him (*Romans, two to Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, two to Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus and Hebrews*). Along with *Paul's epistles*, the *New Testament* also contains "eight epistles of different missionaries and early Christian leaders, and **Revelation to John**, visionary act added in the form of apocalyptic literature."<sup>44</sup>

Compilation of these different texts represents the *New Testament*, which together with 46 in Catholic and 39 in Orthodox tradition accepted Jewish texts, represent the *Bible* (Greek: *biblia* - paper, scroll).

All Christians accept the *Bible* as the Word of God. Still, in practical application and in its messages there is difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant Church. Namely, Roman Catholic Church believes that the *Bible* is divinely inspired, but that church authorities and the clergy have a special role in interpretation of Bib-

41 France, Richard. *Biblija, u Religije svijeta: Enciklopedijski priručnik, (Bible in Religions of the World: Encyclopedic Manual)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1987, p. 368.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 368.

43 *Biblija, Stari i Novi zavjet (Bible, Old and New Testament)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2000, p. 1243.

44 France, Richard. *Biblija, u Religije svijeta: Enciklopedijski priručnik, (Bible in Religions of the World: Encyclopedic Manual)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1987, p. 368.

lical messages which are obligatory for all Catholics. Protestant churches, on the other hand, give priority to the authority of the Word of God and not to church leadership and authorities.<sup>45</sup>

Christianity, unlike Judaism and Islam, does not accept the Law as an external form of action, but as action of *the Holy Spirit* in human beings. In this way, "God through Christ made the New Covenant by pouring *the Holy Spirit* on humans."<sup>46</sup> With Jesus' coming, the earlier Jewish ritual law practice defining the way in which God is worshiped is transformed. Due to this it is said that Christianity abandoned the practice of temple worship and the understanding that by application of the Law (Saturday observation, Passover, animal sacrifice, circumcision, kosher food etc.) one could reach salvation. Instead of this, new forms of worshiping were adopted, and the heart of it is the baptism – representing the purification from sin and acceptance of *God's Spirit*, dedication to God and joining God's people and *Lord's Supper*, i.e. the Eucharist symbolizing the ritual of the last supper of Jesus and his apostles with bread and vine representing Jesus' spilt blood; spilt for salvation of humans and purification from sin which consequently implies creation of a new covenant between God and His community.

Since there are no more Laws regulating rituals and relations between people, and instead there are ethical messages from the *Decalogue* and Jesus' message of love, forgiveness and salvation through faith and good deeds, thus there are no special legal regulations about participation of women in life and rituals of this new community. Women are also baptized, they receive sacraments, participate in the Eucharist and other prayers and the life of the community.

### 1.3.3. Islam

Religious tradition in Islam, along the previous two, Judaism and Christianity, contains rich cultural and historical legacy. Therefore, it is impossible to speak about monolith tradition and its expression, but about an entire set of images and messages that for centuries testified about One and Almighty God - Allah. Origins of Islam are historically positioned in the 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabian Peninsula, in Mecca, at that time a trading centre. Today Mecca represents the spiritual centre and meeting place for Muslims from all over the world since in their daily prayers believers turn their faces toward the Ka'ba – God's house – which according to tradition was built by

45 *Ibid.*, p. 370-371.

46 Rebić, Adalbert. *Pojam i uloga zakona u Bibliji (Notion and Role of the Law in the Bible)*, Bogoslovska smotra, No. 2-3, Katolički bogoslovski fakultet u Zagrebu/Catholic Theological Faculty in Zagreb, 1984, p. 213.

Ibrahim p.b.u.h.<sup>47</sup> and Ismail p.b.u.h. (Abraham and Ishmael). The essence of the Islamic teaching is belief in God's Oneness (*Tawhid*); not ascribing companions to God nor making any statues or images of Him. The faith is testified through these six principles:

- 1) belief in God,
- 2) belief in spiritual beings (*malaikah/angels*),
- 3) belief in revealed Scriptures,
- 4) belief in previous prophets,
- 5) belief in the Judgment day,
- 6) belief in destiny (*kader*): i.e. that everything happens with Divine decree.

Along with this, external manifestation of the faith is confirmed by belief in God and His prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h, prayer (*salat*), fasting, obligatory charity (*zakat*), and pilgrimage to the Ka'ba in Mecca (the *Hajj*). All these obligations are equally obligatory for women and men. Islam is the religion of the Book, but along with the *Revealed scripture* there are other sources without which it would be hard to understand the messages and the essence of religion. Therefore, I will briefly speak about the fundamental sources of Islam which serve as a basis for *modus vivendi* of Muslims.

**The Qur'an** – Islamic tradition belongs to the family of revealed religions, and is based on the Word of God, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. through the *malak* (angel) Jibril (Gabriel). The period of revelation lasted for 23 years. The book is called the *Qur'an* (Arabic: *qara'a-yaqra'u* – read, recite). Muslims believe that the *Qur'an* is authentic and nonreplicable Word of God, that came to human beings as a confirmation of previous *Revelations: Tawrat (the Torah), Zabur (the Psalms) and Injil (the Gospel)*, as well as the previous prophets which the Almighty God sent to each People as a warning, a guidance and the light to follow. During the life of the Prophet it was written down on pieces of skin, and after that collected in a collection (*mushaf*) in order to be preserved in the original form and be available to people for learning and studying.

The *Qur'an* has 114 chapters (*surah*) and 666 verses (*ayah*) which contain wisdoms, messages, ethical norms and regulations which are supposed to be guidelines for lives of believers. The *Qur'an*, therefore, is not a collection of regulations or readymade solutions which can be directly applied, but it is a moral guide which "should arouse awareness in human beings about multifold relations with God and universe."<sup>48</sup>

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47 peace be upon him

48 Ikbal, Muhamed. *Obnova vjerske misli u islamu (The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam)*, translated by Mehmed Arapčić, Islamic Community of Socialist Republic BiH, Sarajevo, 1979, p. 18.

**The *Hadith*** – teaching, tradition or saying about things which the Prophet spoke, did or approved of, and was recorded after his life based on the testimonies of the first and second generation of Muslims. In 9<sup>th</sup> century (2<sup>nd</sup> century Hijra) these sayings were gathered from the whole Muslim world, and based on that 6 canonical collections of the ahadith<sup>49</sup> were codified. These are considered truthful and authentic.<sup>50</sup> After this, other collections were also made, but they did not gain the same authority as these 6 ahadith collections. *The hadith* is very important for the understanding of the *Qur'an*, since only small number of rules is explained in details in the *Qur'an*, while other rules were explained by Muhammad p.b.u.h. through his practice. Muslims, nevertheless - depending on their legal and theological school - disagree about the way how the validity of hadith is proven. So even today there are discussion about a certain saying being authentic or not, even though it is present in these six canonical ahadith collections, and there are also discussions about the right understanding of the saying which several sources confirm to be authentic (*sahih*) when taking into consideration the social and historical, cultural and political context in which the Prophet lived and in which his sayings were collected and codified.

***Ijma*** – third important source of religion is *ijma* or agreement of religious authorities of the community (the *Ummah*) on certain issue. Since such agreement was not confirmed by decisions of some body, from time to time it was tested among the people in order to solve certain critical points in religious rules. Still the issue of the agreement remains open since it is questionable whose agreement is here spoken about – Prophet's companions (*sahabah*), or Medina scholars, or some other school.<sup>51</sup>

***Ijtihad*** – forth source of religion represents individual effort in formulation of a solution or opinion in relation to an issue, of whether legal or theological nature. Considering the fact that Islam insists on individual rights and responsibilities before God, every person should make an effort – and is invited to do so based on the Prophet's saying: "Every mujtehid (scholar trying to find the right solution) is right" or "every mujtehid will receive a rich reward".<sup>52</sup> In this way, individual effort is encouraged in interpretation as well as in living one's faith according to circumstances and challenges of the given time. Unfortunately, after first four centuries, Islamic thought was encapsulated and closed within the boundaries of legal and theological schools

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49 Plural of hadith

50 Muslims accept the following ahadith collections as canonical and authentic: 1) *Sahih Bukhari* (870), 2) *Sahih Muslim* (875), 3) *Sunan Abi Da'ud* (888), 4) *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* (892), 5) *Sunan al-Sughra* (915) and *Sunan Ibn Maja* (886). These collections are known as *Al Sihah al-Sittah* or six authentic collections of the sayings of the Prophet. See: Nerkez Smailagić, *Leksikon islama (Lexicon of Islam)*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1990, p. 220-224.

51 Smailagić, Nerkez, *Leksikon islama (Lexicon of Islam)*, p. 262.

52 Abou El-Fadl, Khaled: *Islam i izazov demokracije (Islam and Challenges of Democracy)*, translated by Spahić-Siljak, Zilka, Buybook, Sarajevo, 2006. p. 25.

whose opinions are even today perpetuated and most of the time followed uncritically.

**Normative part of Islam** is **the Sharia** – path, way, and law, created by Muslim scholars on the basis of *the Qur'an* and *the hadith* through independent juridical thinking (*ijtihad*) in different forms.

The *Sharia* is a comprehensive, moral and legal system inclined to arrange all aspects of human life, in order to ensure standards and criteria for application of ideas from *God's revelation*.<sup>53</sup>

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53 Safi M. Louay, *Islamsko pravo i društvo, u Šerijatsko pravo u savremenim društvima (Islamic Law and Society in Sharia Law in Contemporary Societies)*, ed. Karčić, Fikret and Karić, Enes, Pravni centar/Law Centre, Fond otvoreno društvo BiH/Open Society Fund BiH, Sarajevo, 1998. p. 57-58.



## 2. WOMEN IN JEWISH TRADITION'S LEGACY

When reading Biblical text, and especially five books of Moses, it becomes clear to us that there is a polarized image of woman and of her place in the Jewish society. Universal principles of gender equality are put aside, and the primary role and content of the Law incorporate the matrix of patriarchal culture with clearly established hierarchy and power relations. The overall Jewish heritage was produced by dominantly masculine elite, headed by religious authorities, whereas every female contribution, and every reflection that would open a possibility of equal participation of women in the community life, was very skillfully concealed by other mightier reflections and paradigms setting and maintaining the man as a norm and focus of all events. In this short outline of issues, relating to gender equality our attention will be directed to traditional perspectives as well as the new ones trying to redefine the role of women in the Jewish community. In the first part, I will briefly elaborate the story about the creation of man and woman and relations stemming from the interpretation of these passages, since they repeatedly occur as a frame and basis for understanding of gender policies in majority of world cultures.

### 2.1. Creation of Man and Woman

The story of creation of Adam and Eve is one of the most famous and oldest stories; this story shaped the relations between men and women, relations in the family life and the public sphere. It has been retold in the family environment, in schools, at scientific gatherings of rabbis and teachers of faith and law; and it remains a never-ending inspiration for painters, poets, writers and other artists. Each generation added its own touch to this Biblical story, adding the elements of their culture and customs, so that today we can approach it from different angles, trying to recognize what is the essential message of God's word contained in these passages. No other story did have such an influence on inter-gender relations as the story from *Genesis* about the creation of Adam and Eve. Still today, it lives in cultures and customs of many nations, sometimes intentionally integrated into the value system, and sometimes unintentionally transferred as a value on its own. A value so dominant, that even the burden of historical changes was not strong enough to challenge it.

In the *Torah*, in *Genesis* we find two stories about the creation of the first man and woman.

**The first story** is of egalitarian character; it speaks about the creation of unnamed human beings, a man and a woman, who equally received God's blessings of being the rulers of everything that was created around them: **"So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women".**<sup>54</sup> (*Genesis*, 1:27)

**The second story** is hierarchical<sup>55</sup> and it explains in more details the way in which the two were created:

**„The Lord God said, “It isn't good for the man to live alone. I need to make a suitable partner for him”... So the Lord God made him fall into a deep sleep, and he took out one of the man's ribs. Then after closing the man's side, the Lord made a woman out of the rib. The Lord God brought her to the man, and the man exclaimed,**

**“Here is someone like me! She is part of my body, my own flesh and bones. She came from me, a man. So I will name her Woman!”(II:18-23)**

Traditional commentators unanimously interpret this story as hierarchically founded, thus producing inequality and submission of woman to man, while other authors consider that the leadership of man does not exclude equality of the two and their joint action.<sup>56</sup>

### **2.1.1. Rabbinical Interpretations (Midrash) about Creation of Man and Woman**

Rabbinical exegetical tradition elaborated the creation passages from the early period of Judaism, through the Middle Ages, as well as during reformation in 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Jewish thought opened its windows to challenges deriving from the historical context. The image of Eve i.e. the Jewish woman, gained new colors and characteristics throughout the centuries, but the peak of pejorative contents is found in the Middle Ages rabbinical interpretations, which are very well correspondent to the interpretative efforts of Christian and Muslim thinkers of that age. Still, there are opinions that andocentric and patriarchal rabbinical interpretations were developed under a strong influence of Greek and Hellenistic philosophical and

54 *The Bible – The Old and New Testament*, Contemporary English Version. 1999; [www.biblija.net](http://www.biblija.net).

55 Clines, David. *What does Eve Do to Help? and Readerly Questions in the old Testament*, Journal for Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series, 94, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990, p. 38-41.

56 Mieke, Bal. *Sexuality, Sin and Sorrow: The Emergence of Female Character (Reading of Geneses 1-3)* Poetics Today, 6, 1985, p. 26.



cultural heritage that define woman as less valuable than man and connecting her to nature and animal instincts, and man to civilization and culture.<sup>57</sup>

Rabbinical commentaries from the early period of Judaism concentrated on the issues of consistency and relation between these two passages in *Genesis* and there are numerous interpretations of it:

R. Joshua of Siknin said in R. Levi's name that He (God) considered well from what part to create her. Said He: "I will not create her from (Adam's) head, lest she be swelled-headed; nor from the eye, lest she be a coquette; nor from the ear, lest she be an eavesdropper; nor from the mouth, lest she be a gossip; nor from the heart, lest she be prone to jealousy; nor from the hand, lest she be light-fingered; nor from the foot, lest she be a gadabout; but from the modest part of man for even when he stands naked, that part is covered". And when He created each limb He ordered her: "Be a modest woman".<sup>58</sup>

Such interpretations represent the roots of andocentric and misogynous commentaries and attitudes toward woman, her nature, capabilities and values. Therefore it is no surprise that during the later exegetical tradition such images are deepened through very explicitly defined characteristics associated with women, and which evidently have negative connotations. For example in the Middle Ages' commentaries about the creation of man and woman, hierarchical gender relations were promoted. Rashi – one of major Jewish commentators from the Middle Ages, interpreted the verse 2:8 "subdue" in the meaning "subdue her (woman) and that male have controls over females and that his nature to master is given by Divine".<sup>59</sup> However, Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman (Nahmanides), famous Talmudist from 12<sup>th</sup> century claimed "that woman's subordination to men was not part of the created order, but a result of woman's disobedience".<sup>60</sup> It is important to underscore the fact that rabbinical interpretive legacy is much different from the sources of the *Hebrew Bible*, since the rabbis developed deeply polarized image of humanity, with clearly marked roles for men and women, highlighting the issues which the Biblical text does not give clear statement about, like for example, issues of sexual attraction which the rabbis defined as very dangerous and irresistible force.

57 Frymer-Kensky, Tykva. *In the Wake of the Goddess: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth*, New York: The Free Press, 1992, p. 203.

58 Freedman, H. and Simon, M. *Genesis Rabbah, 18.2. in Midrash Rabbah*, ed. Vols 1-10, London: Soncino Press, 1939.

59 Kwam, Scheuring and V. H. Ziegler. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, Indiana University Press, 1999, p. 208-9.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 212-213.

### 2.1.2. Eve's Curse

The story on which the curse of Eve and her progeny is based is in the third chapter of *Genesis* and this also symbolizes the "original sin concept" which made man i.e. the mankind lose the place in Heaven. The attitudes that a woman should not come close to a leading position in a community, decision-making position, spiritual scholarship and leadership are clearly articulated in rabbinical literature. Based on Biblical passages about the creation and life in Eden, rabbinical tradition developed its argumentation about gender dichotomy and exclusion of women from the sphere of public life and decision making. Due to the act of creation a woman has a weaker complexion, and emotional and intellectual strength. On these premises a woman is given inferior status and negative characteristics that are allegedly related to her nature. So, for example the Jewish law claims that "man has advantage over woman" (*Mishna, Horayot*, 3:7), which is derived from her nature and origin (the rib): "A rib was taken from Adam and he was given a handmaiden to serve him. (*Sanhedrin*, 39b)."<sup>61</sup> This approach of a man's superiority and woman's inferiority - master and servant relation - can be best seen in the terminology describing men in exegetical rabbinical tradition, based on Biblical text which says: **"Then the Lord said to the woman, You will suffer terribly when you give birth. But you will still desire your husband, and he will rule over you."** (III:16)

The last part of this passage: "He will rule over you" depicts the character of inter-gender relations in which man, according to the interpretations of the law from that time, is invited to maintain the superior position over a woman. This is confirmed by notions of male roles: "husband" (*ba'al*), "sir" (*adon*), "mister" (*mar*), "man" (*gever*).<sup>62</sup> Limitations set for women in rabbinical tradition are referred in *Genesis* 3, where a woman becomes the guilty one for all problems happening to her, but also to mankind, since she is to be blamed for Adam's disobedience and so she brought sin and animosity between them (*Genesis*, 3:1-16). The roots of exclusion of women from public, political, religious and cultural life of the community are traced back to these passages about the original sin and Eve's guilt, and they were used and still are used as a basis for wife's submission to a husband and reduction of her role exclusively to family and marriage life. In relation to this, we find different explanations for such positioning of a woman, which in literature are summarized as 10 reasons for which Eve is cursed:

The first is menstruation, when she is driven from her house and banned from her husband. The second is that she gives birth after nine months. The third is that she nurses for two years. The fourth is that her husband rules over her. The fifth is

61 Elior, Rachel. *Men, Women, Gender, Judaism and Democracy*, Urim Publication, Jerusalem, 2004, p. 83.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

that he is jealous of her if she speaks with any other man. The sixth is that she ages quickly. The seventh is that she ceases to give birth while man never ceases being able to beget children. The eighth is that she stays in the house and does not show herself in public like man. The ninth is that when she goes out to the marketplace her head has to be covered like a mourner. That is why women precede the bier, saying: "We have brought death upon all the inhabitants of the world." The tenth is if she was upright, her husband buries her. For we find that this was the case with our ancestors, our father Abraham buried Sarah our mother. Isaac buried Rebecca our mother. Jacob buried Rachel and Leah.<sup>63</sup>

Female function of motherhood, birth giving and biological characteristics related to it (e.g. menstruation), instead of being respected as a gift from God, in andocentric interpretations are considered a defect, curse and an obstacle to a complete human, mostly understood as male, nature. The obligation of a woman to remain in the house, and when going out to cover her head as if being in grief, is there due to the guilt which she feels because of the original sin, as it was described by certain Talmudic authorities (*Isaiah*, 3:17 and *Berakhot*, 24a).<sup>64</sup> The issue of female body, through the obligation of hair covering outside of the house, is closely connected to the issue of family and community moral represented as women's obligation. She, her hair, voice and appearance are attractive and represent challenge for men,<sup>65</sup> whereas the obligation and responsibility of a man in this regard are not even mentioned. Another hierarchical interpretation of the origin of Adam and Eve is found in the explanation of why are women obliged to light the candle and ketoret on Shabbat. Famous commentator Rashi says: "since it was a woman who was the cause of man's downfall (Eve when tempted by the snake), causing the light of the world to be dimmed, it is a woman's obligation to light the candles and bring back light."<sup>66</sup> Such opinions greatly shaped the ideas of people about a woman being, due to the sin she committed, obliged to perform certain rituals and tasks. Also, family life was considered as a most elevated obligation a woman can have. Therefore, her role and dedication to the family represent the most important task and most honorable obligation incomparable to other obligations.

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63 Baskin, Judith R. *Midrashic Women: Formation of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature*, Brandeis University Press, 2002, p. 78.

64 Kwam E. at all. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, p. 374.

65 Rabbi Jehuda Yenkin, *Responsa on Contemporary Jewish Women's issues*, KTAV Publishing House, New Jersey, 2003, p. 131-148.

66 Kwam E. at all. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, p. 374.

### 2.1.3. Egalitarian Concept of the Creation of Adam and Eve

In feminist critique of andocentric theology, there are different opinions, but majority of them are trying to demonstrate that the first story about creation from the "Elohistic period", is crucial for egalitarian vision of gender relations, whereas the second Biblical passage on creation serves as justification of male supremacy and secondary position of the female. Phyllis Tribble explains that the term '*adam*' is generic and implies a being comprising male and female gender, according to the Biblical sentence: **"He made men and women" (Genesis, 1:27)**. If we take into account the second story about creation, in which God released a dream on the man and then created the woman, it is clear that the man did not participate in the creation of the woman, but that it was only God's act. Later on, she has changed her position concerning the meaning of the word *ha-adam* (Genesis 2:7) which "does not carry a male, generic or androgynous meaning, but sexually undifferentiated creature, neither male nor female, nor combination of the two."<sup>67</sup>

Other authors highlight the social context in which Biblical passages are read. So, for example God's words to Eve: "And he will rule over you..." (Genesis, 3:16). This verse in today's context cannot be understood as a model for marital happiness, but rather as an evil that should be overcome.<sup>68</sup> Judith Baskin thinks that it is possible to read Jewish canonical texts in new ways and "against the grain" so to be able to extract the truth about women "struggling within and against patriarchal culture". It is important having in mind that androcentrism is an inherent feature of the classical texts of Rabbinic tradition which "constitute women as objects of male agency, rather than subjects of their own lives."<sup>69</sup> She quotes examples from Talmud which portray creation of man and woman as simultaneous and equally in the image of God, aiming to resolve contradictions of the two creation stories:

R. Jeremiah b. Leazar has reported that God created the first adam, with both male and female sexual organ, while R. Schmuel bar Nahman said that He created him with two faces, then split him and made him two backs as the Biblical verse suggests: "You have formed me before and behind". (Psalm, 139:5)

Although these two examples confirm that the first human being was androgynous creature and only when man and woman are united we have true *adam*, there is still unattributed objection to the text of Genesis 2:21 and the creation of woman

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 440.

<sup>68</sup> Ross, Tamar. *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism*, Brandeis University Press, 2004. p. 174.

<sup>69</sup> Baskin, Judith. *Rabbinic Judaism and the Creation of Woman in Judaism since Gender*, Ed. Peskovitz & Lewit, Routledge, New York–London, 1997, p. 125-126.

from man, concludes Baskin.<sup>70</sup> In order to understand God's word it is extremely important to reread the *Sacred texts* in this regard and redefine inter-gender relations.

## 2.2. Concept of Gender Relations in Jewish Tradition

In this short review of the issue of gender equality my attention will be focused on new interpretations trying to redefine the role of the woman in the Jewish discourse based on the Biblical text and historical persons which through their engagement managed to step out of the given limitations of a dichotomized society, and show that woman and man are equal before God and that there are no obstacles for equal participation of women in all segments of life. Although women in the Jewish tradition were pushed to the margins of the society, with no possibility to be educated, inherit property and participate in religious and political life of the community, this does not mean that in the very sources of religion there are no bases for egalitarian concept of the relations between the sexes, and that there were no women who found their ways to step out of these given frames. Through critical review of education, inheritance, participation in the worship life of the synagogue and political engagement my intention is to show that behind the heavy curtains of andocentric interpretations, the Biblical text offers the basis on which it is possible to reconstruct the concept of gender equality through methods of inclusive reading and understanding of the *Sacred text* which equally includes women and men.<sup>71</sup>

### 2.2.1. Woman and Education in Jewish Tradition

Education is very important in the life of every man and woman since it teaches us how to develop our intellectual, spiritual capacities and attributes which make us similar to God and how to use them for the benefit of individuals and community. Still in Jewish, and in many other traditions and cultures, women did not have a privilege to get education and demonstrate their intellectual strength as men. In dominantly male patriarchal culture, women were suppressed to remain within the frame of family and marriage, denied participation in intellectual processes of development of religious thought and establishment of religious practice. Such constella-

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128-129.

<sup>71</sup> Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka. *Važnost gender perspektive u religijskom diskursu (Importance of Gender Perspective in Religious Discourse)*, Religiologija u planu i programu nastave državnih univerziteta u 21. stoljeću (Religiology in Curricula of State Universities in 21st century), International symposium, University of Sarajevo; 18 and 19 March, 2005, p. 11.

tion of relations was established by the religious authorities in the early period of Judaism, which later integrated also the values of Greek and Hellenistic culture which additionally strongly empowered gender-dichotomized image of the society.

Interpretative Jewish tradition maintained andocentric course in defining dynamics of gender relations, excluding women from the process of education.<sup>72</sup> Common places in Jewish religious sources completely excluded women from the educational process: **"May the words of Torah be burnt rather than given to women. (JT, Sotah, 3,4)."** In *Talmud* we find the following statement: **"May the man whose wife and children pray at the table instead of him be cursed"**. (6 Tosephta, Ber. 7:18; *Talmud*, pBer. 13b; bMen. 43b). When answering the question of why women did not study the *Torah* and other sources of the faith - even if along with the mentioned statements there were examples which encouraged that but it still did not come into life - famous Jewish author Blu Greenberg says:

Because direct access to learning is the key to religious leadership in the traditional Jewish community. Without it, there is no way a woman can qualify as a scholar, a halakhic decision maker, or a rabbi.<sup>73</sup>

Education is, therefore, a precondition for dignified and moral life, and a man or a woman could not be considered moral if his/her virtues do not stem from reason; Meri Wollstonecraft used to say this when criticizing Rousseau who considered this to be the privilege of men only.<sup>74</sup> Such and similar opinions are the product of patriarchal heritage, and the woman did not manage to step out of the frame of the original sin - source of evil and death, challenge for men – and become a partner, and not an opponent to be kept under control.

In returning to Biblical text, we can further study its message and see how that message has been transferred into the social and historical context of the Jewish society through exegetical efforts of the intellectual community:

**Memorize these laws and think about them. Write down copies and tie them to your wrists and your foreheads to help you obey them.**

**Teach them to your sons (children). Talk about them all the time — whether you're at home or walking along the road or going to bed at night, or getting up in the morning.**

**Write them on the door frames of your homes and on your town gates.**

**Then you and your descendants will live a long time in the land that the Lord promised your ancestors. Your families will live there as long as the sky is above the earth. (Deuteronomy, 11:18-21)**

72 Blair Kaiser, Robert. *Drive Pressed for Ordaining Female Rabbis*, The New York Times, March 23, 1980, p. 40.

73 Greenberg, Blu. *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition*, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981. p. 47-8.

74 Woolstonecraft, Mary. *Obrana ženskih prava (A Vindication of the Rights of the Woman)*, Croatian translation by Marina Laustek, Ženska infoteka, Zagreb, 1999, p. 28-30.

Is this part of *Deuteronomy* related only to sons, i.e. men, or could this order in contemporary world of human rights and “universalist and globalist” interpretations of *The Sacred Texts*<sup>75</sup> be read and understood as equally including daughters as well? Certainly, such reading and understandings marked previous two centuries of the Jewish thought; but they also have their roots in the rabbinical tradition which was divided around this issue. One side considers that the study of the *Torah* is prohibited to women: **“He who teaches his daughter Torah, it is as he has taught her nonsense or indecency.”** (*Mishnah, Sota, 3:4*)<sup>76</sup>; others think that the study of the *Torah* is allowed but that the woman does not receive the same reward as a man since it is not an obligation for her (Moshe ben Maimon);<sup>77</sup> and the third side thinks that a woman can and should study the *Torah* in order to be able to apply the Law and be a responsible community member.<sup>78</sup> The opinion of one of the most famous Jewish authorities from the Middle Ages, Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides) is interesting since he gives two opposing attitudes on education of women. One obliging women to study the *Talmud* and *Gemara* related to the five commandments (*pardes*)<sup>79</sup>, and the second denying them the right to study oral and written *Torah*, and even if they do so, they do not receive the same reward as men. How can one then reconcile these two opinions of his? Maybe the solution is, as Rabbi Soloveichik elaborated, that that in Judaism there is not “one massorah and one massorah community”, but “two massorot, two traditions, two communities, two *shalshelot ha-kabbalah* the massorah community of the fathers and that of the mothers”. Allusions to these two communities are found by Rabbi Soloveitchik in Exodus 19:13: “Thus shall thou say to the house of Jacob [the women] and tell to the children of Israel [the men]”; and in Proverbs 1:8 “Hear my son the instruction of thy father [*mussar avikha*] and forsake not the teaching of thy mother [*torat immekha*].”

If we agree to such an understanding of contradictory opinions of Maimonides, again we fall in the dichotomy that intellect and reason equal man, and feelings and intuition equal woman, thus supporting the patriarchal hierarchical concept.

Most famous example, cited as justification for exclusion of women from the educational process is the case of Rachel a wife of Rabbi Akiva. Despite of her aristocratic origin and wealth she married a shepherd Akiva because of his promise to go

75 Oršolić, Marko. *Zlodusima unatoč (Despite Evil Spirits)*, Newspapers interviews 1988-2002, IMIC-Adamić, Sarajevo-Rijeka, 2003, p. 292.

76 Rosental, Leah. *The Dangerous of Beit Midrash*, in *The Pardes Readers*, Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 78.

77 Moshe ben Maimonides said: “A woman who has studied Torah has a reward, but it is not like the reward of a man. For she was not commanded to do it.” See: Warren Zev Harvey, *The Obligation of Talmud on Women According to Maimonides*, <http://www.lookstein.org/articles/harvey.htm>

78 Greenberg, Blu. *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition*, p. 39-55.

79 The five commandments – *Pardes* – according to Maimonides are referring to physical and meta-physical reality, intellectual contemplation of creation and Creator, which means: to know God, not to entertain thoughts of other gods, to know God's Unity, to love God, and to fear Him. See: Warren Z. Harvey, *Ibid*.



to study Torah. She was abandoned by her parents and as Biale explained she spent in "living widowhood" twenty four years waiting for her husband to come back home and to acquire her former status of a married woman.<sup>80</sup> Based on this story it is possible to conclude that a man deserves his reward for Paradise by studying the *Torah*, and a woman by sending her sons to synagogue to study and helping her husband to become a rabbi. Such attitudes about complete subordination of herself, her own personality, capacity and, in the end, wishes, for centuries kept Jewish women away from studying, education, and consequently away from any engagement in public life of the community.

Nevertheless, all women did not subject themselves to such gender policy. It is still possible to find examples of women from aristocratic families, educated, especially rabbinical families, who did not only study the *Torah* and the *Talmud* but also taught others. One such example is found in Baghdad in twelve century where daughter of Samuel ben Ali, the leader of Jewish community gives instructions in Scripture to young men through the window.<sup>81</sup> Further on, based on legal decisions offered by rabbinical authorities it is evident that women were not allowed to teach others and to open schools. Moshe ben Maimon in his legal decision allowed for a woman abandoned by her husband (*agunah*) to open a school together with her older son since such women were able to manage their affairs independently. But, when her husband reappeared, insisting for her to come back home, since it was against her dignity and he wanted a wife to take care of him in the house, Maimon answered: "She will have disposition over herself. She may teach what she likes, and do what she likes. If she stays with her husband he has the right to forbid her to teach."<sup>82</sup>

According to Jewish law, adult daughters, widows and divorcees are considered independent in all their decision but in their responsibility before the law;<sup>83</sup> so their rights and possibilities are more flexible than the ones of other women. Highlighting the role of the woman in marriage and family – when a female child was born the blessing for her was: "May her grow up, get married and give birth to children." – which excluded women from education and study of the *Torah* and *Talmud* due to the fear that the honor of woman could be compromised, or a woman could

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80 Biale, Rachel. *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women Issues in Halakhic Sources*, Schocken Book, New York, 1984, p. 39-41.

81 Baskin, R. Judith. *Jewish Women: Historical Perspective*, Wayne State University Press, 1991, p. 101.

82 *Ibid.*, 101.

83 Jewish law recognized the category of "adult daughter" (*bogeret*), aged 12 and a half and a day. At this age (12 and a half) she is obliged to apply the *Torah* obligations, but she is not yet free. If her father does not give her to marriage in the next 6 months which usually did happen, she becomes independent and can make autonomous decisions. Also, a widow (*yebamah*) without a son also had the same status; but according to the Jewish law, if the husband had a brother she had to marry him, unless he disagrees and relieves her of that duty.



become masculinized. Nevertheless, some rabbinical authorities understood that the family, children, household and the overall community would be at loss if the woman is not educated, so they encouraged it.<sup>84</sup>

The turning point in the Jewish tradition happened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Jewish thought - instigated by the ideas of enlightening and major secularization of societies - started changing the attitude toward this issue. With an aim of finding individual position and identity in these new circumstances, it was important to reconcile the Jewish law (*Halaha*) with the new concept of civil identity, and situate women's rights into the new, secular concept of civil rights, as well as many other issues demanding an active attitude toward individual tradition's legacy. It is exactly in this period that the Jewish tradition underwent major changes and profiling of new orientations. Immigrant population, coming from Europe to America accepted emancipating values of that age articulating them through the reformed orientation of Judaism and egalitarian conception of gender relations. So, for example according to opinion of Haffets Hajim prohibition on the study of the *Torah* that was applied in earlier times cannot be justified today since there are no reasons for it, especially since women were given access to secular education which enables human beings to have critical approach and exclusion of women from the study of the *Torah* therefore would be counterproductive.<sup>85</sup> This attitude supports the efforts of Jewish feminists to, according to these new circumstances, read and apply the Word of God. In the past two centuries Jewish women intensively educated themselves in all fields of science, even studied the *Torah* and *Talmud*, which resulted in a completely new movement of women scientists, writers and commentators of the *Torah* and, finally rabbis.

### 2.2.2. Women and Economic Status in Jewish Law and Practice

One of basic human rights includes also the right to own property and dispose with it. This also serves as a good indicator of the real status of every individual and, very often is used as a basis for all other rights. In order for a person to be able to make independent decisions and independently participate in decision making within a family and society, it is important to have economic and material security guaranteed. In this way the possibility to oppress and subjugate such persons is diminished. Unfortunately women mostly were and still are exposed to such prac-

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84 Such examples are found in all periods of history, and especially in the Middle Ages, like sisters Fioreta, Modena and Diana Rieti in Italy who taught the *Torah*, *Mishna*, *Talmud* and *Kabbalah*. See: Judith R. Baskin, p. 143.

85 M. Silver, Arthur, *May Women Be Taught Bible, Mishna and Talmud?*,

tices since they represent the poorest group within the world's population.<sup>86</sup> Considering the fact that a woman does not have the obligation to perform the positive rules (*mitzvot*) so that she will have more time for child and husband care, the division of proprietary and legal obligations is also made in such a way that everything fits the same frame. So, we find in the *Torah* three obligations which a husband has toward his wife: not to deny her existence, clothing and season (sexual relations).<sup>87</sup> These obligations are mostly found in the traditional form of the marriage contract (*ketubbah*), together with the amount of the matrimonial gift (*mohar*), which should insure necessary means for existence and material security of a woman, in case of divorce.<sup>88</sup> The remaining seven obligations of a husband toward his wife are:

- to cure her in case of illness; to redeem in case of her imprisonment; to bury her in case of death; to remain in his house after his death; to live out of his income; to support their common daughters after his death – until they do not get engaged; to give as inheritance to their common sons – along with the inheritance which they get upon division of the property among them and the sons of father's other women – the amount recorded in her matrimonial contract to be divided among them.<sup>89</sup>

The rights which the husband has from his wife are exclusively of rabbinical origin:

to dispose with her earnings; to dispose with the things she might find; to enjoy dividends from her pre-marriage property; to inherit her property if she dies before him, to have priority in inheritance over all other inheritors.<sup>90</sup>

The *Torah* mentions a blatant example of the exercise of property rights through the story about the daughters of Zelophehad, establishing thus the paradigm for inheritance relations:

**Zelophehad son of Hopher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh son of Joseph was from the Manasseh tribe, and he had five daughters, whose names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.**

**One day his daughters went to the sacred tent, where they met with Moses, Eleazar, and some other leaders of Israel, as well as a large crowd of Israelites. The young women said:**

**You know that our father died in the desert. But it was for something he did wrong, not for joining with Korah in rebelling against the Lord.**

86 Women today own only 1% of the world property and make 70% of the poor population of the world. See Mršćević, Zorica. *Ženska prava u međunarodnom pravu (Women's Rights in International Law)*, Yugoslav Human Rights Committee, Belgrade, 1998, p. 23.

87 Papo, Eliezer. *Judaizam i ljudska prava (Judaism and Human Rights)*, p. 74.

88 Today Orthodox Jews use the traditional form of marital contract (*ketubbah*), which mentions the obligation of the husband, while the *Reformed* and *Reconstructionist* and some *Conservative* orientations of Judaism transformed the content of the *ketubbah*, so that it now has egalitarian character. Mordekai Kaplan and Abraham Joshua Heschel set the methodological basis for transformation of the *ketubbah*.

89 Papo, Eliezer. *Judaizam i ljudska prava (Judaism and Human Rights)*, p. 75

90 *Ibid.*

**Our father left no sons to carry on his family name. But why should his name die out for that reason? Give us some land like the rest of his relatives in our clan, so our father's name can live on.**

**Moses asked the Lord what should be done, and the Lord answered:**

**Zelophehad's daughters are right. They should each be given part of the land their father would have received.**

**Tell the Israelites that when a man dies without a son, his daughter will inherit his land. (Numbers, 27:1-8).**

Therefore it is clear, that in the inheritance law sons have advantage over daughters, which responds to "parental system of inheritance" in which priority in inheritance is given to father's cousins in upward and downward lineage.<sup>91</sup> Rabbi Dayan Grunfeld gives us explicit rules on order of inheritance based on the oral law: 1. sons, 2. their inheritors, 3. daughters, 4. their inheritors, 5. father, 6. brothers, 7. their inheritors, 8. sisters, 9. their inheritors, 10. grandfather, 11. father's brothers, 12. father's sisters, 13. their inheritors.<sup>92</sup> Still, in practice even these rules were not respected due to the fact that a woman was mostly excluded from inheritance or would inherit property in wealthier families if there were no male relatives. This of course changed through history, and a significant transformation in this regard happened in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century within the reform processes of the Jewish thought and law.

### **2.2.2.1. Mohar - Economic Security for Woman**

Economic rights of women in the Jewish tradition are closely linked to their status in the family and marital union. Namely, since the woman until her maturity was under the mentorship of her father and later in marriage these rights were passed to the husband, then her economic status had to be seen through the focus on family and marital life. According to Biblical message: **"Want you and your descendants to have many children..."** (Genesis, 9:7) marriage in the Jewish tradition was considered not only recommended but obligatory for men and women. The way in which marriage was concluded implied a certain procedure mirroring itself in the metaphors of terminology used at that time. The term "delivery" (*kinyan*) of a wife through marital contract (*ketubbah*) remains in usage even today with the Orthodox Jews but it also has a symbolic meaning in the text of *ketubbah*:

"We have followed the legal formality of symbolic delivery (*kinyan*) between the bridegroom and bride, this virgin and we have used a garment legally fit for the

91 F. Radford, Mary. *The Inheritance Rights of Women Under Jewish and Islamic Law*, [http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/law/lwsch/journals/bciclr/23\\_2/01\\_TXT.htm](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/law/lwsch/journals/bciclr/23_2/01_TXT.htm)

92 *Ibid.*

purpose to strengthen all that is stated above.”<sup>93</sup> Although in Hebrew *kinyan* means also “purchasing” of the bridegroom, rabbis still make a distinction between “acquisition” and “purchasing” of the bride in the following way:

“The idea of women being property is un-Jewish”, claims Yakov de Wolf. The fact that a woman is “acquired” (Mishna Kiddushin, 1:1) does not mean that she is property! It should be stressed that a marriage is a fusion of two people into one – a fusion in which the man traditionally plays the active role, because he “lost” the female part of himself in Creation (see Gemara Kiddushin, 2b).<sup>94</sup>

Rachel Biale, also gives us interesting explanations of the rabbinical term *kiddushin*, which according to Gemara texts represents a sacred thing, an object or an item different than other profane things which remains separate from them. In the same way through matrimonial contract a man separates a woman from the whole world and maintains exclusive right to have sexual relations with her.<sup>95</sup> But since the marriage had the central role in the Jewish life, the parents of the bride and the groom were actively included in the making of the marriage contract – which also included financial demands from both sides. By entering into the marriage a woman had her basic existence ensured. Along with this, her husband gave her a matrimonial gift (*mohar*) representing her economic security in case of divorce. On the other hand the wife brings the dowry. The dowry was generally much higher than the matrimonial gift so that sometimes it was hard to marry a daughter due to the huge dowry which her father was supposed to pay. S.D. Goitein gives us a detailed description of everything that could be a part of a dowry, describing every item, material, colors and other characteristics, as well as the value of jewelry and furniture<sup>96</sup>

A woman as a partner in the marriage was contributing to the overall property of this new matrimonial union. And many examples show that wealthier women were supporting their husbands and families from their dowry. The matrimonial contract ensured series of measures to protect the woman. Even along with the customary practice demanding from a woman the acceptance of the patriarchal value system and the husband as a head of the family, there are documents proving that women used their marriage contracts in order to secure maximal protection for themselves, in marriage and after divorce:

1. Should separation occur, the (divorce) document freeing Siit al-Dalal (Lady Bold) will be produced by her husband without delay;

93 Graetz, Naomi. *Unlocking The Garden: A Feminist Jewish Look at the Bible, Midrash and God*, Gorgias Press, 2005, p. 63.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

95 Biale, Rachel. *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women Issues in Halakhic Sources*, Schocken Book, New York, 1984, p. 48.

96 R. Baskin, Judith. *Jewish Women: Historical Perspective*, p. 98.

2. She is trustworthy in her statements concerning everything and no oath of any kind may be imposed on her;
3. He will not marry another wife (nor keep a slave girl disliked by her);
4. He will not beat her;
5. He will not leave Fustat and travel anywhere (except with her consent);
6. Before setting out on a journey he will write her a conditional bill of divorce, and deposit the delayed installment of her marriage gift as well as the sums needed for her maintenance during his absence;
7. The young couple will live in her parents' house. The husband owes yearly rent of 6 dinars and will never be late in paying it;
8. He will not separate her from her parents, as long as the latter are alive and cannot force her to live anywhere else;
9. A fine of 50 dinars is imposed on him in case he fails to fulfill any of the preceding conditions.<sup>97</sup>

A woman also had the right to demand the introduction of a clause in the marriage contract by which the husband would guarantee that he will not marry other women, given that the polygamy was accepted concept in the Jewish tradition. Nonetheless, such contracts were a privilege of women coming from wealthier families. Therefore, when speaking about the prevailing practice in the tradition, it must be taken into account that women from lower, poorer classes were more vulnerable and exposed to misuse of the law and customary norms. A Jewish woman also had the possibility to earn and that represented her own property and she had the right to dispose with it as she wished, e.g. sell it, and the husband was not allowed to sell it without her consent. There are different stories testifying that women from aristocratic families were great traders, business women, medical and other experts, and they were using their social status, reputation and wealth in order to achieve significant influence on social affairs of a certain time.<sup>98</sup> Such examples show that there was a double standard in the application of the law. One for the elite, other for the ordinary people. Consequently social and political system and cultural conditioning during the first centuries of the application of the law mostly shaped and determined the position, not only of women but of other marginalized groups as well. However, the problem was that in practice neither legal regulations nor valid contracts were respected. Therefore, it was hard for women to exercise their rights to divorce and property claims, and this is a characteristic of contemporary societies as well.

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98-99.

<sup>98</sup> Goitein, S.D. *Mediterranean Society*, vol, 3, The Family, Berkley, 1978, p. 49.

### 2.2.3. Participation of Women in Public Worship

In order to speak about the way in which women take part in the worship service of Jewish communities today, it is important to return to the origins of the faith and see what woman's participation was like in rituals and the life in the temple and synagogue during Biblical and post-Biblical period. It was already mentioned that out of 613 rules (*mitzvot*), 365 prohibitions are for men and women; and the rest 248 positive rules are obligation for men, and are mostly related to worship in the synagogue and other obligations in family and community. In the previous chapter about the education of women, I mentioned the reasons for which women were excluded from the obligation of studying and teaching the *Torah*, which is closely connected to their participation in rituals, especially the ones to be performed in the synagogue at a determined time. Women mostly did not study the *Torah*, nor did actively participate in the creation of positive tradition and law, thus was their participation in the life of the synagogue and community typically directed toward the family life.

When asked if women or others also excused from obligations and rules (*mitzvot*), can decide to take on the duty of performing them, most of the answers are positive, since exemption does not mean exclusion. We see that in the case of the daughter of king Saul who used to wear *tefillin* and the wise man of that time did not react.<sup>99</sup> Still, religious scholars disagreed in relation to this, so that namely Maimonid considered that a woman can take over the obligation to perform certain proscribed orders, but cannon pronounce the blessings since they always start with the following sentence: "Blessed art Thou O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to...perform a given mitzvah."<sup>100</sup>

On the other side, Rabbi Isaak Ha-Levi, a teacher of the great Rabbi Rashi, thought that woman is not only allowed to pronounce the blessings, but that she is obliged to do so and once she takes that commitment then it is fully valid in all its aspects.<sup>101</sup>

Orthodox Jews still maintain the ancient tradition and strict division of obligations between men and women. Women can enter and pray in the synagogue, but in the Orthodox Jewish tradition they are not counted in the quorum (*minyan*) of ten persons required for the prayer. Additionally, in the synagogue there are separate spaces for men and women. In some synagogues they are divided by a curtain

99 Biale, Rachel. *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women Issues in Halakhic Sources*, Shoken Book, New York, 1984, p. 41.

100 Biale, Rachel. *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women Issues in Halakhic Sources*, p. 42.

101 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

(*mechitzah*), and in some there are special galleries for women depending on the structure of the synagogue and the prevailing cultural influence. Maimonid explained in the *Mishnah Torah* that the reason for separation of men and women in the synagogue is to keep them away from each other and that the men would not look at women. Such rules are of rabbinical origin and the great teacher Rashi says that such rules represent preventive action for protection of moral purity.<sup>102</sup> A woman is responsible for morality and purity of the community so that it is of utmost importance to hide her behind a curtain, into special compartments, balconies, behind, outside, into the silence. Even female voice (*kol islah*) was considered provocative and the recommendation for them was to keep quite so that they would not arouse some "dedicated" male soul in the temple.

In the *Talmud* it is highlighted that female voice, hair and legs are sexual lure or trap for man,<sup>103</sup> and that therefore all occasions in which a woman could - with her voice or revealed hair - upset the believers should be avoided.

Until 20<sup>th</sup> century the system of separation of men and women was in force – in jobs and rituals – so that *Mishnah* advises men: "Any of you whose job includes working with women, do not be alone with them. No one should teach his son, a female trade."<sup>104</sup> After development of *Reformed*, *Reconstructionist* and *Conservative* orientation of Judaism, women became equal participants of the worship in the synagogue. Man and woman read the *Torah* together, sit together and women even perform rabbinical duties. The rule of "ritual cleanliness" prohibiting women to enter the synagogue during the menstruation period was repressed. This represents a significant change in the Jewish tradition. Demands and circumstances in which Jews did not know any more how to reconcile their faith, rules and laws led to it. This is a step forward toward an egalitarian model of reading and understating the *Torah* and other rules which at the same time is helping these texts to remain a major feature of the Jewish identity around the world.

### **2.2.3.1. Egalitarian Interpretation of Women's Participation in the Quorum (Minyan) in the Synagogue**

When it comes to worshiping, women are included as equal members based on the egalitarian, universalist and globalist faith interpretations especially promoted by women themselves. One of them was Chana Safrai who insisted not on justice for women, but on justice for Judaism. She thinks that during the first centuries of the

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102 Rabbi Yehuda Henkin. p. 110.

103 Weidman Schneider, Susan. *Jewish and Female*, A Touchstone Book, 1985, p. 67.

104 Verber, Eugen. *Talmud, prijevod i objašnjenja izabranih tekstova sa hebrejskog i aramejskog jezika* (*Talmud, translation and explanations of selected texts from Hebrew and Aramaic*), 2nd edition, Belgrade publishing and grafic institute, 1990, p. 213.



*Torah* usage there was no separation into male and female space, and there are proofs of women actively participating in rituals, especially during the period of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Therefore she offers several arguments in favor of equal participation of women in the prayer quorum that can be summarized as follows:

Women were numbered among synagogue-goers and if they are numbered among the seven (called to the Torah on the Sabbath), why would they not be counted among the ten (for prayer quorum)? A Babylonian Talmud that bars women from reading Torah for reason of "Public dignity" recognizes the possibility that women might do so, although they are disqualified for political reasons... Our premise is that the exclusion from the synagogue was a socio-historical development which occurred probably in Babylon during the Amoraic period.

The Jerusalem Talmud... describes the situation in which all of the men in a given city are kohanim (members of priestly clan). The Gemara asks how they can recite the Priestly Benediction without a congregation to say amen and receive their blessings. The answer to the question "who will say amen" is very simple, "the women and children."

Midrash Rabbah on the Book of Genesis seems to ascribe to Abraham consciousness of an egalitarian quorum to defend Sodom, and arrives at the number ten: "Why ten? Because he taught that there were ten there, viz. Lot, his wife, his four daughters and four sons in law...", Ten is a minimum representative figure and the Midrash includes both women and men.

Rabbis and scholars have pointed out the interesting requirement that all of Israel – men, women and children – must be convened in order to fulfill the commandment of *hakhel* (lit. "assemble" – a ceremony held every seven years on the festival of Sukkot, cf. Deut 31:10-13-tr). The Rabbis, it seems, tried to construct a fundamental midrashic rationale, whereby the participation of women in covenantal events such as the giving of the Torah at Sinai and the commandments of *hakhel*, is seen as part of the Jewish people's social commitment to the Torah. Women thus become a part of the congregation, although the Biblical verses can be understood differently. The Rabbis preferred to include women in covenantal obligations. There are cases in which *hakhel* (assembly) or *am* (people) are understood by the Rabbis – even in sacred contexts – to include women. It is, therefore, incorrect to presume that the only possible reading is one that excludes women from assembly and people.<sup>105</sup>

Having in mind that Judaism is the religion of ritual, law and studying, Jewish feminists focused their attention on practical ritual issues in order to have equal participation in rituals. Still, in order to arrive to inclusive model of synagogue worship, Rachel Adler, the pioneer of Jewish feminist theology, thinks that it is

105 Elijah, Rachel. *Men, Women, Gender, Judaism and Democracy*, p. 114-118. See also, L. Ginzburg. *Commentaries and innovations in the Yerushalmi*, New York 1961, p. 279.



important to recognize women as members of the congregation, allow women to - together with men - create and transform liturgical prayers recited by all, and in the end, recognize that the existing rituals reflect andocentric language, style, movements and theology.<sup>106</sup> Although women participated in the life of the synagogue from the very beginning, they did not request re-examination of the content and style of masculinized religious worship. But, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century conditions for instigation of the essential issues relating to inclusive worshipping were met. Generally, the reason for the gathering of the Jews was to teach people and remind them about the content of the Law, and during the first centuries of Judaism a custom was to do this once in seven years in a public space. Some rabbis based on this deduced the rule about the reading of the whole *Torah* through weekly parts, so that listening and reading of the *Torah* on Shabbat is equally binding for men and women. Others then relate this obligation to the time of the Second Temple, when Ezra established the obligation of reading of the *Torah* on Monday, Thursday, and Saturday which explicitly does not include women.<sup>107</sup>

We should not forget that voices about equality of women in the synagogue were heard even before as Rabbi Manoah of Narbonne said:

The Sacred texts give women equal treatment when it comes to rules on punishment in the *Torah* (Pesahim 43 a), and they order performance of the *Torah* commandments then they can also pronounce the blessings: praise be to the One who choose us, praise be to the One who created us (the blessings pronounces after the reading of the *Torah*).<sup>108</sup>

Hence a woman is equally responsible before God for all good and evil things she does, and the fact that she did not read the *Torah* in public was only due to the "respect of the society – congregation". At that time it was dishonorable not to have enough literate and learned male Jews so that a woman would have to take over the role of the person reading the *Torah* in the congregation since men were explicitly obliged to study the *Torah* and perform prayers at precisely determined time. The most important thing was for the *Torah* words to be publicly heard as Maimonid said: "Our teacher Moses established a rule for the Israelites to read the *Torah* on Saturday, Monday and Thursday so that three days will not have passed without the *Torah* being heard".<sup>109</sup>

Jewish feminists in these discussions highlighted that the important question to be asked here is who made the models of "respect and disrespect of the

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106 Adler, Rachel. *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics*, p. 66.

107 Biale, Rachel. *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women Issues in Halakhic Sources*, Schocken Book, New York, 1984, p. 24-25

108 Rabbi David, Golinkin. *The Status of Women in Jewish Law*, study booklets regarding women in Jewish Law, <http://www.schechter.edu/women>

109 *Ibid.*

congregation"?<sup>110</sup> The answer to this question is very simple since men were the ones who wrote and created laws, and in this way they set the measures of the things which are appropriate, allowed, recommended, reprimandable or acceptable. But since the congregation is not only made of men, and considering the fact that women have always been present there, it is very questionable whether this prohibition was imposed due to the respect of the congregation which is in fact a mixed one or so that the male part of the congregation would not be upset since the *Talmud* teaches that "female voice is pervasive, blemish like nudity, as well as female hair."<sup>111</sup> In the end, the original reasons of female exclusion due to the "respect of the congregation", which "were most probably related to the honor of men who were obliged to read the *Torah*, disappeared - since even today both men and women study the *Torah* and are equally educated",<sup>112</sup> so that it is not any more shameful for a men to show in front of the congregation that he does not know how to do it, or that there are no seven man able to read the *Torah*. At the time when men and women equally participate in all segments of the society it is necessary to open the door for women so that they can also have their place in the spiritual sphere together with their husbands and children in order not to create a new dichotomy of gender roles in which women are deprived of sharing the blessings of spiritual and social life in the synagogue and the community.

### 2.3. Participation of Women in Public and Political Life of Community

Although in earlier chapters we have seen that women were mostly excluded from the educational process, the study of the *Torah*, the quorum (*minyan*) in the synagogue and the title of rabbi, in this chapter I will show how is the participation of women in public and political life of the community seen in the Jewish tradition. The story about equal participation of women in this regard will not be complete if we do not go back to previous centuries and reconsider the examples of women - the role models, found in the *Sacred Jewish texts (TaNaKH)* and see whether there is a foundation for female legitimation in religious and political sphere. Although the orthodoxy of the Jewish religious and secular politics denied, and is still denying, women the right to be equal participants in spiritual and political life of the

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110 Peskowitz-Lewit. *Judaism Since Gender*, p. Xi

111 Rudavsky, T.M. *Gender and Judaism: The Transformation of Tradition*, New York University Press, 1995, p. 194.

112 Rabbi David, Golinkin. *The Status of Women in Jewish Law*, study booklets regarding women in Jewish Law, <http://www.schechter.edu/women>

community, there are numerous examples from history testifying that women were spiritual leaders, prophetesses, queens and teachers.

Luckily, such women are found in the Biblical texts since the collectors and chroniclers of Biblical stories had a minimum of scientific and human correctness to record and include several stories about great women of the Jewish tradition.

### 2.3.1. Models of Female Rulers, Prophetess and Women Rabbis in Jewish History

#### 2.3.1.1. Miriam

Miriam was the oldest child of Amram and Yocheved, and sister of Aaron and Moses. She is among rare women mentioned by the *Sacred texts* as a prophetess, with a mission similar to the one which her brothers had, with an aim to turn the Jewish people to the faith in one God. Biblical narrators speak about her as a person who remained in a state of unique blissfulness for her entire life. Her first appearance is related to her childhood she spent in Egypt, in slavery, together with other Jews, waiting for salvation. When Moses was born, this was a sign that God sent a messenger who will liberate the Jewish people from a long slavery.

**The Lord covered the royal Egyptian cavalry and chariots with the sea, after the Israelites had walked safely through on dry ground.**

**Miriam the sister of Aaron was a prophet. So she took her tambourine and led the other women out to play their tambourines and to dance.**

**Then she sang to them: "Sing praises to the Lord for his great victory! He has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea." (*Exodus*, 15: 19-21)**

From these Biblical lines it is obvious that the appearance of the prophetess is natural, no one was bothered or disturbed by this. This, thus implies the fact that a woman, like a man, in the time when the *Revelation* was still fresh in memory of the people, was considered spiritually and intellectually equally strong, since God spoke to her directly giving her a task to perform among her people. Still, this egalitarian vision and concept of Biblical gender policy was countered by discriminatory, ideological vision of the sages and rabbinical authorities who managed to suppress every image, act, authority, success and influence of women which, under the burden of patriarchal layers, remain invisible.<sup>113</sup> Although she is mentioned in the Biblical text several times (*Exodus* 15:20-21, *Numbers*, 12:1-15, 20:1, 26:59, *Deuteronomy*, 24:9), even as a prophetess, the interpretations of her character

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113 Elijah, Rachel. *And Absence: On The Question Of The Presence And Absence Of Women in The Holy Tongue*, The Jewish Religion and Israeli Reality, Alpayim 20, Am Oved 2000, p. 214-270.

reflected mostly a model of a woman “whose jealousy brought judgment”<sup>114</sup> Namely, Miriam and Aaron sinned since they were complaining about Moses marrying his second wife from Ethiopia. God became angry with them for this (*Numbers*, 12:1-3).

It is mentioned in interpretations that Miriam revolted against Moses’ new wife who was from Ethiopia, not from the People of Israel. Already at an elderly age, Miriam revolted against the foreign woman knowing that the blood in the veins of the Ethiopian woman is the blood of her ancestors who despised the worship of One God.<sup>115</sup> But this was not the only thing the two of them reproached him about. Namely, Miriam learned from Moses’ first wife Zipporah that he was abstaining from his marital obligations ever since he received his mission from God. This was why they reproached him since the two of them were also chosen by God, and they were not abstaining from God’s commandment to give birth to offspring which was at that time extremely important for Jews who had just liberated themselves from the slavery:

**The Lord heard their complaint and told Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to come to the entrance of the sacred tent.**

**There the Lord appeared in a cloud and told Aaron and Miriam to come closer. Then after commanding them to listen carefully, he said:**

**“I, the Lord, speak to prophets in visions and dreams. But my servant Moses is the leader of my people. He sees me face to face, and everything I say to him is perfectly clear. You have no right to criticize my servant Moses.”**

**The Lord became angry at Aaron and Miriam. And after the Lord left and the cloud disappeared from over the sacred tent, Miriam's skin turned white with leprosy. (*Numbers*, 12: 4-10)**

Humble and God fearing, Aaron did not argue, but after God’s judgment he prayed to God to spare and heal her. In many comments there are discussions about the reason for Miriam’s punishment, and why only she was punished, and not Aaron although he too was gossiping and reproaching Moses. Rabbi Juda b. Levi says: “Anyone who is so arrogant as to speak against one grater than him causes the plagues to attack him. And if you do not believe this, look to the pious as a warning to all slanders.”<sup>116</sup>

Andocentric comments attributed this to the “evil tongue” and tendency of women to gossip since according to rabbinical interpretations “women possess four characteristics: they are greedy, inquisitive, envious and indolent”<sup>117</sup> Moreover, rabbis add to this the fact that women spend 90% of their time speaking, so that it

114 Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Women of the Bible*, p. 111.

115 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

116 Graetz, Naomi. *Unlocking The Garden: A Feminist Jewish look at the Bible, Midrash and God*, p. 47.

117 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

was not unexpected for Miriam to gossip. Although Aaron was with her, he remains unpunished because he was only a listener and did not actively participate in gossiping. But, even if it was the case, the one listening to gossiping is also sinful since he did not do anything to prevent it, which means that he was tacitly approving it. Other interpretations explain this Divine intervention as a treatment, after the sin Miriam committed.<sup>118</sup> Separated in quarantine for seven days until she was not cured from leprosy, Miriam had enough time to think about what happened.

However we understand the character and role of Miriam, still the fact remains that she was a prophetess since God spoke to her and entrusted her with missions; she was respected among her people, and in the end, together with Moses and Aaron she celebrated the glory of the Jewish people, which also remains written in songs sang even today.

### 2.3.1.2. Huldah

Huldah is another name in the Jewish tradition recognizable mostly for the benefits she made for her people. She was of royal family, gifted with knowledge and wisdom; a great heroine and prophetess; it is said for her that she was “a woman who unveiled the future of a nation.”<sup>119</sup> During the reign of the king Josiah, she advised people, and helped them to get closer to God through devoted faith. She would sit in the centre of the town, at the square, receiving everyone asking for help or guidance. It is considered that she had a better reputation than Jeremiah, since people preferred to come to her for help. Huldah was also the one who found “*the book of the Law*” from Moses’ time, and she confirmed its authenticity and gave interpretation which later came true. Namely, priest Hilkiah found the scrolls of the *Torah* in the temple, which, together with the collected money, he brought to the king. When the king saw the scrolls of the *Torah* he told them:

**Go, enquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.**

**And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college:) and they spake to her to that effect.**

**And she answered them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me,**

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118 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

119 Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Women of the Bible*, p. 69.

**Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah:**

**Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. (*II Chronicles*, 34: 21-26)<sup>120</sup>**

The sages object Huldah's arrogance in her appearance, since she told them: "Tell the man that sent you to me" and not "Tell the king", although she knew who sends them and whom was the prophecy related to. So, her prophetic gift is not questioned, but a woman does not have the right to behave like that towards a king. Still, Huldah only transferred the prophetic vision she received from God, due to which she, and not Jeremiah, was visited by king's representatives. This is a very interesting fact – king choosing to speak to God over the prophetess Huldah instead over the prophet Jeremiah which is, in the light of today's understanding of the prophets and their role, unimaginable. Nevertheless, majority of the prophets were men enjoying esteem and honor. Here, it is obvious that Huldah was also much esteemed since it was a very important issue that was at the stake.

During this time in Assyria the king received the prophecy that he should rebuild Babylon which was destroyed by his father. The new prophecy indicated different flow of events so he wanted to examine its correctness by inviting experts to do it for him. Huldah was a prophetess but she was also linked to the royal court, unlike Jeremiah who did not offer prophecy for royal clients.<sup>121</sup> The king was afraid and sad when he read the scrolls of the *Torah* as they were indicating a very harsh destiny for his people and therefore he asked confirmation of authenticity from a person he knew will provide him a truthful prophecy. In the end, the king and his people took her words most seriously and went back to the covenant with the Lord, established earlier by their predecessors. What is evident here is the fact that a king had enough courage to pay the respect to the prophetess Huldah and her God-given gifts, and that the Jewish authorities tried to find the arguments of her misconduct in order to diminish her indisputable authority and knowledge.

There is not much data about Hulda: "Can it be because she was a woman that she left no school to record her prophecies and pass them on to succeeding generations"? <sup>122</sup>Probably this was the reason as well, but we should not forget that her story is recorded in the *Bible* which means that the writers and editors of the Biblical stories did record the relevant stories, but the later authorities and

120 Due to the approximation with the indicated meaning King James Version of the Bible is used here.

121 Frymer-Kensky, Tykva. *Women of the Bible: A New Interpretations of Their Stories*, Schocken Books, New York, 2002, p. 325.

122 Plaskow, Judith. *Standing Again at Sinai*, Harper San Francisco, 1990, p. 39.

commentators intentionally forgot to interweave the spirit and reflections of this and other stories about women into religious thought and practice.

### 2.3.1.3. Deborah

Deborah is considered to be one of the wisest and most eloquent women in Biblical texts. She is mentioned as a prophetess, ruler, warrior, agitator, poetess, mother and wife. She seems to have all the roles which are even today required from a woman who wants to participate actively in the public life and politics, just in the reverse order. She was a judge in disputes between people. But, she did it in a public space, under a palm tree, in order not allow for people to be tempted to condemn her for immoral behavior. A woman was not supposed to receive men in her house and spend time with them alone, so that she decided to avoid any possibility of compromising her reputation in the community. The Biblical text mentions her by her name, highlighting the function she performed. In the time when the People of Israel ceased to follow the words of God, according to Biblical story, they were handed over to the king of Caanan, Jabin, whose army was led by Sisera. Then the People of Israel asked God for help:

**Deborah the wife of Lappidoth was a prophet and a leader of Israel during those days.**

**She would sit under Deborah's Palm Tree between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, where Israelites would come and ask her to settle their legal cases.**

**One day, Barak the son of Abinoam was in Kedesh in Naphtali, and Deborah sent word for him to come and talk with her. When he arrived, she said: I have a message for you from the Lord God of Israel! You are to get together an army of ten thousand men from the Naphtali and Zebulun tribes and lead them to Mount Tabor. 7 The Lord will trick Sisera into coming out to fight you at the Kishon River. Sisera will be leading King Jabin's army as usual, and they will have their chariots, but the Lord has promised to help you defeat them. "All right, I'll go!" she replied. "But I'm warning you that the Lord is going to let a woman defeat Sisera, and no one will honour you for winning the battle." (Judges, 4:4-9)**

And so it was: her prophecy came true. The Jews won their victory, Jabin was defeated, but the great army leader Barak did not obtain honor for winning the battle, since according to the Bible, Sisera while running away from the Jewish army found a tent of Jael, wife of Haber from the Kenite clan, who were not in war with Sisera and she offered him a hideaway from his persecutors. He accepted it and then she killed him and waited for Barak and his army to show him the person who was persecuting him. Israelites in this way witnessed the fulfillment of Deborah's prophecy which also indicated a victory over their enemies. Deborah was the fifth of



the leaders or “judges” of Israel raised up by God to deliver His people from bondage their idolatry had caused...<sup>123</sup>

Frymer-Kensky explains that judges in general were charismatic Jewish leaders, but they could acquire the leadership authority once they save Israel's people through fight, what exactly Deborah has done by her prophecy.<sup>124</sup> She managed to awaken the people which had fallen into apathy and lethargy. She regained her spirit and dignity and liberated herself of the slave position she was given. Her spiritual strength inspired a great leader Barak, who was hesitating about whether to fight with mighty Sisera. Deborah was convinced of his victory and with her strength, she moved lethargic leaders and people. After the victory, she ruled the country for a long time and she continued to serve the justice. She wrote some extraordinary poetry, praising and glorifying God, considered to be among the most beautiful verses of ancient Jewish poetry:

**„Listen, kings and rulers, while I sing for the Lord, the God of Israel.  
Our Lord, God of Israel, when you came from Seir, where the Edomites live,  
rain poured from the sky, the earth trembled, and mountains shook“  
(Judges, 5:3-5)**

She and her verses survived the centuries of rapturous Jewish past, as her actions and writings celebrating God's glory surpass ordinary human effort.

### 2.3.1.4. Esther

Esther was a great ruler and heroine. A whole chapter of the Bible is dedicated to her, *Book of Esther*. Her character and deeds are celebrated during big Jewish holiday of Purim when Jews remember hard times when they were almost extinct. It should be mentioned that *Book of Esther* and *Song of Songs* of the king Solomon are the only two Biblical books in which the name of God is not mentioned, although indirectly stories and lyrics are referring to Divine beauty, Wisdom and Love.

We learn from the *Bible* that Esther was a daughter of Abihail, who lived in Susa, a Persian royal city, together with other Jewish prisoners whom Nebuchadnezzar exhaled from Jerusalem. Her name was first Haddassah, but later she got the name of Esther which was more attractive for introduction on a royal court. When her parents died, her uncle Mordecai took her over. He lived a secluded life performing his duties on the court. Following the behavior of the courtiers he noticed that an assassination of the king Ahasuerus is being prepared. He told that to the king. The king, after an investigation, executed two eunuchs who were part of the mutiny. Mordecai was rewarded with a decent position among the courtiers. One day the

123 Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Women of the Bible*, p. 41.

124 Frymer-Kensky, Tykva. *Women of the Bible: A New Interpretations of Their Stories*, p. 46.



king hosted a great feast for the gentry of the court and people, in order to celebrate his three year rule. Queen Vashti also hosted a feast for women, but when on the seventh day he wished to see the queen, he ordered his eunuchs to bring her, in order to show her beauty to the courtiers. As she did not respond to his invitation, he was angry, and he asked people with legal knowledge to give him advice about what to do. Their answer was:

**„Queen Vashti has not only embarrassed you, but she has insulted your officials and everyone else in all the provinces. The women in the kingdom will hear about this, and they will refuse to respect their husbands. They will say, “If Queen Vashti doesn't obey her husband, why should we?”**

**Before this day is over, the wives of the officials of Persia and Media will find out what Queen Vashti has done, and they will refuse to obey their husbands. They won't respect their husbands, and their husbands will be angry with them. (*Esther*, 1:16:18)**

The judgment was that the queen cannot appear before the king and that a new queen should be found to replace her. Along with this, a letter was sent to all counties informing the people that every husband is a ruler in his own house. We do not know for sure whether the situation was different before so that there was a need for intervention with a king's letter in order to emphasize the order which should exist in a family. In this way it was once again underlined that patriarchy was maintained and sustained with law and cultural practice so that the women were forced to find “bypassing” ways in order to reach their goals.

### **2.3.1.4.1. Saving Jewish People from Haman's Plot**

In any case this was a chance for Esther since her uncle Mordecai has been preparing her for years for an opportunity like this. When she was supposed to appear before the king, she was warned not to mention her family and origin since her uncle was afraid of enemies which did not like Jews and their presence on the court. She did so, and therefore it is said that she was wise, eloquent and ready to sacrifice herself for her people.<sup>125</sup> She got her mission and the chance to perform it, and she did it. When she came before the king she shadowed all other girls with her beauty, appearance and eloquence so that in the end the king put the crown on her head and so she obtained queen Vashti's place. Nevertheless, king's minister Haman learned that Mordecai is a Jew and that he is not bowing down before the king so he decided to eliminate all Jews in the kingdom. So he notified the king that, in his land, there are people living who have different laws and not obeying king's orders, and that they should be eradicated in order for others not to look up to them in their disobedience to king. When the king approved this request, Haman started his

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125 Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Women of the Bible*, p. 52.

expedition. He was preparing the elimination of the Jews in all regions of the kingdom, but Mordecai and Esther learned about this, so she says to her uncle:

**“Bring together all the Jews in Susa and tell them to go without eating for my sake! Don’t eat or drink for three days and nights. My servant girls and I will do the same. Then I will go in to see the king, even if it means I must die.”**  
(*Esther*, 4:16)

After fasting and prayers, Esther decided to go to the court, although the law said that one cannot come uninvited before the king. Weak from fasting, but shining with the splendor of the faith and strength on her face, she stood before the king. When he looked at her angrily she fell on the hands of the maids that were following her. At that moment, the king’s anger turned to sympathy and compassion so that he stood up, and took her in his hands, encouraging her with comforting words. After that, she invited the king to her feast, with a condition to bring minister Haman with him. King did so and told her during the feast: “Esther, what brings you here? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom” (*Esther*, 5:6). Esther was wise and did not ask for anything at that moment, only for both of them to come to the feast again. King did so again. And then king asked Esther what she wanted from him, and she said:

**“Your Majesty, if you really care for me and are willing to help, you can save me and my people. That’s what I really want, because a reward has been promised to anyone who kills my people. Your Majesty, if we were merely going to be sold as slaves, I would not have bothered you.”** (*Esther*, 7:3-4)

She pointed at Haman, who kneeled in surprise, and begged for his life although he already had prepared the lots (*purim*) for execution of the Jews. And this is the end of the story in which Esther saved the Jewish people. It was marked with a celebration and two-day fast. Even today it is celebrated as one of great events of liberation of the Jewish people. Esther indebted them with her sacrifice, but also in her writings asked the Jews not to forget these events and to remember them in prayer and fast as she did when asking for salvation for herself and her people.

The Esther story does not speak only about a great heroine, ruler and savior of her people but also represents an extraordinary model of a person whose character features and committed life can serve as an inspiration for other people. She is courageous, determined, persistent, dedicated woman with a vision and mission she is ready to sacrifice herself for. At the moment when she reveals her Jewish identity to the king, she is ready to sacrifice herself but also to fight for salvation of her people. Although she became the queen, and gained a possibility to rule, and think only of herself she did not forget who she was, and where she came from, and why in the first place she came to that position. She did not renounce herself, her identity, her people and her faith. This statement of H.V. Morton could be related to her:

When a person has gone up in the world and has achieved a position of power and eminence, it requires strength and beauty of character for that person still to love and remember the simple people from whom he or she sprang. Humble girls have often married rich men and forgotten their origin. They have, in a fact been, ashamed of anything that might remained them of it.<sup>126</sup>

But, Esther understood the message Mordecai told her:

**“Don't think that you will escape being killed with the rest of the Jews, just because you live in the king's palace. If you don't speak up now, we will somehow get help, but you and your family will be killed. It could be that you were made queen for a time like this!” (Esther, 4:12-14)**

She understood that she has to raise her voice against the injustice or in the contrary, she will herself be exposed to the hands of despots. This has always been a moral act and dilemma people were facing in critical situations. At these circumstances most people do not react to injustice since they are led by the idea of saving their own lives. Nonetheless, not reacting to injustice and being silent means, in a certain way, corroboration in it. Esther defeated the fear and concern for her own destiny and focused on concern for her people by using the position she was at, and political influence she had as a queen. But, the biggest virtue in her character was absolute devotion and confidence in God, His Will and Mercy which, in the end, He bestowed upon the Jews.

### 2.3.2. Women Rabbis

After Biblical stories about women performing the roles of leaders, prophetess and judges in the Jewish communities during different historical periods, in this part I will represent the phenomenon of ordination (*laying on of hands*) of women rabbis which came to life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Jewish communities of Europe and immigrant communities in Northern America.

Namely, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Isaac Wise initiated a wheel of history for the benefit of the reform of the Jewish teaching, in order to bring the Jews closer to their faith and tradition since they strayed away from it and did not know how to apply such traditionally “ossified” religion in contemporary social, political and cultural context. Women, as we saw in previous chapters, had a significant role in the history but were for centuries pushed away from equal participation in educational and intellectual processes of the Jewish thought and with this were excluded from ordination for rabbis. Ordination of women represented practical implementation of hundred years’ long discussions and theoretical observations in

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126 Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Women of the Bible*, p. 53.

which women and men did not accept the idea of exclusion of women from the life in the synagogue.

What does it mean to be a rabbi in the Jewish tradition? Literally the word *rabbi* means teacher, or my teacher. Usually those were the persons which first and foremost were submitting themselves to God's commandments (*mitzvot*), who knew the Jewish law (*Halakha*) and tradition, who solved juridical ambiguities and inconsistencies and which guided the community: "Barricaded behind their tomes of Talmud, these rabbis searched in the tradition of the past to judge the affairs of their day."<sup>127</sup> The rabbi does not have to lead the prayer, and in relation to other believers the rabbi is not more invited to lead the prayer than them. Blu Greenberg, a well known feminist of the Orthodox Jewish orientation considered that female nor male rabbis are obliged to lead the prayers, since there is a huge number of men that are ordained and still do not perform any other additional duty as their not ordained colleagues, and this could apply to women too.<sup>128</sup>

Still, in practice the rabbis – since they were most educated people in the community – were most suitable to lead a congregation in a synagogue, and women rabbis also performed that role. The right of women to become ordained was recognized by *Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist* denomination of Judaism, while in the Orthodox orientation only men can lead the prayer. Although equal rights of women were recognized in the process of reform as early as beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we had to wait until 1972 to see the first woman becoming a rabbi. It was Sally Priesand. After this *Reconstructionist* orientation recognized this right to women in 1977, while the *Conservatives* did it somewhat later in 1983.<sup>129</sup> The first woman ever to formally require the ordination for a rabbi was Irma Levy Lindheim (1886-1978). She was a first woman to obtain the opportunity to study at the Department for Rabbis in 1923. But due to the problems in her private life she was forced to leave it a year before getting her title. But, she wrote:

My intention was not to become a rabbi. I simply believed that if I prepare myself according to demands of the function, other women who wish or have talent to lead the congregation will have the door open.<sup>130</sup>

And so it was; women continued with the pressure to be allowed to study and, afterwards, become ordained. Regina Jonas was however the first woman to be ordained as rabbi. Although she obtained her degree from *Hochschule fur die*

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii

<sup>128</sup> Greenberg, Blu. *Will There Be Orthodox Women Rabbis?* In *Judaism*, 33.1. (Winter 1984), p. 23-33.

<sup>129</sup> More about women rabbis:  
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/womentoc.html>

<sup>130</sup> Zola P. Gary. *Women Rabbis: Exploration and Celebration*, HUC-JIR Rabbinic Alumni Association Press, 1996, p. 3.

*Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Germany, her teachers rejected to perform her official ordination fearing the reactions of the Orthodox Jewish community, so that Max Dienemann, a liberal rabbi, did so during a private ceremony in 1935. Of course, Regina did not lead prayers in the synagogue but she did teach and lecture.<sup>131</sup> A lot of time had to pass from proclamation to practical application of the principle and ideas of equal participation of women in the worship in official establishments of Jewish denominations since the leaders of the *Reform* denomination were afraid that by appointing women they will give another reason to Orthodox Jews to criticize their authority.<sup>132</sup> Along with this, the issue of balance between family and rabbinical duties surfaced in discussions, representing thus a reason more for resolution of this issue to be postponed until the early 1970's of the twentieth century.

*Conservative* orientation of Judaism still accepted the authority of the Jewish law (*Halakha*), but considered it necessary for the Law to develop, so it was possible to introduce the changes in its interpretation. Therefore the rule about the quorum (*minyan*) in the synagogue was changed so as to include women. Still the decision about ordination of women was adopted only in 1983 because Talmudic authorities were leaving the organization not wanting to recognize that right to women. Even so, they were defeated by arguments indicating that there are no formal or legal reasons for exclusion of women from rabbinical duty. Therefore the Jewish assembly and theological universities decided to open their door for women wanting this title. The *Reconstructionist* already in 1968 had a first woman who was educated at the university for rabbis, since as *Reformists* they considered that irrespective of the law women and men have the same rights.<sup>133</sup> In the *Orthodox* orientation of Judaism, lately such discussions also came to life pressured by prominent intellectuals from within the community like Blu Greenberg. From 1980's of the twentieth century she has been fighting for the rights of women becoming rabbis since this would be a way to recognize their intellectual strength and spiritual achievements, but also it would instigate certain issues relating to family and intimate life of believers.<sup>134</sup> This issue remains open, but women did start attending universities at which they are studying the *Torah* and *Talmud*, and one of them, Haviva Krasner-Davidson was courageous enough to apply for rabbinical school in 1993. She was rejected of course, but it did serve as incentive for other women, so that Orthodox synagogue did hire a woman to assist the rabbi in teaching, preaching, visit to the sick, and internal tasks in the synagogue but she did not obtain the title of the rabbi. But as Blu Greenberg concluded

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131 Von Kellenbach, Katharina. *God Does not Oppress Any Human Being: The Life and Thoughts of Rabbi Regina Jonas*, Leo Back Institute Yearbook, 39, 1994, p. 213-225.

132 Walter, Jacob and Zemer, Moshe. *Gender Issues in Jewish Law: Essay and Responsa*, Bargahn Books, New York, 2001, p. 202.

133 Nadell, Pamela. *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 188-1985*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1998. p. 187-188.

134 *Ibid.*, p. 217.

that there were no direct halachic objections to women's ordination, therefore she made an optimistic statement: "I believe that the ordination of Orthodox women is close at hand."<sup>135</sup> Although the Orthodox Jews deny women right to ordination simply by saying that women never performed this duty, Gerda Lerner claims that men wrote history and theology and profited from the transfer of knowledge from generation to generation while women were denied the right to their own history, so that they had to invest a great effort to rethink and find the wheel for change.<sup>136</sup> This can be freely applied on this issue like Nadell S. Pamela says, since women had to reinvent the arguments about their capability to use the knowledge they received in order to perform the function of a rabbi.<sup>137</sup>

Namely, Bernardette Brooten in her research discovered that women had significant leadership positions in the synagogue, confronting thus the existing rabbinical sources. She also shows that the Jewish authorities very skillfully interpreted the documents indicating that women had the leadership in the synagogue at certain rituals, so that women would be erased from the pages of history.

Data from the first century B.C.E. to the six century C.E. show different titles of women in religious life: "president of synagogue", "leader", "elder", "mother of synagogue" and "priestess".<sup>138</sup> Jewish scholars were aware of these titles, but they interpreted them as honorific, as one of them commented: "Rufina herself bears the title *archisynagogos* (leader, head of the synagogue), which in the case of woman is, of course, just a title."<sup>139</sup> Bernardete Brooten says that the honor titles did not exist at that time and that women mentioned with such titles were in fact performing these functions; but the problem is that such data question the attitudes about the exclusion of women from the leading positions in religious life of Jews.<sup>140</sup>

Women rabbis yet did face many challenges and issues which were to be solved along the way. It took some time for them to get accustomed to this new duty, but also for the community to get accustomed to a female rabbi, since at that position they always had a man, and subconsciously they were excepting authority from a man. A woman rabbi Laura Geller felt that in her work by concluding that the congregation does not give to a woman the same power and prestige it gives to a man. The reason for this is that there is a lesser social distance between a woman rabbi and the

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135 *Ibid.*, p. 219

136 Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness from the Middle Ages to Eighteen- Seventy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, p. 116.

137 Nadell, Pamela. *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination*, 188-1985, Beacon Press, Boston, 1998. p. Xiii

138 Plaskow Judith. p. 44.

139 Nadell, Pamela. *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination*, 188-1985, Beacon Press, Boston, 1998. p. 44-45.

140 *Ibid.*, p. 45

congregation which leads to a collapse of hierarchy in religious institutions.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, women introduced new elements and creative spirit into Jewish rituals and practices and it brought people closer to the synagogue and God. They introduced ceremonies depicting the spirit of the real life, and this helped people minimize the gap they felt between their religious and secular identity.

However there are still issues to be solved, since as Rabbi Sandi Sasso from the *Reconstructionist* denomination says:

"Women come to the rabbinate with a different set of experiences. Women's centre of focus is on people rather than on principles. Women's version of reality is not a hierarchical model where one's goal is to move up to be alone at the top, but rather a network model, where the goal is to connect with others, to be together at the centre."<sup>142</sup>

Along with this, a research established that women rabbis are less paid than men,<sup>143</sup> which is, I have to admit a reflection of the American reality in which even today women do not receive the same salary as men for the same job.<sup>144</sup> Second issue which has not been adequately dealt with is the issue of motherhood, maternity leave, and other obligations related to this. Facing these dilemmas many women give up the position of assistant rabbi so that they would have more time for family life. Again we come to the situation when we should determine what in fact gender equality is. Is it complete denial of what we are and equalization of biological differences and specificities we have, or do we have to go for so called "positive discrimination" in order for women to be able to balance motherhood and jobs they do? But since the leadership model, as well as, the gender roles, did not significantly change, Judith Plaskow considers that:

Women's full participation in leadership and decision-making, as well as in the ordinary activities of the Jewish community presupposes not simply communal willingness to make certain positions available to women, but a fundamental transformation of both structure of leadership and sexual role.<sup>145</sup>

So, it is not important only to declaratively support certain ideas, nor be willing to offer certain positions or titles, but also to change established patterns and models of gender roles in private and public sphere, since otherwise it will be equally hard for women to find their place, as well as for the community to accept new approached on old bases.

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141 Rudavski T.M. *Gender and Judaism*, p. 245

142 *Ibid.*, p. 247.

143 *Ibid.*, p. 248.

144 Within a semester which I spend on *Religious Studies Department at Arizona State University* in USA in 2006 I attended a panel discussion about *Women and Politics*, organized by women from the University, and I was surprised with the data presented: women are still, even as professors, less paid than men. In average it is 20-30% less. Young women still have huge problems in getting fulltime positions due to pregnancy and maternity leave.

145 Plaskow, Judith. p. 228.





### 3. WOMEN IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION'S LEGACY

#### 3.1. Creation of Man and Woman

Considering the fact that Christians accept Jewish *Sacred texts*, including the passages about the creation of man and woman from the *Genesis*, it is no surprise that their understanding of these stories is under a strong influence of culture and tradition of the Jewish people from which, in the end, Jesus himself came. Therefore, it is important to bare in mind the fact that in the period of early Christianity - during the life of Jesus and first three centuries - major number of texts and comments were strongly influenced by Greco-Roman philosophical and cultural legacy of interpretations of evangelical messages. The understanding of Eve and her "guilt" was not significantly different from rabbinical andocentric image in which Eve is portrait as weaker, more emotional and susceptible to temptation. In Christian tradition the story about the creation has largely determined the relations between men and women, but also relations of the church toward woman, her nature, role and possibilities. Woman was considered the one who was guilty for the original sin or so called "ancestral sin". She succumbed to temptation and brought the sin, evil and death to the world, and so her punishment is the suffering at the child labor and her husband will rule over her: **"He will rule over you"** (III:16) or (*Genesis*, 3, 169).<sup>146</sup>

In the New Testament, there are also two stories about the creation of man and woman; one is egalitarian, and the other is hierarchical. The egalitarian concept of creation is related to the issue of the salvation in Jesus of all people, men and women: "Just as we will die because of Adam, we will be raised to life because of Christ. Adam brought death to all of us, and Christ will bring life to all of us" (*Corinthians I*, 15, 21-22). Also, all those who have been baptized in Christ erase racial, social and gender differences as Paul said: "And when you were baptized, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes. Faith in Christ Jesus is

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146 The original sin in the history of theology was often also called Adam's sin since, following Paul's typology, Adam stands as a contrast to Christ. Since it was thought that the original sin is transmitted by birth, and during the birth process, as influence of Aristotle's teaching, only man was considered to be the transmitter of life, and consequently the transmitter of the original sin. This, nevertheless was not an obstacle to consider the woman the one guilty for the sin since she, based on the interpretations, led the man to the sin. A woman was made guilty since it was through her that the lust entered the world. (Helen Schüngel-Straumann. *Die Frau am Anfang. Eva und die Folgen*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1989, p. 32; Helen Schüngel-Straumann. Eva, in: Elisabeth Gössmann/Helga Kuhlmann/Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel. *Wörterbuch der Feministischen Theologie*, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verl.-Haus, 2002, p. 125.)

what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman." (*Galatians*, 3, 27-29)

This is one of the messages which most men and women use when trying to show that divine message is, nevertheless egalitarian and fair since the door of salvation is equally open to all who seek it, and God is equally treating devotion and good deeds, independent of the person it comes from. Still, the number of hierarchical messages prevails. These messages have been the ones used by the masculine, andocentric, interpretive tradition to shape gender relations during the two previous centuries.

### 3.1.1. Early Christian Interpretations of Creation of Humankind

As early as in the first centuries of Christianity the patriarchal hierarchical structure was imposed even on the Christian communities, so that the women, who were actively participating in the establishment of the new communities, were pushed to the margins of social and religious life. This was also due to andocentric interpretation of the Biblical texts, especially *Genesis* and creation of the first human being. Hierarchical order is clearly established in the New Testament as a cosmic principle: **"Now I want you to know that Christ is the head over all men, and a man is the head over a woman. But God is the head over Christ"** (*Corinthians I*, 11, 3). Therefore, as Rosemary Radford says: "male monotheism becomes vehicle of a psycho-cultural revolution of the male ruling class in its relationship to surrounding reality."<sup>147</sup>

So, for example Teofilus,<sup>148</sup> a Christian apologist from Antioch who lived in 2<sup>nd</sup> century defined Eve as "the author of the sin". Teofilus considers also the issue of the sequence of creation and Eve's secondary derivation from Adam's rib. According to his opinion, had God wanted it, He could have made Eve a separate being; but, He created her from Adam's rib and in this way made them nearer to each other. Considering also the fact that Eve was seduced by a snake or Satan – who influences people even today – Eve, i.e. a woman is a temptation for a man and is compared to Satan and his influence on humans.<sup>149</sup>

Second, very prolific Christian thinker Tertullian (160-225) in his paper *On the Apparel of Women* dedicated to women converting to Christianity, relates women to Eve by saying to them: "You are the devil's gateway", when speaking about their

147 Radford Ruether, Rosemary. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1983, p. 54.

148 Rabbi David Golinkin. *The Status of Women in Jewish Law*, study booklets regarding women in Jewish Law, <http://www.schechter.edu/women>

149 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

appearance which attracts the attention of men, and for which women should be dressed modestly, in repentance clothes that would remind them that envy and vanity are the characteristics of Eve and her daughters.<sup>150</sup> He openly condemned women with his misogynous statement in order to silence rebelling voices that spoke against exclusion of women:

Do you know that you are (each) and Eve?... You are the first deserter of divine law. You are she who persuaded him to whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image man. On account of your desert – that is death – even the Son of God had to die.<sup>151</sup>

Another significant Christian thinker Origen, who lived during the first half of 3<sup>rd</sup> century in Egypt, in his understanding of Biblical texts he says that “scriptural texts not only have a literal sense, but also have moral and allegorical meanings.” While defining “the *imago dei* Origen uses allegory to posit that each human being is both male/spirit and female/soul.”<sup>152</sup> This dichotomy in which the male principle depicts the spiritual and female being related to the soul, passions and instincts, contributed to biological characteristics to be understood as the starting point for all other gender differences culturally and socially conditioned.

Even today such arguments can be heard in churches – against the ordaining of women – that women are closer to nature, birth, feelings, and emotions, and men are closer to reason, rationale, justice and accomplishments in the sphere of spiritual and political leadership. Responsibility associated with woman and sin, evil and suffering she brought to the world, made women subordinated, under the authority of their husbands:

**“Women ... should learn by being quiet and paying attention. They should be silent and not be allowed to teach or to tell men what to do. After all, Adam was created before Eve, and the man Adam wasn't the one who was fooled. It was the woman Eve who was completely fooled and sinned. But women will be saved by having children, if they stay faithful, loving, holy, and modest” (Timothy, 2, 11-15)**

Since she allowed herself to be seduced, but also since she did not warn Adam when she saw the consequences of tasting the forbidden fruit but moreover since she persuaded him to try too, Eve repeated her sin and so expelled them from immortal and eternal life – says Ambrosias, governor and later bishop in Milan in 4<sup>th</sup> century. He also in his interpretations supported dichotomized concept of male and female roles, with explanation that such order is based on the very act and manner of creation of the woman from the rib (*Genesis*, 2, 21-22). Ambrosias claims that the

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>151</sup> Young, Serenity. *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women*, Crossroad, New York, 1994, p. 46.

<sup>152</sup> Kwam E. et al. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, p. 133.

word "to built" is well chosen in speaking of the creation of woman, because a household, comprising man and wife, seems to point toward a state of full perfection. One who is without a wife is regarded as being without a home. As men is considered to be more skillful in public duties, so a woman is esteemed to be more adaptable to domestic ministrations."<sup>153</sup>

Ambrosias concludes that Eve, since she admitted her sin and guilt, received milder sentence, a result of which is the fact that she is under the patronage of her husband.<sup>154</sup> Like Ambrosias, John Chrysostom (347-407) says similar things. He was a Greek theologian and bishop from Constantinople, who with his theology influenced eastern and western Christianity. His understanding of the concept of creation of the humankind puts Eve in an inferior position due to the fact that she, although similar to the man, showed weakness in her talk with the snake and succumbed to temptation of the forbidden fruit. Chrysostom continues his elaboration of the reasons for female subordination to male and he says God did this for the following reasons: "In the beginning I created you equal to your husband in esteem, and my intention was that in everything you share with him as an equal, and as I entrusted control of everything to your husband, so did I to you; but you abused your equality of status."<sup>155</sup>

He therefore explains divine intention and the reasons for which God decided to take away from women their equal position - which they were given at their creation - and put them under the control of men. Disobedience caused them to become aware of their own sexuality so that their first sexual intercourse happened at that stage, which according to Chrysostom indicates the fact that the two of them transgressed from the angelic state into the sinful state by sexual act. Disobedience brought to loss of innocence, purity and this elevated state they were given, and— as he advised believing men, and especially believing women – it is very important to preserve the innocence and the original purity in which Adam and Eve lived.<sup>156</sup>

In early Christian thought the opinion of the great Augustine (354-439) was inevitable. In his famous work *The Confessions* he offered the model of a perfect Christian woman through the image and figure of Monika, a woman obedient to her father and husband in her effort to gain the kindness and mercy of God.<sup>157</sup>

In commentaries of the Book of Genesis his use of 'literal' interpretation involved telling what happened rather than offering a "symbolic or figurative inter-

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153 *Ibid.*, p. 138-139.

154 *Ibid.*, p. 138-139.

155 *Ibid.*, p. 146.

156 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

157 Young, Serenity. *An Anthology of Secret Texts by and about Women*, p. 49-50.

pretation which would stress the text's spiritual or allegorical meaning."<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, in some parts of the Text he uses symbolic interpretation, in which the man is the symbol of reason, the woman symbol of soul, and the animal symbol of body.<sup>159</sup> With the aid of female soul, male reason should govern the body. In the interpretation of the creation story he considers that woman, like man, was created on God's image, but that the purpose of her creation was to be Adam's helper which is primarily related to childbearing. Punishment for disobedience and for the sin she committed is servitude to her husband.<sup>160</sup>

Due to this he justifies and supports the statement assigned to Paul that a man should not cover his head since he is the image and glory of God, and the woman is the glory of man, and based on this he concludes that a woman is capable of receiving knowledge from God but through her husband and should, as Paul suggested it, learn at home with her husband..<sup>161</sup> These interpretations shaped the ideas of believers and were for centuries leaving their marks in cultures and traditions throughout the world in such a way that people very often did not know where their attitudes came from, whether from a religious or customary tradition.

### 3.1.2. Culmination of Eve's Curse

A model of Eve the sinner, responsible for the fall of the human kind from Heaven and for mortality, is supported in the works of theologians and thinkers from the Middle Ages. But the culmination of Eve's curse happened when the Catholic Church started the trials for witch crafting. One of the most influential Catholic theologians Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), in his famous work *Summa Theologica*, supported the attitudes about the deficiency of female nature holding that man's creative force is active, and woman's passive.<sup>162</sup> Consequently, he explains that submission of a woman to a man is twofold. The first reason why a woman should submit herself to the one who is superior to her by his own nature i.e. the man, is the fact that she was disobedient towards God. The second reason is of material nature since the man is the one securing the material means for the family, and therefore he has the decision-making power.<sup>163</sup> He, therefore, gives priority to men because of two things; first is related to the very nature of a woman, conditioned by the original

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158 *Ibid.*, p. 148.

159 Leisch-Kiesl, Monika. *Eva als Andere: eine exemplarische Untersuchung zu Frühchristentum und Mittelalter*, Köln; Weimar; Wien: Böhlau, 1992, p. 70.

160 Kwam E. et al. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, p. 151-152.

161 *Ibid.*, p. 153-154.

162 Young, Serenity. *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women*, p. 68.

163 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

sin, whereas the second is related to material security which can be provided by the man since he is the one who has the predisposition for decisions, protection and defense. This is another Aristotelian division on male/public and female/private sphere.

When such a teaching is set in the context of social and political circumstances of the Catholic countries of the Middle Ages with the Inquisition enslaving everything that was *unchristian* and "cleaning" everything that was burdening Christian practice it was to be expected that women would, as most vulnerable social group, come under the scrutiny of such a politics as well. One of the tasks was also the fight against the Satan embodied mostly in women that worked as healers and for whom it was claimed that were in agreement with the evil forces. Namely, two inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger made a compilation of works entitles *The Hammer of the Witches (Maleus Maleficarum)* which became legal and theological guide for the judicial practice that punished thousands of women throughout Europe.<sup>164</sup> Under torture big number of women admitted the collaboration with the devil and so was created the belief that women are dangerous and that due to their powers they should be under a strict male supervision. In such circumstances biggest harm was done to lower-classes widows and unwed women who worked as midwives and doctors for whom that job was a mean to feed their families.

Such church politics was largely supported by theological attitudes of influential scholars and thinkers in the early Christianity but also in the Christianity of the Middle Ages, who most probably could not even imagine that the linkage between religion and politics would bring the exodus of the most vulnerable – female – population. The arguments about the nature and origin of women were unavoidable in the accusations of these women. Therefore, in *Maleus Maleficarum* the authors describe in details the reasons for intellectual and spiritual deficiencies for which women can easily come under the influence of Satan and witchcraft:

And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives... And it is clear in the case of the first woman that she had a little faith, for when the serpent asked why they did not eat of every tree in Paradise she answered: of every tree, etc. lest perchance we die. Thereby she showed that she doubted and had a little faith in the word of God. And all this indicated by the etymology of the word; for Femina comes from Fe and Minus since she is ever weaker to hold and preserve faith... therefore, a

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164 M. Russell, Letty and Clarkson J. Shanon. *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 1996, p. 316.

wicked woman is by her nature quicker to waver in her faith, and consequently quicker to abjure the faith, which is the root of witchcraft.<sup>165</sup>

Again and again “the crooked rib” reappears as an important identity determinant of women’s nature, and is suitable for most unbelievable observations about the nature of women. Man’s nature was never discussed, whether he was susceptible, uncertain or doubtful in his faith, but the perfection of his nature was *a priori* accepted. The position of women did not significantly change during the Reformation, since Christian reformers from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century were under the influence of Hellenic philosophical thought through liberal, philosophical legacy of Rousseau, Locke, Hobbs and others. The same cultural matrix expanded its influence to new ideas as well, which indisputably started the winds of change in Europe and the world, and which under the influence of Protestant works and labor ethics led to technological development of the western civilization.

Protestant reformers partially amended their attitudes toward the nature of women and her origin, rejecting the Aristotelian thought about a woman being “a castrated man”. In this regard, for example, the great German reformer Martin Luther encouraged the idea that Adam and Eve were created in God’s image and that together they received the task to rule the Earth as partners.<sup>166</sup> Because of this he made a shift, and left the Catholic Church and celibacy holding that the obedience to God can be easily achieved in a partnership with a woman. Still, family and marriage relations, as he considered, should be hierarchical, with a man as a head of the family to whom the woman owes her obedience.<sup>167</sup> The reason for this is the sin Eve committed and because of which she is obliged to obey her husband who is given the legitimacy to rule the family and the state. “But because Luther identified marriage as a form of government, and thus a remedy for sin, he concluded that husbands should exercise dominion over their wives.”<sup>168</sup> His influence was so strong that in Europe and USA his teaching was spreading for centuries, but still such order and understanding of gender relations was maintained as integral part of the faith. Although major changes were happening in the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to the influence of female protests against injustice and discrimination within the church life, still in philosophical and theological thought misogynous interpretations and attitudes about women were dominant.

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165 Young, Serenity. *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women*, p. 79.

166 Kwam E. at al. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, p. 251-252.

167 Yalom, Marylin. *A History of the Wives*, Perennial, An Imprint of Harper Collins Publisher, 2002, p. 99.

168 Kwam E. at al. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, p. 253.



### 3.1.3. Contemporary Church Interpretations and Complementarity Theory

For centuries woman was presented as secondary and the source of the entrance of the sin into the world which provoked deficiency of her nature and consequently subordination to man. Women were partially denied their creation in God's image, but this theory was abandoned at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Still, in the teachings of the church the theory of subordination of women in the family and public life was still in force. Second Vatican Council in its documents even made the first step toward the reciprocity theory and equality, but afterwards they again came back to the theory of complementarity which the church scholars are encouraging even today.<sup>169</sup>

Women and men in the church, as well as the church authorities in Catholic and Orthodox Christianity explain the gender roles through the theory of complementarity according to which both are equal before God, but with different characteristics determining male and female. In this way the church teaching tries to offer the answers to contemporary concepts of gender equality and their equality in all segments of life, but also mitigate hierarchical notions in understanding of the creation of the first human being. A human being was created in God's image but in the Christian understanding of the Trinitarian God there is different understanding of the complementarity theory. Therefore, for example, Pope John Paul II understood the relationship between man and woman as relation of complete persons: "...and relationship between them is not a result of a lack of female or male character, but of a need of a person (no matter the gender) to give her/himself, to enter a partnership, since a human is a person created on the image of God who is Love."<sup>170</sup>

Some theologians still in relation between man and woman highlight their roles and in this way maintain the unchanged male-female status: "as Father and Son cannot change their roles, Son cannot become the Father, nor Father Son; so woman cannot become man, nor man woman".<sup>171</sup> This has implications on predefined male and female roles as well as on their obligations to develop and nurture natural characteristics of male and female personality. Therefore, Rebeka J. Anić explains:

This Trinitarian iconological interpretation of the complementarity theory implies the conclusion: as defined and unchangeable the roles of God's persons

169 More on this: Anić, Rebeka. *Žena – slika Božja, (Woman – Image of God)* in: *Bogoslovska smotra* LX (1990) 3-4, p. 290-301; Anić, Rebeka. *Otvorenost crkve za poslanje žene (How Open is the Church for Missions of Women?)*, in: *Bogoslovska smotra* LXXII (2002) 2-3, p. 383-403.)

170 Anić, Rebeka. *Više od zadanog: žena u crkvi u Hrvatskoj u 20. stoljeću (More than Given: Women in the Church in Croatia)*, Franjevački institut za kulturu mira/Franciscan Institute for Peace Culture, Split, 2003. p. 56.

171 *Ibid.*, p. 51.



are, so are also defined and unchangeable roles of woman and man, femaleness and maleness.<sup>172</sup>

The complementarity theory, nevertheless, implies divisions which resulted in numerous stereotypes about the roles of women and men in the society and they encouraged deepening of dichotomized image of the society with marked borders between private and public sphere of life. In this way we repeatedly come back to woman's nature, her psycho—social characteristics, affinities and spiritual dimensions of her person which place and relate woman only to motherhood and home. Along with this, motherhood is set as a fundamental determinant in a woman's life while fatherhood is secondary although more and more young men are becoming aware of their fatherly role and they are rediscovering it. This is a role which was neglected due to stereotypical presentation of the motherhood and barriers within the patriarchal culture set between men and children. Complementarity theory was advocated by a great Catholic scholar and philosopher E. Stein. She insisted on particularities in natures of women and men, and consequently, their roles in family and society.

Nature of a woman is directed toward her purpose: being a wife and mother. These two are closely linked. Female body is therefore created to "be one body" with some other body, and to feed a new human life inside her. This is parallel to the inner state of a woman that is made for the serving obedience to the head and - at the same time - his support like well-disciplined body which is obedient tool to the spirit that improves it, but is for him a source of power and gives him firm position in the outside world.<sup>173</sup>

With such an attitude, Stein considers that it is necessary for women to really fulfill their role of "helper", which has been given to them upon creation, but this should be complete, dedicated participation:

Suitable helper to a man is not a woman by the very means that she is taking part in his cause, but because she is complementing him and thus decreasing the dangers treating him from his specific nature (in this or that individual feature).<sup>174</sup>

According to these messages it is clear that Catholic women are expected to justify their role of the "helper", mother, wife and sister whose love and patience should go beyond all obstacles and problems and ensure a safe haven for her husband and children. Still in critiques of complementarity and mutuality of roles the question of what a woman receives in return for what she gives to others is posed. Since, others are not invited (as she is) to return her love and sacrifice as much. Response is partially offered in the new interpretation of *Epistle to Ephesians*,

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172 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

173 Stein, Edith. *Žena (Woman)*, Kršćanka sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1990, p. 55.

174 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

offered by Pope John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem* where a woman should not become “an object” and “property” of her husband, and that “overcoming evil inheritance of sin” mirrored in the words: “You will still desire your husband, and he will rule over you”, should be the task of the future generations.<sup>175</sup> Feminists in the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* especially criticized reduction of the identity of a Christian woman to motherhood; idealization of motherhood as supreme path for reaching sanctity; linking motherhood with essential viewpoints of the female identity; and usage of motherhood as social institution for control of woman’s life.<sup>176</sup> In her critique of *Mulieris Dignitatem* A. Marija Grunfelder says that, along with insisting on equal dignity of women and men, they do not have same responsibility in the society. The female or female identity is related exclusively to motherhood and the social position of a woman is defined according to her nature.<sup>177</sup>

In the Orthodox Christianity the same principle of complementarity of roles is advocated. Pavle Evdokimov, in his critique of the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir, says that by the autonomy of a man and a woman the mutuality and specificity of the blessed gifts of both sexes is lost. He compares the humankind with a top with two slopes – female and male, complementing one another, connecting this with the Biblical sentence: “When God raises people to life...they will be like the angels in heaven”. (*Marc*, 12, 25), explaining that in the end, in heavenly kingdom man and woman will become one angel, one being, like at the beginning.<sup>178</sup> When analyzing male and female relations in religion and the real life, Zorica Kuburić concludes that: “The church gives power to men, as a parallel for domination and power of women in birth and delivery of this earthly life. Men in religion “deliver” fruits for the eternal life and are reluctant to give women any influence or domination in the religious sphere (therefore women in all religions stand aside)”.<sup>179</sup> Therefore, the complementarity promoted by religious communities does not imply two equal genders, but gender relation with assigned roles family, faith and the public life as a whole.

175 John Paul II. *Mulieris Dignitatem: Apostolsko pismo o dostojanstvu i pozivu žene prigodom marijanske godine* (Apostolic Letter On The Dignity And Vocation Of Women On The Occasion Of The Marian Year), Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1989, p. 28-31.

176 Grey, Mary. *Europe as a Sexist Myth*, in Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, *The Power of Naming*, p. 245.

177 Grunfelder, Ana Marija. *Mulieris Dignitatem: dokument koji stvara dvojbe* (*Mulieris Dignitatem: a Document Creating Doubts*), Obnovljeni život, XLIV, 1989, No 3-4, p. 209-228.

178 Evdokimov, Pavle. *Žena i spasenje sveta* (*Woman and Salvation of the World*), Russian translation by Biljana Vičentić, Svetigora, Cetinje, 2001. p. 186.

179 Kuburić, Zorica. *Muškarac i žena u religiji i realnom životu* (*Man and Woman in Religion and Real Life*), in: Bojan Jovanović, ed. *Muškarac i žena* (*Man and Woman*), Gutenbergova Galaksija, Belgrade, 2001, p.139-169.

### 3.1.4. Egalitarian Concept of Creation of Adam and Eve

Protestant reformation allowed freedom for different perceptions of the creation of a woman, so that in opinions of Martin Luther Eve was Adam's partner in creation, but the first sin damaged human nature and therefore God established superiority as a "cure" for the committed sin. Luther considered "ruling" a marriage in which the man rules, and a woman owes him obedience.<sup>180</sup> This lasted all the way until 20<sup>th</sup> century since it took a long time for changes to occur in religious interpretive tradition which has been shaping the conscience, attitudes and systems of human values. Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century women within Christian churches have been permanently working on the change of culturological concept based on misogynous and andocentric religious tradition which places the woman at a secondary position, a being obedient to man.

The most significant step was made by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the author of the *Woman's Bible*, which was published in 1898, and was a product of long work of a group of American Christian women which were not accepting the imposed concept of female exclusion from the church and social life and her reduction to marital and family issues only. The basis for it was the belief that Jesus advocated for egalitarian concept of the Christian faith, and not dominantly male hierarchical church in which women were mostly passive students. In her analysis of *Genesis* Stanton elaborates both stories on creation: *elohist*, in which a man and woman are created in God's image: **"He made man and woman"**; and *jahwist*, in which first the man was created from the earth, then flora and fauna, and only then the woman was created from his rib. Stanton considers that both stories cannot be true and that Jewish authors misused the situation after destruction of Jerusalem in 588 B.C., so that they added one more story in order to obtain divine legitimacy for maintenance of patriarchal status and obedience of women to men.<sup>181</sup> Then, she offers counter-arguments to official church interpretations of Eve's guilt for man's sin and mortality by calling on Adam's responsibility. He was the one to whom God sent His orders, but he did not warn the woman nor argued with her about it, he simply ate the fruits she offered. How is it possible, Stanton asks, for a man to build the story on superiority if when asked why he ate the forbidden fruit his answer was: **"It was the woman you put here with me," the man said. "She gave me some of the fruit, and I ate it."** (Genesis 3, 12). Then she asks: could it be that someone so susceptible to the influence of the other - without serious questioning and opposition to the persuasion to break God's order - could be proclaimed superior to woman? After Philadelphia female Bible readings at which the *Bible* was read at the end of 19<sup>th</sup>

180 Kwam. E. et al., p. 267.

181 Cady Stanton, Elizabeth. *The Woman's Bible*, Prometheus Books, 1999, p. 16-18.

century, in 20<sup>th</sup> century feminist theology found its place at different colleges and private schools, opening thus a possibility for women to integrate themselves more in to the church life.

In egalitarian interpretations we find the following explanation: "Adam is male and female, i.e. the all-incorporating prototype of polarity accomplished accordingly through embodiment of man and woman".<sup>182</sup> Only through the act of creation a human being becomes alive with the soul inhaled by God, and then as explained in the second Biblical story comes the sex differentiation of human beings to man and woman. Nevertheless, "customary (patriarchal) interpretation is that a man was created first and that a woman is "from" him which historically justified different forms of his superiority over woman, and in theologically problematic way it equalized Adam - the human being with Adam – the man".<sup>183</sup>

Unfortunately, still Adam - the human being is considered "the man" since long interpretive practice situated the man in the category of the first being created on the image of God, and woman as his companion and helper, who owed him submissiveness and obedience because of the sin she caused. Bal Mieke from the feminist perspective says that God in the beginning created sexless being, first body, undivided, without name and activity. Woman is formed first, than man; it is *iša* (female) who changes the meaning of *ha-adam* from earth creature to earth man.<sup>184</sup> Bal Mieke calls this phenomenon "equalizing dialectic": man and woman mutually constitute each other and in this respect they are created at the same time."<sup>185</sup>

The second creation story is in collision with the first, since Bal sees Eve's disobedience as a first act of independent action, in which wisdom is the main characteristic, and which shows the capability to accept human dimension of existence – sexuality and mortality.<sup>186</sup>

In Gnostic sources<sup>187</sup> there is a phenomenon of male-female God, according to Biblical sentence "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis, 1,26), which is Father and Mother. Creation of a human being: **"So God created humans to be like himself;**

182 Bakic-Hayden, Milica. *Žena i religija: postanje, drugo stanje i stanje danas (Woman and religion: Origin, Different State and Situation Today)* in *Mapiranje mizoginije u Srbiji: praksa i diskursi II (Mapping Misogyny in Serbia; Practice and Discourse II)*, ed. Marina Blagojević, Belgrade: AZIN, 2005: 322-340.

183 *Ibid.*, p. 322-344.

184 Pades, Ilana. *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach*, Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 30.

185 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

186 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

187 Gnosticism was a wide movement in 2nd century, in Greco-Roman world, with a key idea that only knowledge i.e. *gnosis* leads a person to salvation. Most known teachers and founders of Gnosticism were Basilides and Valentius. Nevertheless, in 4th century when the Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, Valentinians and other Gnostic groups were expelled and chased away, so that we lose any trace of them. See: Pagels, Elaine, *The Gnostic Gospels*, Vintage Books, New York, 1989.

he made men and women", means that the image of God is male and female. Elaine Pagels speaks about different connotation of wisdom in Gnostic sources such as "first universal creator", "enlightenment of human beings", "incorruptible Wisdom" and moving force for Adam and Eve, teaching them self-awareness, and skills to find food and bear offspring.<sup>188</sup> Wisdom (*sophia*) had a decisive role in creation of Adam and Eve when giving the life to Adam. There is an extraordinary story about it in Gnostic texts found in Nag Hamadi in Egypt. Namely, wisdom breathed a part of itself into Adam, but as he was incapable to stand up, wisdom sent her daughter Zoe, giving her name Eve (*from alive*), to help Adam become alive. When he opened his eyes he said to her "You will be called a *mother of the living*, because you are the one who gave me life".<sup>189</sup> Pagels discloses that in Greek, feminine term for wisdom *sophia*, has the the same meaning as Hebrew feminine term *hokmah*.<sup>190</sup>

In fact these comments intend to diverge the story about the sin, fall, evil and suffering to that what humans discovered in disobedience toward God which is freedom of choice, possibility to differentiate between good and evil as well as independence. In a certain way their act could be perceived as the moment of becoming mature. Adam and Eve are like children who at a certain age become mature and separate from their parents. In this way they show that it is time for them to leave their parent, the Creator, and that they take over the responsibility for their lives. In most of Protestant denominations the concept of complementarity, prevailing even today in the Catholic and Orthodox church, has been replaced with the concept of equal possibilities, rights and obligations so that consequently for a long time now women have been granted access to all positions in the church as well as joint action on promotion of Christian teaching.

### 3.2. Concept of Gender Relations in Christian Tradition

The message which Jesus Christ brought to the Jewish people and to human beings in general was God's word of salvation, consolation, hope, and more over, love and joy for all, no matter the origin, race and sex. He invited people to come back to the belief in one God, to love their neighbors, to have solidarity and serve God through service to people. His message was testified by both men and women, since he opened the door of salvation and love for all. In his time, the Jewish society was divided into classes, with the elites of Pharisees and Sadducees who ruled the temple in Jerusalem so that Jesus' egalitarian message resounded strongly as a

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188 Pagels, Elaine. *The Gnostic Gospels*, p. 54.

189 Young, Serenity. *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women*, p. 54-55.

190 Pagels, Elaine. *The Gnostic Gospels*, p. 54.

hurricane, caring a threat for Roman occupier but also to religious Jewish elite which had monopoly over the temple and religious issues in the community. Jesus teaches equality of all people before God, and opens the door of salvation even to the biggest sinners offering mercy and love to everyone who offers his or her love to other human being. By accepting everyone who was seeking God and help, with his example he showed that in God's Kingdom there is place for all: "In Christ all are one and of equal birth".<sup>191</sup>

One of most important improvements which Jesus did in the patriarchic environment segregated by class and gender, was his meeting with Samaritan woman at the well. One could say that the essence of gender policy advocated by Jesus is contained in this meeting. On his road to Galilee Jesus was passing through Samaria. He was tired and he paused at Jacob's well to take some rest:

**Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well. Jesus asked her, "Would you please give me a drink of water?", "You are a Jew," she replied, "and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink of water when Jews and Samaritans won't have anything to do with each other?" Jesus answered, "You don't know what God wants to give you, and you don't know who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you would ask me for the water that gives life." (John 4, 7-20)**

This meeting testifies Jesus' determination to recommend the Word of God – the water that gives life – to anyone who will demand to drink from that well, but it also reflects egalitarian vision of gender relations, in which a woman is not only equal participant in conversation but chosen to receive "the water that gives life" and convey it to her people, as explained in the continuation of the story:

She was a privileged woman in that Christ confessed to her that not usually confessed even to His disciples... thus this woman has an individual prominence in that she was among the number who sought Him not (Isaiah, 65:1). Further He did not usually offer His gifts unasked, but waited until they sought or implored.<sup>192</sup>

Still, for a long time this story was - in church dogmatic teachings - used for condemnation of sin, although in the text there are no indications of condemnation. Therefore in the analysis of this meeting Svenka Savić concludes:

What became a part of dogmatic teaching today is that the Samaritan woman is a person to whom Jesus reveals himself as Messiah, although she is a sinner. Such orientation must be changed toward the fact that it is really a remarkable thing that Jesus revealed himself as Messiah to a self-confident woman with such extraordinary qualities, that he himself respected her in the dialogue which she

191 Soelle, Dorothee. *On Earth as in Heaven: A liberation Spirituality of Sharing*, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, p. 22.

192 Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Women of the Bible*, p. 236-237.

very skillfully had with him and believed him and revealed that love to others. Both components should be emphasized in today's church practice, equally.<sup>193</sup>

Jesus with this conversation and meeting breaks all norms of conventional behavior of that time Jewish society, in which one would not speak openly to a woman in a public, and especially because she was from Samaria, a tribe which separated from the orthodox Jewish orientation. Therefore his disciples were surprised by this, but did not ask for his reasons out of respect towards him. Jesus in this way sends a clear message to his students and people. Svenka Savić in the analysis of this story says that "Christianity, like Islam, allowed for women to obtain a better status in comparison to the status they had before. Still, religious practice altered such starting position into discrimination toward women".<sup>194</sup> Jesus' tradition was directed toward emancipation of women and vulnerable groups against patriarchal andocentric structures and value system which dehumanized the weak and powerless.

### 3.2.1. Women and Education in Christian Tradition

The previous story about Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well depicts the concept of gender policy offered by Christianity through the actions of Jesus Christ. A woman is namely, invited to follow the Word of God, to go with Jesus and his disciples, to receive the message directly from him and to convey it faithfully to her people as a legitimate representative accepted by Jesus and her people. It is not adequately recorded in historical sources how much and in which way women were included in transmission of Jesus' teaching immediately after his crucifixion and resurrection. The reason for this being "hegemonic historiography" supporting the exclusion of women; but what we know for certain is that Mary Magdalene participated in spreading of the good news of resurrection of the Lord, Jesus Christ,<sup>195</sup> whom he appeared to, and spoke with her and the disciples (*John* 20, 1-18). Mary Magdalene diligently worked on it, although Christian sources neglect her role and work directed at speeding of Christian teaching and joy of belief in God. Mary Magdalene in later interpretations of the New Testament texts appears as a model of the sinner, and she is not recognized as one of Jesus' followers in the Christian teaching. Her status did not change in dogmatic and moral teaching of Protestant denominations neither, since Luther, for example, considered her a sinner, like Calvin who

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193 Savić, Svenka. *Feministička teologija (Feminist theology)*, p. 71.

194 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

195 Moltmann-Wendel, Elisabeth. *Motherhood or Friendship in The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology*, ed. Shussler Fiorenza E Orbis Books, London, 1996, p. 292.



maintained that Jesus was followed by women which had "bad reputation".<sup>196</sup> When the Council of Ephesus proclaimed Mary – the Mother of God (*theotokos*), the model of pious Virgin Mary became the paradigm to which all women should aspire.

In this way the tradition of friendship was significantly suppressed. Women who had friendly relationship with Jesus did not find their place in faith. Mary the Magdalene became not-legitimate. As "Three Mary's", women remain lost in local cults or they renounce their biblical stance and march in the lines of growing army of martyrs and saints.<sup>197</sup>

Women, therefore, did not manage to obtain the legitimacy of equal participation in public life guaranteed to them by Jesus', but were or suppressed into the sphere of family life or were able to accomplish themselves only through the role of Mary, the Mother of God, "since in her and like her all women perfected their vocation and received the power of nurturing, cleaning and influencing a human being, separating it from the earth, bringing it to the heaven like widows or unwed girls so that they would submit themselves and their lives to church".<sup>198</sup>

Interpretations of the Epistles attributed to St. Paul established parameters for female activity outside of the family life:

**"The women must not be allowed to speak. They must keep quiet and listen, as the Law of Moses teaches. If there is something they want to know, they can ask their husbands when they get home. It is disgraceful for women to speak in church" (Corinthians I, 14: 34-36)**

Interpretations of this Paul's Epistle largely influenced destiny of women in Christian churches although according to some exegetes it is questionable whether Paul wrote the entire text of the *Epistles*. Professor I. Dugandžić thinks that someone else inserted these comments (*Corinthians* 14, 33-36). The ones who did not approve of women speaking publicly did this, says professor Dugandžić, since these comments were inserted before so called pastoral *Epistles* (1 and 2 Timothy; Titus) were written, which proves that St. Paul receded such opinion before Jewish tradition and predominant cultural practice.<sup>199</sup> Ljiljana Matković about this says that his reasons were not of theological but of sociological and disciplinary nature.<sup>200</sup> In further study of possible reasons for such attitudes, Lj. Matković mentioned the fact that women until then had a major role in spreading of heresy, and that Paul wanted to impede such actions and therefore set motherhood as a way of salvation for

196 *Ibid.*, p. 295.

197 *Ibid.*, p. 294.

198 Palunko, V. *Žena na svom mjestu i socijalno pitanje sretno riješeno (Woman in her place and social issue happily solved)*, Book I, *Vrijednost žene (Woman's Value)*, Leonova Tiskara, Spljet, 1913, p. 437.

199 See more in: Anić, Rebeka. *Više od zadanog: žena u crkvi u Hrvatskoj u 20. Stoljeću (More than Given: Women in the Church in Croatia)*, Franjevački institut za kulturu mira/Franciscan Institute for Peace Culture, Split, 2003, p. 48-49, and Dugandžić Ivan, *Žene u Bibliji (Women in Bible)*, in *Svesci* 1994, 82-84, p. 31-37.

200 Matković, Ljiljana. *Žena i crkva (Woman and Church)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1973, p. 55-56.



women. This, according to her should not have a dogmatic importance since this was a disciplinary measure in a certain social context and should therefore be separated from Paul's doctrinal opinions.<sup>201</sup>

Cady Stanton speaks about restrictions the canon law imposed to women through centuries: "framed by the priests, compiled as early ninth century, has come down in effect to the nineteenth making women subordinate in civil law. Under canon law wives were deprived of both person and property".<sup>202</sup> Still, in the early period as well as in the Middle Ages, women found ways to get education but also to educate others. In first Christian communities women took active participation in promotion of God's word and teaching. Girls and widows were mostly involved in this since they were able to dedicate themselves to church and serve it.

**St. Macrina** (327-379) was one of these women whose life was described by her brother Gregory, comparing her with virgin St. Thecla, a student and follower of St. Paul. She was the oldest child in her family and she received her education from her mother. Although she was engaged at 12, after the death of her fiancée she decided to dedicate her life to church. She founded first female commune or community, and then community for men too. She was an excellent philosopher and thanks to her brother, her work *Dialogue on the Soul and Resurrection* remained alive.<sup>203</sup> Paul Trebilco gathered huge number of data on educated women but also on women that were included in the educational process in state schools in Asia Minor. So it was mostly claimed that in Greek cities, but in the whole Roman Empire as well, women did not have access to education which Trebilco rejects as incorrect since according to the writings he studied there is a whole list of names of women that performed different public functions in schools (*gymnasiarch*), like:

- *prytanis* – the highest civic office comparable to our office of mayor;
- *stephanophoros* – literally the one who wears the crown – the title of principal civic official;
- *agonothetis* – the official responsible for athletic contests and for competition in music and drama.<sup>204</sup>

In the Middle Ages we see large number of women prominent in religious sciences, spirituality, music, philosophy and literature. These were mostly wives, sisters and mothers of tsars, and church authorities, as well as women from higher social classes privileged in their education since they had private teachers and were, within the family setting, able to acquire and upgrade their knowledge.

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201 *Ibid.*, p. 56-57.

202 Cady Stanton, Elisabeth. *The Woman's Bible*, Prometheus Books, 1999, p. 168.

203 Young, Serenity. *An Anthology of Secret Texts by and about Women*, p. 57-58.

204 Saucy L. Robert and Tenelshof K. Judith. *Women and Men in Ministry*, p. 281.

**Hildegard of Bingen** (1098-1179), today known as prophetess *Germania* testified God's message with her mystic visions and monk's life, and more than anything she lived and promoted love. Very early, when she was eight she entered a monastery, but her health was fragile and she was often sick which represented an aggravating living circumstance in the Middle Ages monasteries which were not comfortable at all.

In her revelations she offered to the world her therapeutic gifts by writing about herbs and healing:

Her complex medicine (Ganzheitsmedizin) according to which body and spirit need to be cherished and healed mutually, as well as prevention and development of strong will and life strength, correspond to today's attitudes.<sup>205</sup>

Although she did not have classical education but a theological one, her knowledge was extraordinary so that popes and kings, as well as ordinary people, wanted to speak to her: "Her prophecies were taken seriously, by everyone, including the pope. Her major work is *"Scivias"*, a record of her life and visions which she began dictating when she was forty three."<sup>206</sup>

What is especially important is that she, with her independent engagement, established two female monasteries and afterwards they also gained autonomy, which meant that they were not under protectorate of male monasteries. This meant that a community of nuns could choose their own overwoman and a confessor.<sup>207</sup> Hildegard left a strong impression on the Catholic church but also on people which even today celebrate her as saint and prophetess although she was not officially beatified by the Church.

**Christine de Pizan** (1365-1430) was a very educated woman, thanks first to her father and later her husband, who supported and encouraged her. But, as she remained a young widow, at the age of 25, with three children to be fed, she started writing, and so became first woman in France to professionally perform this job, and earn for her living in this way.<sup>208</sup> While performing her job she fought against numerous limitations which were imposed on women, since as a devout Christian she believed that the oppression over women can be suppressed through faith.<sup>209</sup> In her famous work *The City of Women* she discussed with three ladies: Reason, Sincerity

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205 Hegediš-Kovačević, Katalina. *Žene u rimokatoličkoj crkvi: Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179): Profetissa Germaniae (Women in Roman Catholic Church: Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179): Profetissa Germaniae)*, in *Feministička teologija (Feminist theology)*, ed. Savić Svenka, p. 121.

206 Young, Serenity. *An Anthology of Secret Texts by and About Women*, p. 64.

207 Hegediš-Kovačević, Katalina. *Žene u rimokatoličkoj crkvi: Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179): Profetissa Germaniae, (Women in Roman Catholic Church: Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179): Profetissa Germaniae)* p. 125.

208 Yalom, Marilyn. *A History of the Wives*, p. 81.

209 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

and Justice, and she attacked misogynous contents in the literature of that time.<sup>210</sup> Due to the text in which she defends the rights of women it is considered that this book represents “a prefeminist utopia.”<sup>211</sup>

**Margarita of Navarra** (1492-1549) used her noble origin and influence she had and helped reformation and protected the followers of it. As older sister of the king Francis I from France and a follower of the bishop Meaux she corresponded with Calvin ensuring for the region of Navarra to become one of the important points of Reformist movement. She was very educated, but her works were mainly theological – she mostly spoke about God’s love. In her poem *Prison* she speaks about this world as a soul prison and that the soul will become free only when united with God.

The abovementioned examples show how certain women from privileged classes of the society had the chance to get education and in this way influence women and men although this was not the official policy of nor church or state in the Middle Ages. “Motherhood was generally a desired state, seen as the fulfillment of woman's God-given role... For economic, social, religious, and emotional reasons children were perceived as a blessing.”<sup>212</sup> Since women, especially girls and widows lived in monasteries and convents their possibility to get education was higher, mostly however in religious sciences and possibly philosophy and literature. Still, women were not able to obtain social recognition in this sphere so that for centuries the issue of education was related to religion, and women were educated within their families or in convents. Only at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we see positive steps forward in reformed denominations, which were the first to open their door to women at schools and universities.

At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, major discussions were held in the Catholic Church about the way in which women should be educated and which type of education is most suitable for them. Rebeka J. Anić analyzed magazines *Kršćanska škola* and female magazine *Za vjeru i dom*<sup>213</sup>, which were published in Croatia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and she came to conclusion that even then they were discussing the physical and psychological characteristics of boys and girls. In female magazine *Za vjeru i dom* it is surprising that Radmanović advocates for attitudes in favor of female inferiority in comparison to men, and refers thus to the story about the creation: “Weaker in body, gentler in heart, with reason lower than man’s”<sup>214</sup>

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210 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

211 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

212 Yalom, Marilyn. *A History of the Wives*, p. 70.

213 *Christian School and For Faith and Home*

214 Anić, Rebeka Jadranka. *Više od zadanog (More than Given)*, p. 185, see also Radmanović, “Katolički feminizam” (*Catholic Feminism*) in *Za vjeru i dom*, 1908, No. 4, p. 100.

Further he mentions the teaching of Church fathers and says:

Knowledge is not for women, not because they are not capable of learning, but because they would lose their humbleness, their main virtue. Holy Fathers and knowledgeable people do not recommend science to women but piety, obedience and humbleness.<sup>215</sup>

In the educational process itself the concept of separation of male and female schools was advocated for, with the explanation that it is especially inappropriate to educate boys and girls together due to their physical and sex differences which should be especially nurtured and developed so that later they would be able to accept some desired characteristics of the opposite sex.<sup>216</sup> The most desirable sphere of education is the religious education, which should serve as natural continuation of the mother's upbringing from home. Religious education is preferred to any other type of education about which the Bishop Palunko says:

A woman with little world knowledge but a lot of religious one... that is a serious woman, humble, smart, neat, predictive and dedicated with her soul and body to the happiness of her husband... If she does not know how to have long speeches, but knows how to act upon the issues, than that is all God, people, family and the society ask of her.<sup>217</sup>

Edith Stein extensively elaborated the issue of the education of women by summarizing all opinions of the Catholic Church about specificities of women and men and the need to have a special approach to education of women according to her nature:

May the education of young women lead to acquisition and confirmation of the specificity of female being which includes, due to the will of God, a place right by the man, which is not his place but is neither a degrading role which does not suit personal human dignity.<sup>218</sup>

Similar attitudes are found in the Orthodox Christianity in which women are not denied the right to education but it is highlighted that this education should serve her children's nurturing and deepening of the faith. In the analysis of male and female principle of action according to God's gifts, Evdokimov does not question the intellectual capacity of women, but he thinks that it does not bring joy to them:

A woman too intellectual like a man, the builder of the world, will be deprived of her essence since she is invited to bring in to the culture femininity as a special form of the being; and irreplaceable form of existence. A man created science, art, philosophy, even religion as systems, but these systems make a fearful

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215 *Ibid.*, p. 100.

216 *Ibid.*, 187.

217 *Ibid.*, see also, Palunko V. *Žena na svome mjestu i socijalno pitanje sretno riješeno*, (*Woman in her place and social issue happily solved*), Book II, *Dužnost žene* (*Woman's Duty*), Leonova Tiskara, Spljet, 1913, p. 32.

218 Stein, Edith. *Žena* (*Woman*), p. 96.

objectification of the truth. Luckily, there are women, and they are predestined to become the bearers of such values, it is their realization and life... To maintain the world and people as a mother and save it as a virgin by giving her soul to the world – that is woman's calling.<sup>219</sup>

Such attitudes show that a woman could have been included in the educational sphere of most religious education and service to the church and faith. The church established first schools and theological departments on which basis later secular universities were established, but women did not have access to them until 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3.2.2. Women and Economic Status in Christian Practice

In the *New Testament* the issue of inheritance is not regulated, and it was later defined in the Canon law which was greatly influenced by the law of the countries in which Christianity was established as state religion. Economic rights of women were mostly connected to marital status, the control over which was held by the church or state. In the first three centuries of Christianity, most Christians were wed according to local laws and customs, since there was no specific church marriage ceremony. Eastern churches in the fourth century gave priests a more significant role in terms of marriage, in the sense of blessings offering, and until 9<sup>th</sup> century Church took over the control over the issues of marital relations. In 11<sup>th</sup> century in all countries under the Church jurisdiction marital law was completely under the Church.<sup>220</sup>

Of course, the biggest influence was that of the Roman law with elaborated functional legal system, in which Christian moral teaching is integrated, so that the Church had its influence in this new area, especially due to the fact that it was regulating the issues of marriage and family law. The economic status of a woman was inseparable from her marital status since by entering into marriage both man and woman gained the right to dispose with the inheritance. According to the church law, the property of woman, her time and service were in the hands of her husband. The reformation did not liberate women of their slavery position either. E. Cady Stanton says that ninety-five Luther's thesis on the door of Wittenberg Church did not confirm neither natural nor religious equality of women and men.<sup>221</sup>

"Unlike France and England which had accepted the church jurisdiction of the marriage ceremony, Italy was slow to give up its civil ceremonies in favor of religious

219 Evdokimov, Pavle. *Žena i spasenje sveta (Woman and Salvation of the World)*, p. 187.

220 Swidler Anderson, Arlene. *Marriage Among the Religions of the World*, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, p. 40-41. See also Milaš, Nikodim. *Pravoslavno crkveno pravo (Orthodox Church Law)*, Mostar, 1902, p. 613-614.

221 Cady, Stanton E. *The Woman's Bible*, Prometheus Books, 1999, p. 164.

ones. Marriage was a firmly family affair, the goal of which was to provide benefits for each of the two families.<sup>222</sup> It would consist out of the dowry which the woman would bring to her husband's family; the prestige gained by connections with an influential family; or, simply, by establishing family relations which one could utilize if needed. Women were not able to choose their marriage partners, since that would destroy the possibility offered to families in gaining benefit and profit by the matrimonial partnership.

So, for instance, the famous writer Boccaccio (1313 -1375) writes about how some girls and women could not even go to church to attend weddings, because they might find themselves in the situation of meeting an inappropriate man and succumb to the temptation; in extreme situations they were forbidden even to look out of the window, because in those times it was customary for men to walk underneath the windows trying to catch a girl's look.<sup>223</sup> The reason was of economic nature: an unexpected marriage could disrupt the family's plans and her survival in the harsh reality of the medieval life, which required them to pay attention to the protection of the family's interests, and arranged marriages were the best way to achieve that. Since fathers were obliged to pay dowry for daughters, which was a public matter since it was registered in the national registry, some families had been saving from the day the child was born in order to ensure a respectable dowry, which was not intended only to help the newlyweds to start a new life, but, rather, confirmed the woman's value in the community.<sup>224</sup> In countries where Roman law was applied, the rule was that the father has to pay dowry for the daughter, and if he failed to do so, the marriage would be, basically, annulled.<sup>225</sup>

Marriage was a norm for everyone and the frame in which economic security and political aspirations were obtained. It was therefore much easier to force women to remain married than today, since the institution of marriage was supported by the Church, state and family, says Yalom Marilyn<sup>226</sup> according to regulations of the Orthodox Church rules, marriage institute is subject to church and civil legislation:

The Church should prescribe the laws and judge in marital disputes but it recognizes the right of the state in everything related to civic and especially proprietary side of marital contracts. The jurisdiction about the dowry and support of spouses and children falls under the jurisdiction of the competent country, although this was also under the jurisdiction of the Church, still the Church does not consider that its general marriage law was violated due to this shift of juris-

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222 Yalom, Marilyn. *A History of the Wives*, p. 83.

223 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

224 Klapish-Zuber, Christiane. *The Griselda Complex in Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, translated by Lidia Cochrane, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London, 1985, p. 214.

225 Yalom, Marilyn. *A History of the Wives*, p. 47.

226 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

diction... The issues of divorce are under the competence of the church court, and proprietary relations in such cases are solved by the civil court.<sup>227</sup>

In the Catholic Church the issues of marriage and the economic status of women in marriage are settled in the Codes of the Canon law which were under the strong influence of the Roman law. When comparing the Canon law Codes from 1917 and 1983, Josip Delić says that Pius - Benedict Code from 1917 was discriminatory to laics and women:

After the wedding a woman becomes dependent on her husband in everything, so she has to agree with his residence, she receives the status of her husband and she is dependent on it relating to Canonical effect, and her husband represents her in legal issues...<sup>228</sup>

New Code from 1983 regulates the legal status of a woman on the basis of the new course of gender policy established by Second Vatican Council, but a lot of time needed to pass in order for legal regulations to come alive in the practice and change the mentality and cultural practice of the people.

### 3.2.3. Participation of Women in Public Worship

Women have been participating in the church life from its very beginning, and even today they are most faithful and numerous members of congregations. Women therefore have not been forbidden to visit the church and perform rituals together with men, but there were and still are certain rules on women's behavior in the church during worship. At the beginning, there was no church in today's sense of the word, nor was there hierarchical structure with clearly determined ministerial functions. Jesus' followers were first missionaries and founders of first Christian communities, and the way in which they were organized and the service offered definitely differed from today's church rituals. Rituals have a central role in Christian communities, and it is very important what women's position is in the ritual life of the church. The report of a Roman historian Pliny the Younger (62-114) was of primary importance for the service of women in early Christian communities. At the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, he was a governor in the province of Bithynia at the Black Sea. In his letter to Emperor Trajan<sup>229</sup> Pliny, for example, mentions that among the accused Christian women in his province there were two deaconesses,

227 Milaš, Nikodim. *Pravoslavno crkveno pravo (Orthodox Church Law)*, Mostar, 1902, p. 616-617.

228 Delić, Josip. *Žena u Zakoniku kanonskog prava (Woman in the Canon law Code)*, Bogoslovska smotra LX, 1990, p. 330.

229 See: Pliny the Younger. *Pisma (Letters)*, translated by A. Vilhar, SKZ, Belgrade, 1982, p. 364-367.



“servants”.<sup>230</sup> In his letter he uses the term *ministrae* (Latin equivalent for *diakonos* - deaconess), which confirms the existence of female deacons.<sup>231</sup> I will speak more about this in the following chapter in which I will elaborate the issues of female ministry.

Women were therefore participating in religious life of the first Christian communities but there were still certain rules about behavior of women and men. Based on *Deuteronomy* of St. Paul, it is possible to conclude that he considered that men and women should behave politely in the church and that women should not dress in a provoking manner, wear ceremonial clothes and jewels because they would be drawing the attention to themselves and caused curse for the church:

**„I would like for women to wear modest and sensible clothes. They should not have fancy hairdos, or wear expensive clothes, or put on jewellery made of gold or pearls. 10 Women who claim to love God should do helpful things for other and they should learn by being quiet and paying attention.“**  
(*Timothy I, 2: 9-10*)

Similar message is found in *Peter's Epistles* in which moderation and modesty in dressing and behaving are highlighted, and this is more a message for the ones who do not believe than a verbal expression of faith (*Peter I, 3, 1-6*). But, in order to make a distinction between the appropriate clothes and clothes that draw attention it is important to take into account the intention: does one come to the church because they are dedicated to God or is their aim to draw attention on themselves? This intention will also dictate the choice of clothes which the person will wear to the church. Since there are no more laws regulating the rituals and relations among people, and we have ethical messages of *Decalogue* and Jesus' teaching about encouragement of love, forgiveness and salvation through faith and good deeds, there are no special legal regulation about the participation of women in life and rituals of the new community as well. Women receive sacraments; participate in the Eucharist and other prayers and the life of the community. Nevertheless even in the first centuries and post-apostolic period customary forms of worship were introduced, lead by bishops and priests while “the role of women in faith communities was significant at the time of their founding, but marginalized during the periods of power control. Still the support of women was again expected in times of crisis.”<sup>232</sup>

Today women actively participate in liturgy and services in Catholic and Orthodox churches, and according to the Canon Code women were always **recognized**

230 Vukomanović, Milan. *Rano hrišćanstvo od Isusa do Hrista (Early Christianity from Jesus to Christ)*, Čigoja štampa, Belgrade, 2001, p. 41.

231 Von Gerhard Lohfink. *Weibliche Diakone im Neuen Testament*, in: Gerhard Dautzenberg / Helmut Merklein/Karlheinz Müller, *Die Frau im Urchristentum*, Quaestiones disputatae 95, Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1983, p. 320-338.

232 Kuburić, Zorica. *Žena i crkve (Woman and Churches)*, in *Feministička teologija (Feminist Theology)*, Savić, Svenka . 2. edition, Novi Sad, 2002. p. 44.



**the right to offer the sacrament of baptism**, but only in the case of necessity. When a layman and a laywoman are present, the advantage will be given to the man. According to new Canon Code women can also assume some pastoral services: perform liturgy of the word, lead pastoral prayers, baptize and offer the holy communion; last blessing; the sacraments; local ordinary, allow women to set sacramentals.<sup>233</sup> In practice the place at the altar is still reserved for men only, since the canonical regulation 1024 says: "Only baptized males validly receive sacred orders".<sup>234</sup> Participation of women in pastoral services is not any more the issue of legal system but

of cultural practice and readiness of local churches to give such positions to women. The issue of sitting and standing in the church was differently arranged in churches, depending on the culture and customs of Christian people. Sometimes it was regulated in such a way that women were sitting behind the men; sometimes women were seated on the left and men on the right; today in most of Catholic churches men and women sit together, but in the Orthodox churches women still sit on the left and men on the right side although it is not the rule in all churches. This has been present in the Orthodox churches since the time of Byzantine Empire and it corresponds to position of icons on the iconostasis (Mary, mother of Jesus sits on the left and Christ on the right).

Until *Second Vatican Council* Catholic women were usually wearing scarves during liturgy but this has been abolished in practice of most churches. It is different in the Orthodox churches where it depends on the culture and customs of people, but lately they revived the issue of female head covering during the service. This practice today is present in Russian Orthodox Church.

### **3.3. Participation of Women in Public and Political Life of Community**

Opposed to Judaism, women in Christianity were not excluded from the process of education and the study of the *Holy Scriptures*; in fact they were with Jesus, and later with missionaries, conveying the Word of God and the joy of faith. Nevertheless, the church was very soon patriarchized, women marginalized and restored to the sphere of their family life, except the ones which dedicate themselves to service of God and church. With an aim to deconstruct the layers of predominant patriarchal exegesis, feminist theology represents a challenge for bibliologist in development of a model of biblical revelation according to which the New Testa-

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233 Delić, Josip. *Žena u Zakoniku crkvenog prava (Woman in the Canon law Code)*, Bogoslovska smotra LX, 1990, p. 339-341.

234 *Ibid.* p. 341.

ment will represent the prototype as well as the archetype. Elizabeth Shussler Fiorenza considers that: "A Hermeneutical understanding of Scripture as prototype not only has a room for, but requires the transformation of its own models of Christian faith and community."<sup>235</sup>

Today we cannot speak about political participation in Christian countries since religious laws are not being applied and the church is separated from the state. But, we can see what role models of women we find in the Holy Texts and in practice of Christian communities, and in which way they shaped and are still shaping gender relations and participation of women in the public sphere.

### 3.3.1. Models of Female Rulers, Prophetess and Priests in Christian history

#### 3.3.1.1. Mary – A Woman Exalted Above all Women

Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, in Christian tradition is understood as Mother of God (*theotokos*), Pure Virgin, and later Eternal Virgin, who with immaculate conception gave birth to her son Jesus, Messiah and Savior of the humankind. That is why it is said that Mary corrected Eve's mistakes. In the Christian tradition Mother Mary has a special place due to her role, a unique one in the history of the humankind. Her figure is respected in the whole world and in many countries there are cults of Mary Mother of God, to whom especially women pray for health, fertility and other wishes. If compared with the role and importance she has in the Christian teaching, it can be said that the New Testament does not mention her a lot.

Mary comes for a poor peasant family from Nazareth, from the tribe of Judah – from the lineage of David (*Mathew* 1, 1-17), confirming the genealogical linkage of all God's prophets and messengers. From previous Biblical paragraphs it is possible to understand that she got married to Joseph, with whom she later had four more sons: James, Joseph, Judas and Simon, as well as several daughters not named by the evangelist (*Mathew* 13, 55). Christians accept the dogma about the immaculate conception and Mary's virginity. According to their interpretation of Jewish prophecies, the coming of Messiah and his virginal conception were announced, as described by the Prophet Isaiah: **"But the Lord will still give you proof. A virgin is pregnant; she will have a son and will name him Immanuel!"** (*Isaiah* 7: 14)

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235 Shussler Fiorenza, Elizabeth. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983, p. 33.

Mary was chosen, out of all women in the world, for a unique historical role which until then was not given to anyone. Humble and dedicated to God, young girl was chosen to become the mother of the Jesus Christ, the Savior. She was related to Zachariah and Elisabeth who remained pregnant at elderly age, and therefore able to recognize God's gift in her womb (*Luke, 1, 39-45*). The *Gospel* describes her meeting with angel Gabriel and her opinion about God's decision:

**"One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you." Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end." Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen? I am not married!" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. Nothing is impossible for God!" Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said." And the angel left her. (*Luke, 1: 26-38*)**

Mary, namely accepted God's will and choice, which indicates that she was in fact not only a humble, peasant woman but dedicated believer who has been, with her dedicated life, prepared for this role.

### 3.3.1.1.1. Nature of Mother Mary

At the end of the second century, Tertullain, Justinian and Irenaus developed an idea about a new Eve, in the figure of Mary referring to the sentence from *Luke's Gospel*, in which Mary answers to the angel: **"I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said"** (*Luke, 1:37*).

In the Orthodox Christianity comparison of the Mother Mary and Eve is explained through the concept of "ontological chastity". Eve lost her chastity with the first sin, maintaining the evil femininity, and Mary brought back this chastity to Earth.<sup>236</sup> This was still not the concept of Mariology that developed at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> century when asceticism was raising and when people started showing interest in Mary as a symbol and source of service, songs and praise of God.<sup>237</sup>

236 Evdokimov, Pavle. *Žena i spasenje sveta (Woman and Salvation of the World)*, p. 224-225.

237 Radford Ruether, Rosemary. *New Woman/New Earth*, The Seabury Press, New York, p. 48.

Nevertheless, only at the beginning of the fifth century the nature of Mother Mary was seriously studied. Church authorities were divided about it. Namely, exegetical School of Antioch represented by Theodore and his student Nestorius who later became the bishop of Constantinople, preferred her nature of Mother of Christ (*Christokokos*), insisting on her human nature and motherhood in human dimension. They tried to explain that the term Mother of God could suggest danger of the superiority of God himself, but also that such a title is a remnant of ancient polytheistic history in which there was a Mother Goddess. Others did not agree with them, and School of Alexandria proclaimed them heretical, by adopting a decision at the Ecumenical council in Ephesus in 431, that Mary is Mother of God (*Theotokos*).<sup>238</sup> Later, at Lateran Council in 649 the decision was made to make Mary Eternal Virgin and as such she remained a paradigm and inspiration to all women of the world. Centuries later, Pope Pius IX in 1854 proclaimed dogmatic teaching about exemption of Mary from the original sin at the moment when her parents conceived her, since even then she was subject of preparations for the role of the Mother of God. Finally, Pope Pius XII in 1950 proclaimed Mary's assumption into heaven, after her death, which makes her a co-redeemer of human sins. After the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church again highlighted her role:

"Through the gift...of divine motherhood, Mary is united with her Son, the Redeemer, and with his singular graces and offices. By these, the Blessed Virgin is also intimately united with the Church: the Mother of God is a figure of the Church"<sup>239</sup>

Mary is compared to Church, and church is given motherly adjectives since it is the Church that is preserving the faith of Jesus as Mary was preserving the embodied word of God by the Holy Spirit. Paul VI during the Council highlighted that Mary is the Mother of Church, and four years later he clearly defined it in *Credo of the People of God*:

"We believe that the Blessed Mother of God, the New Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven her maternal role with regard to Christ's members, cooperating with the birth and growth of divine life in the souls of the redeemed".<sup>240</sup>

Still, Protestant denominations do not accept dogmas on her exemption from the Original sin and about her motherly service in Heaven:

Mary never magnified herself – only her Lord. Her glorification as the object of worship, her function as an intercessor through whom prayers must be addressed to Christ, her perpetual care of Christ and her present influence over Him are the false creations of Rome.<sup>241</sup>

238 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

239 Pope John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris Mater*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1987, p. 81.

240 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

241 Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Women of the Bible* p. 99.

Today, like before, the figure of the Mother of God is honored throughout the world. Rosemary R. Radford, in elaboration of the issue of Mariology comes back to religious and cultural practice in Egypt in 4<sup>th</sup> century. She speaks about two levels of Mariology: one developed by monks who saw Mary as the "symbol of ascetic spirituality and female virgin soul in her openness toward God,"<sup>242</sup> and other level resulted from folkloric relation toward the Queen of Heaven. In this way Mary is at the same time doctrinary a virgin in Heaven as an object of worship and dedication, who remains very alive and her earthly dimension of mother on Earth to whom women pray during birth or for children, farmer for good harvest and similar.<sup>243</sup> The figure of Mother Mary, Mother of God or Our Lady remains still the model of the most perfect woman to which all women should aspire through renouncement and total dedication to faith. In the spirit of liberation theology, closely connected with feminist theology, Catharina Halkes sees Mary as a symbol of prophetic strength for liberation of women and for development of sorority of people inspired by their faith and dedication.<sup>244</sup>

On the other hand, Hans Küng in his *16 Theses on Women in the Church* highlights the importance of the fullness of Mary's figure:

Only Mariology which does not reject critical interface with biblical documents - which would, instead of representing Mary as an example of submissive servitude, recognize her full femininity and place her in relation to other Biblical and Church female figures - can help the contemporary man better understand Christian message.<sup>245</sup>

Mary therefore can be a prophetic paradigm containing in her a liberating power, but her power and strength are also conveying a symbolic message to all women that these are only advantages and not flaws.

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242 Radford Reuter, Rosemary. *New Woman/New Earth*, p. 50.

243 *Ibid.*, p. 50-51.

244 Gibellini, Rosino. *Teologija dvadesetog stoljeća (Theology of 20th century)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, p. 441.

245 *Ibid.*, p. 441.

### 3.3.1.2. Mary Magdalene – Prototype of a Fallen Woman or Beloved Disciple

In the official church discourse Mary Magdalene did not receive respect or the position she deserves, although her role in Jesus' life was significant. Was Mary Magdalene only a simple sinner from which Jesus expelled seven demons? Or was she an apostle, devoted student, and follower and conveyer of the Word of God? There are no precise data on her origin but taking into account the fact that all Gospels mention word Magdalene with her name Mary, interpreters conclude that she most probably comes from Magdala, small fisherman's town in north Galilee.<sup>246</sup> Since she is not like other women represented through her male representatives – husband, father or son – but exclusively through the place of her origin, there is the opinion that Mary Magdalene did not live with her family at the time when she met Jesus.<sup>247</sup>

We learned the following about Mary from Magdala on the basis of Canonical Gospels:

- that Jesus cured her from seven demons: “His twelve apostles were with him, and so were some women who had been healed of evil spirits and all sorts of diseases. One of the women was Mary Magdalene, who once had seven demons in her. (Luke, 8: 2)
- that she belonged to a group of women who together with male students followed Jesus: “Some women were looking on from a distance. They had come with Jesus to Jerusalem. But even before this they had been his followers and had helped him while he was in Galilee. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of the younger James and of Joseph were two of these women.” (Marc 15: 40)
- that she was under the cross when Jesus was crucified, that she was the first to see him after the resurrection, and that she received the ordered from him to convey this to other disciples: **“Very early on the first day of the week, after Jesus had risen to life, he appeared to Mary Magdalene. Earlier he had forced seven demons out of her”.** (Marc, 16: 9)

Since Mary Magdalene is the only woman whose name is appearing every time and always first when listing the women that followed Jesus, it is considered that her role was important in this group. It is of key importance that all gospels represent

<sup>246</sup> Serenity Young gives certain biographical data about Mary Magdalene which show that she belonged to a noble family; by father Sirius, and mother Eukaria, brother Lazarus and sister Martha, and that together with her brother and sister she owned a fortified city Magdala, Betany and part of Jerusalem. She speaks about these data in her book *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine*. See more in: Young, Serenity. *An Anthology of Secret Texts by and about Women*, p. 73.

<sup>247</sup> Susanne Ruschmann. *Maria von Magdala. Jungerin-Apostolin-Galubensvorbild*, Katholische Bibelwerk e. V., Stuttgart, 2003, p. 9.

Mary Magdalene as the only person whose testimony can confirm the continuity of Jesus' life from his public actions in Galilee, through the death on the cross, to resurrection. She, namely, was with him in Galilee, then she comes to Jerusalem to witness his death on the cross (Marc 15,40/ Mathew 27,55), to see him placed in his grave (Marc 15,47), goes from the cross to the grave (Luke 23,55 without explicit mention of the name), guards the grave (Mathew 27,61). In this way she testifies that Jesus truly died and that the one that was on the cross is not resting in the grave which she found empty on the Easter morning. All Gospels mention her among the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. In John's gospel, she is the witness of the first appearance of the Resurrected and as such was sent by Jesus to disciples, the apostles to announce the good news.<sup>248</sup> Based on all evangelical reports it is only Mary Magdalene who can confirm the continuity of Jesus' "death-burial-resurrection", the continuity that bears tremendous importance to Christian faith.

Although, the Church Fathers, and later Scholastic theologians called Mary Magdalene *apostle of the apostles*,<sup>249</sup> and although in western Christianity her image was preserved as the image of the messenger of the good news until the 16<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>250</sup> in western Christianity Mary Magdalene through the history gradually, but enduringly suffered the transformation from the apostle of the apostles to grave sinner and vert. The reasons for this transformation are multifold. First step toward this new image of Mary Magdalene is blending of the Biblical figure of Mary from Magdala with other female figures from the New Testament. Firstly, the *unnamed woman* from Luke's Gospel (7,36-50) is considered to be the same woman as Mary from Magdala (Luke 8,2). About this sinner, known in the town, who in the house of Pharisee Simeon spread oil on Jesus' legs, Luke narrates immediately before the mentioning of women that inherit Jesus among whom is Mary Magdalene as well. The sin of unnamed woman from Luke 7 was promptly defined as prostitution although the text does not say so. This "sin" of the unnamed woman is mentioned in relation to *seven demons* from which Jesus cured Mary Magdalene. What was Mary from Magdala cured from really is not clear from the Gospels. Demon possession at that time could be any physical illness as well as epilepsy, and the number seven is to symbolize high degree of the possession. Based on Luke 8,2 it is possible to conclude that Mary was completely taken over by a serious illness and that Jesus returned her identity to her. Mary from Magdala is therefore represented as a woman who felt unlimited liberating God's power in her own body.

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248 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

249 Pope John Paul II in his apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* also mentions this (John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter On The Dignity And Vocation Of Women On The Occasion Of The Marian Year*, Zagreb, Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1989, p. 49, note 38).

250 Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel. *Ein eigener Mensch werden. Frauen um Jesus*, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1980, p. 85.



Both these stories from Luke were later related to a story from John's Gospel. He also speaks about a woman who anointed Jesus (John, 12). According to him this happened in Bethany, in the house of Lazarus, brother of Martha and Mary. In John's Gospel it is Mary from Bethany that is anointing Jesus' legs and wipes them with her hair.<sup>251</sup> This story is completely different than the one in Luke, and Mary from Magdala is not occurring in any of the anointment stories. It only the same name *Mary*, and it was enough to identify her with Mary from Bethany anointing Jesus and the unnamed sinner from Luke's gospel. Identification with Mary from Bethany gave Mary Magdalene contemplative markings.<sup>252</sup>

This complex process of merging of different evangelical female figures into one happened gradually, and the final touch came from Gregory the Great in his sermons, most probably at the end of 6<sup>th</sup> century. This still did not represent the end of further transformation of Mary from Magdala. During time this figure of Mary from Magdala was also merged with a historical person of Mary from Egypt from the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The legend says that she was a former prostitute, who after her conversion spent almost 40 years in desert as repented sinner. Apparently her penance clothing was only her hair, and angels fed her.<sup>253</sup> This created a new image of Mary Magdalene with almost no trace of Biblical Mary from Magdala but an image representing a mosaic comprised of different elements: Jesus' friend, former prostitute who is in fact a converted sister of Martha from Bethany, living a secluded life of a repented sinner. Only in 1517, Jacques Lefevre (*Faber Stapulensis*) subjected such an image of her to critical analysis and singled out different female figures. This caused a great exegetic discussion, during which church scholars confirmed the unity of her figure, and Jacques Lefevre was excommunicated from the Church. The rehabilitation of the Biblical figure of Mary Magdalene was seriously revisited only in 20<sup>th</sup> century and it lasted until 1978 when Mary Magdalene received her memorial day in Roman Calendar of Saints.<sup>254</sup>

In the Eastern Church this merging of three different female characters into the figure of Mary from Magdala did not happen. Biblical Mary from Magdala was celebrated as "the one that carries the ointments" on the Easter morning, as student and first witness. Until today the Eastern Church celebrates the holyday of *Myrophoren* (Carrier of Ointments) on the second Sunday after Easter and on 22<sup>nd</sup> of July the "Holyday of Saint Carrier of Ointments and Equal to the Apostles Mary from Magdala".<sup>255</sup>

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251 Ruschmann, Susanne. *Maria von Magdala. Jungerin-Apostolin-Galubensvorbild*, p. 13.

252 *Ibid.*, 14.

253 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

254 *Ibid.*, p. 19-20.

255 *Ibid.*, p. 15.



Gnostic *Gospels* show us the other side of her personality connected to her relation with Jesus and her role of a "beloved disciple". In *Gospels of Philip* (63,30-64,9) and *Mary* (18,14-15) she is represented as the favorite student or disciple. Does this mean then that favorite or chosen apostles, as a rule, must be founders and leaders of the first Christian communities? According to opinion of some authors, favorite apostle from *John's Gospel* should not only be the founder of John's community but its first leader as well, and they find their argumentation in the last chapter of this *Gospel*.<sup>256</sup> When analyzing this text Diedre Good claims that here the issue is not related to confusion and uncertainty present due to the death of the leader of the community but that this is related to postponement of the return of the Jesus Christ (*parusia*), since editorial comment in the answer to this question highlight that the community should not be afraid even if it happened that the favorite apostle dies before Jesus' coming. Then in chapter 21:15-17 of *John's Gospel*, Peter is given the leader's role although he is defined as a shepherd of the herd and someone who should love Christ more than others and not as the favorite apostle. And since he considered Magdalene favorite it is not necessary that she receives leadership as well, and even if it is, then it can be some special, leading role.<sup>257</sup> Maybe her role of "beloved disciple" includes a special gift to understand Jesus and his mission, like when for example Jesus called Jacob the Righteous his favorite (*Coptic*: merit), by giving him the gift of deep understanding: "My beloved! Behold, I shall reveal to you those things that neither (the) heavens, nor their archons have known."<sup>258</sup>

Then, discussions about her relation to Jesus vary from official, intra-canonical comments that she was a simple sinner whom Jesus cured, to unofficial, non-canonical sources which even bring her in marital and sexual relation with him. Still, there is no valid evidence on that, not even in apocryphal *Gospels*, although *Philip* (59: 6-11) says that she was Jesus' friend, companion (*koinonos*), and that Jesus most probably kissed her on the mouth (63:35-36), and that he loved her more than other apostles. Such practice still does not imply sexual relations and could be understood as a metaphor for spiritual food as well as her capability to understand Jesus better than anyone else. In *Mary's Gospel* Jesus' love towards her is not defined as sexual relationship, but as a relationship of a beloved disciple who had a special status among apostles.<sup>259</sup>

Her leading role in the first community, on the basis of apocrypha *Gospel of Philip*, could be understood as a prototype of a Christian man/woman who is able to understand a deeper spiritual reality and truth. Her conflict with Peter and Andrew who were jealous of her relation with Jesus even before, is - after resurrection -

256 Good, Diedre. *Mariam, the Magdalene and the Mother*, Indiana University Press, 2005, p. 50.

257 Marjanen Antti. *Mary Magdalene a Beloved Disciple in Good Diedre*, p. 50-51.

258 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

259 *Ibid.*, p. 53-54.

brought into connection with the issue of spiritual leadership. Namely, a fact that defends her status of spiritual leader is that the Savior would not have revealed and showed himself to her if he did want to teach male apostles the legitimacy of her leadership role.<sup>260</sup> Namely in 1945, in Nag Hammadi in Egypt, a peasant found books wrapped in leather;<sup>261</sup> which were the *Gospels* buried by the monks in the desert after the Alexandrian bishop Athanasious ordered for all non canonical Gospels to be burnt. Nevertheless, the defenders of the Biblical tradition from 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century did not agree with this, and they hid these scrolls in desert. Today they represent additional sources to official Biblical texts. Along with these texts, even earlier in 1896 in Cairo, the *Gospel of Mary the Magdalene* was discovered as well – in which she is presented as one of the closest Jesus' followers.<sup>262</sup> After her statement that she witnessed Jesus' resurrection, Peter questions her spiritual authority and she answers:

"My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I thought this up myself in my heart? Do you think I am lying about the Savior?" Levi intervened in the dispute and said: Peter you have always been hot-tempered... If the Savior made her worthy who are you to reject her?"<sup>263</sup>

From this dialogue it is possible to conclude that she was very influential in the early Church and that she preached in the newly established communities. Dorothe Soelle says that she was "apostle of the apostles, because she called men to life and resurrection, the men who had become dependent."<sup>264</sup> In this way Magdalene became spiritual authority which is not supporting the established patriarchal image of woman in community and society and surrendering to traditionalists who want to discourage and scare Jesus' followers with unimportant arguments like gender or regulations prohibiting the access to the spiritual. Her role is redefined, especially in feminist discourse, whose argumentation is close to Gnostic, in which *gender* becomes irrelevant factor in the sphere of spiritual maturity and practice since every person has a possibility to become a vessel into which God's light will be poured. For Magdalene the paradigm of friendship is very important. The friendship which she, and other women, had with Jesus. But, since true friendship is possible only from freedom such a model was very soon forgotten and suppressed with new-old hierarchical model of motherly and virginal female role.

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260 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

261 Pagels, Elaine. *The Gnostic Gospels*, p. xiii

262 Hoppkins M., Julie. *Towards a Feminist Christology*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995, p.74.

263 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

264 Soelle, Dorothee. *On Earth as in Heaven: A liberation Spirituality of Sharing*, p. 26.

### 3.3.2. Ordination of Women

Examples of leadership of women in Christian communities are numerous and I will introduce some of them in this part without dividing the issue of ministry and leadership. This issue has been present in Christian churches and denominations for two centuries now, since Protestant churches attained demands for recognition of rights of women to hold sermons and other pastoral functions like men.

The above text about participation of women in different spheres of life testifies that women were, during Christ's life and also in first Christian communities included in the spreading of Jesus' message, and that they were dedicating their lives and properties to this cause. Women, therefore were not denied the right to education – to learn and to teach Christian faith and practice, what is confirmed with numerous examples of women, especially widows and young women who voluntary joined first communities and organized first schools and seminars for new members, in their homes. Nevertheless, the official establishment of the Church for almost two millennia denied women the right to be priests. i.e. to have the right to ordination (*laying on of hands*).

Most of the arguments denying the ordination of women in the church hierarchy could be summarized as follows:

- The argument from nature: women are inferior and therefore cannot become ministers;
- The argument from the nature of God: God is Father, Jesus is incarnated as a man. Since the minister represent Christ, he must be male also;
- The argument from Biblical example: when Jesus chooses only men as apostles, he set the standard for the church;
- The argument from tradition: through its history the church has not ordained women as ministers;
- In Scripture (Timothy 1, 2:12; 3:2; 5:17 ) women are not permitted to teach or rule men.<sup>265</sup>

This is a traditionalist perspective, present even today in Catholic and Orthodox Churches: it suffered small changes reflected in concepts of complementarity and mutuality (*Mulieris Dignitatem*) of women and men, instead of for-centuries-justified subordination.

Still, the argument about the Savior as a male figure, according to Bishop Kallistos Ware, is no coincidence, since everything is planned in God's plans even the fact that God will reveal Himself to humans in the form of a man – bridegroom of the

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265 T. Foh, Susan. *A Male Leadership View: The Head of the Woman is the Man*, in Clouse, Bonidell and Robert. *Women in Ministry*, Intervarsity Press, Illinois, 1989, p. 90-91.

Church, leaving also the issue of the gender of the bridegroom open for discussion.<sup>266</sup>

### 3.3.2.1 Ordination of Women in Early Christian Churches

When responding to previously mentioned arguments Protestant churches and feminist theologians developed another argumentation line in rereading the Biblical text while obeying certain exegetical and hermeneutical rules in order to reach “highest norms and standards” in teaching Bible,<sup>267</sup> and the highest most certainly is: **“Treat others as you want them to treat you. This is what the Law and the Prophets are all about”.** (Mathew, 7:12)

In the approach to Biblical text related to this and any other issue, it is important to avoid the following hermeneutical mistakes:

- *selective literalism* – (selecting passages we like and ignoring those seem to teach the opposite);
- *reading into the text meanings* that are not inherent to the text – example of human (*Genesis*: 2), some interpreters “read into the text” a subordination that is not present;
- *propositional exegesis* – (asserting a proposition and then searching for support by selective literalism and “reading into the text”).<sup>268</sup>

When speaking about this it is important to define the notion of ministry and leadership in the Church. There are different opinions and attitudes about this, but also agreement in Protestant churches that ministry means serving others and the community:

Biblical ministry is servant-hood, not the assumption of the authority over others. In Mark 10:35-45, Jesus contrasted the tendency of Gentile rulers to seek lordship and authority with the way he, the Son of man, came not to be served, but to serve.<sup>269</sup>

So, the church from the *New Testament* does not appoint people to positions of power, but to positions of servitude. Although the *Holy Text* several times uses the term “placing/laying of hands” (*Acts*, 6:1-6, 9:17), Walter Liefeld considers that this is not related to ordination nor performance of functions of power, since there is no

266 Ware, Kalistos. *Men Women and the Priesthood of Christ*, in *The Ordination of Women in Orthodox Church*, edit. Behr-Sigel Elisabeth and Ware Kallistos, WCC Publication, Geneva, 2000, p. 88.

267 Mickelsen, Alvera. *An Egalitarian View: There is Neither Male nor Female Christ*, in: Clouse, Bonidell and Clouse G. Robert. *Women in Ministry*, Intervarsity Press, Illinois, 1989, p. 177.

268 *Ibid.*, p. 181.

269 Liefeld L., Walter. *A Plural Ministry View: Your Sons and your Daughters Shall Prophesy*, in: Clouse, Bonidell and Clouse G. Robert. *Women in Ministry*, Intervarsity Press, Illinois, 1989, p. 146-147.

recognizable term to mark ordination in Jesus' practice.<sup>270</sup> So today, in many evangelical churches the ordaining is understood as God's call to certain person to serve. All believers participate in spiritual ministry; the offering of sacraments is no one's privilege since the evangelists claim that the *Bible* is their authority; this authority is located in the congregation itself, and not in individuals.

In the early Christian communities there is mention of women who opened not only their hearts, but also their homes to the teaching about God. Some of the first ones mentioned are Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis, "who worked hard for the Lord" (*Romans*: 16). Also it is interesting to mention that in this *Epistle* Priscilla and Aquila are also mentioned as "hard workers", but that Priscilla is mentioned before her husband. During the first years after Christ women - especially the rich ones - offered their houses as places at which people preached and prayed which was of crucial importance for development of the first communities. "Households in ancient world were places in which women taught and disciplined family members and servants and managed material resources."<sup>271</sup>

St. Paul mentions women that offered him on his missionary travels hospitality and support in the spreading of the faith. One of them was Lydia of Philippi, that time Macedonia, who listened to the missionaries together with a group of women, and afterwards she offered them her house (*Acts*: 16:14). St. Paul speaks about such women and men with respect and esteem and asks for validation of their efforts: **"My friends, we ask you to be thoughtful of your leaders who work hard and tell you how to live for the Lord".** (*Thessalonians*, 5:12)

Lydia represents a paradigm of spiritual leader who is, in her mission on God's path, ready to invest not only her property but to use her spiritual endeavor and strength to encourage others and lead other women and men from her family and community. She is a pioneer that paved the path for other women and men in missionary activity and service:

Lydia teaches us that a woman leader must tend to and nurture her spiritual core with prayer and worship. Gathering together with other praying women is a powerful means of connecting with God and with each other.<sup>272</sup>

Still, it is not clear from Biblical text, whether women performed the functions of bishops and priests, i.e. leaders of the community, which implies offering sacraments and Eucharist as well. For centuries it has been considered that such positions were exclusively held by men; nevertheless, there is archaeological evidence indicating

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<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>271</sup> MacHaffie, J. Barbara. *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, second ed. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2006, p. 10.

<sup>272</sup> Porter, Jeanne. *Leading Lessons: Insight on Leadership from Women of the Bible*, Augsburg Books, 2005, p. 102.

that women had quite significant roles in the early period. On a tombstone there is a message in Greek confirming that women also worked as priest but as Barbara Machaffie says it is not clear whether it is related to Jewish or Christian congregation.<sup>273</sup> Another evidence is found on a fresco from a Roman catacomb on which there is a group of women celebrating the Lord's supper. The attire of a woman breaking the bread is different than the ones of other women.<sup>274</sup> Another example supports the ministry of women and is connected to a mosaic in a Catholic Church representing Mary and two female saints, together with Theodora – who is considered to have been a priest of high order.<sup>275</sup> Such examples are many and they are used as arguments in demands of women to have their rights on holding ordained positions recognized.

Second, very important position for women in the early churches is related to deaconate (*diakonat*). Although, it is not quite clear whether deaconesses had the same roles as man, there are data that they worked together with them. So in Pliny's letter we see that he tortured two women who were religious workers.<sup>276</sup> It is certain that there were deaconesses in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, since the data found in the eastern churches clearly show that women were ordained. Also it is quite clear that these were only virgins and widows. Such an example is also Phoebe, whom St. Paul mentions in his *Epistle* and asks help for her, since she also helped others. The term used in this Biblical sentence is masculine noun *diaconos*, since the New Testament does not use the feminine noun *diaconess*, and therefore Phoebe was simply a female *diaconos*.<sup>277</sup> Their task was to help the sick, to receive confession and hold women in water after baptism. There was a fear that men could be tempted by female half naked bodies so that women were appointed for such positions in order to protect the reputation of the church.<sup>278</sup> The official church nevertheless, continuously reprimanded such examples, which also confirms that there were women at such positions since otherwise the church would have no reason to highlight its disagreement with that. This is also obvious from the letter of the Pope Gelasius to bishops in south Italy and Sicily who were under a strong influence of the Byzantine culture and maybe even Gnosticism, in which he reproaches this practice by which female priests performed the church rituals at the holy altar.<sup>279</sup>

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273 *Ibid.*, p. 12-13.

274 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

275 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

276 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

277 Saucy L. Robert and Tenelshof, Judith. *Women and Men Ministry*, ed. Clouse Bonidell and Robert . Intervarsity Press, Illinois, 1989, p.173.

278 MacHaffie, J. Barbara, *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, p. 13.

279 *Ibid.* /support to this argument, about the same source see in: *Didascalia Apostolorum* (book by a church order from Syria, written between 200 BC and 25 AD) and *Apostolic Church* (cca. 300 AD),

Another issue closely related to the issue of female ordination is the issue of female apostles. Were the women counted as apostles and what would that refer to? Robert Saucy makes a categorization of the use of this term in the New Testament, according to which the word apostle was used to depict:

- twelve Jesus' apostles;
- the ones that witnessed Jesus' resurrection and the ones he empowered to preach;
- the ones that Church authorized for performance of certain tasks;
- missionaries like Barnaba.<sup>280</sup>

In such a context, he says, one could understand the apostleship of Andronicus and Junias. Although in the translation of the Bible into Croatian Junias is represented as a man, since the Greek version of this name is Iunian and in many Bible translations it was translated as a male name Junias, this name could be a female name as well. Further on, the name Junia was a famous female name in Rome, so that the commentators conclude that St. Paul had in mind female apostles.<sup>281</sup>

This is also supported by the example of Mary Magdalene who according to the contemporary exegesis is an apostle:

A clear sign for this is the significance which women, first and foremost Mary the Magdalene, have in the tradition of passion and resurrection. This is the fundament for the service of preaching of Mary the Magdalene, this is where she became the apostle of the apostles receiving the order to tell Jesus' resurrection to the disciples...<sup>282</sup>

Still, neither Catholic nor Orthodox Church accept the calling of a woman to ordained positions, since they are not formally invited to do so, as Mato Zovkić explains it:

Jesus did allow women to follow him and accept his teaching, but such women were not formal disciples in a way that they should preach, on Jesus' behalf, availability of the Kingdom of God (since no one would listen to them), but they are disciples in the biblical sense following their Teacher closely, sitting at his feet, living his life style.<sup>283</sup>

Maybe exactly in this explanation – that at that time no one would listen to them and take them seriously – lays the possibility for women to be accepted and seriously taken as a spiritual leaders at some other time, especially when there is the

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where christening and leading of the Eucharist is strictly prohibited because women were not able to have power over men and could not speak publicly at church gatherings./

280 Saucy, Robert and Tenesholf, Judith . *Women in Ministry*, p. 177.

281 *Ibid.* p. 177.

282 Renate, Wind, *Maria – aus Nazareth, aus Bethanien, aus Magdala, Drei Frauengeschichten, Gütersloh*, Chr. Kaiser, 1999, p. 85.

283 Zovkić, Mato. *Isus u Evanđelju po Luki* (Jesus in the Gospel of Luke), p. 196-197.



legal framework and positive atmosphere for equal participation of women in all spheres of life.

### 3.3.2.2. Ministry of Women in the Modern Age

Protestant reformation introduced significant dogmatic changes by preaching that there is no special caste of priests: "Every person is his/her own priest", and "Luther taught that every Christian had the duty to carry out certain priestly function and that in unusual circumstances, when no man was available, a woman should be permitted to preach."<sup>284</sup> Still, none of these well known reformers did not go one step further to open the door of the priestly positions to women, partially due to the fact that for example Luther, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, still advocated for submission of women to men due to Eve's role in the original sin. The first who did this were two groups of radical reformers from the 17<sup>th</sup> century: *Baptists and Quakers*, explaining it with the attitude that every person is illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and therefore spoken ministry is not limited only to men.<sup>285</sup> Women preached even in 17<sup>th</sup> centuries to Baptists in England, Holland and USA, and the first book about this topic was written by Margaret Fell under the title *Women's Speaking Justified*, claiming that statements of St. Paul telling women to learn in silence not to teach nor have power over her husband should be ignored, since they were meant for heretic women he addressed.<sup>286</sup> At that time, Protestants were exposed to major pressure and threats because of their heretical works, what brought to the first wave of the "Great Awakening" and pietism, i.e. a model of faith that requires from individuals to bring Christ into their everyday lives, to internalize their faith and not to pay too much attention to form and creeds. This opened the door for women in *Methodist* churches to gain the possibility for equal participation in the church life.

The most famous woman from that period was Sarah Osborn, who in 18<sup>th</sup> century led a service in her home, which upset the leading elite, especially since she accepted black people to her service.<sup>287</sup> End of 18<sup>th</sup> and the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century represented second "Wave of Awakening", marked with conversion of huge number of young women to Evangelical churches exactly due to gender policy they propagated; and at the end of the century big number of women in churches insisted and worked on social changes and justice. Young women, usually below 30, mostly participated in the life of the Church. Some historians see this as their need to find

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284 Clouse, Bonidell and Clouse G. Robert. *Women in Ministry*, in Saucy Robert and Tenelshof K. Judith, (ed.), Moody Press Chicago, 2001. p. 11.

285 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

286 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

287 *Ibid.*, p. 15.



sanctuary in God and try to gain control of their lives, or prepare themselves for marital life that required submission to their husband.<sup>288</sup>

Three women that were especially famous in their sermons and missionary work were Phoebe Palmer, Catherine Booth and Hannah W. Smith, who worked in teams with their husbands and were even more prominent than them.<sup>289</sup> So, in the beginning women used the existing possibilities for their engagement by being included in the public life through their husbands since they could not work independently. They travelled around USA and gave sermons. Along with this, they wrote books, so that the one who listened to them and read what they wrote acknowledged their intellectual strength and power to influence people. The process of inclusion of women in the church structures was inevitable; In 1894 General Conference of the Brethren Church had granted the right to women to serve as pastors and missionaries, and the first ordained woman was Mary M. Sterling, a respectful preacher and evangelist.<sup>290</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many women also preached and had pastoral duties, but after a better reorganization of the church, these roles were taken over by men. Women would be the reserve – if need arises they could be engaged and used, as a great missionary Gladys Aylward admits:

I was not God's first choice for what I have done for China. There was somebody else... I do not know who it was – God's first choice. It must have been a man – a wonderful man. A well-educated man. I do not know what happened. Perhaps he died. Perhaps he was not willing... And Good looked down... and saw Gladys Aylward.<sup>291</sup>

After 19<sup>th</sup> century many women received the possibility to preach, but ministry was the privilege of a small number of women in Protestant denominations who had to struggle to gain their position in the congregation and to be accepted by people on positions at which they were accustomed to see exclusively male authorities.

Although today a huge number of women are performing pastoral duties, in some Protestant churches there are still barriers for ordination of women. In 1984 *Southern Baptist Conference* adopted the *Resolution* in which they explain that they are against the ordination of women, as well as *Lutheran Missouri Synod*, rejecting to give women any leadership position in the church.<sup>292</sup> Catholic and Orthodox Church did not make significant steps in this regard, so that this issue still remains a challenge for male hierarchical structure in both churches. Although such discussions

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288 MacHaffie, J. Barbara. *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, p. 195.

289 Clouse, Bonidell and Clouse G. Robert. *Women in Ministry*, p. 18.

290 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

291 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

292 MacHaffie, Barbara. *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, p. 305.

have been held in the Catholic church since 1960, especially in USA, the opinions still remain the same.

Along with these well known reasons about exclusion of women from the church which I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Paul Jewett, a theologian, elaborated in details other reasons present in the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican Church. He mentions three important reasons for exclusion of women from these positions:

- First, they often claim that a woman before the altar would distract men from the purpose of worship by arousing sexual feelings in an atmosphere already charged with emotion;
- Second, the point is made that the priestly office is a position of authority and leadership that cannot be granted to women who have been created as inferior to men;
- Third, they frequently turn to the “maleness” of God, Jesus and the twelve apostles to stress that women cannot act as God’s representatives on earth.<sup>293</sup>

After Protestant Episcopal churches acknowledging women the right to be ordained in 1976, the Catholic Church adopted the Vatican Declaration in which it repeats its attitudes and reasons on rejecting women a possibility to be ordained. Pope John Paul II in 1994 in his letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* also reacted in the same way when the Anglican Church approved female ministry.<sup>294</sup>

Orthodox Church did not deal with this issue a lot, although there were attempts by female theologians in Romania and Greece to initiate such questions – but, with no success. Still the official attitude of the Church is that only a man can represent God on Earth. Timoti Ver points out that women were ordained to be deacons as men, with the same rituals and prayers, and the Church was not opposing to that; but they do oppose accepting ordination of women for priests – mentioning reasons similar to the ones of the Catholic Church on this issue.<sup>295</sup> Although these discussions about ordination of women in the Orthodox Church have been vivid since 80’s, still there are no signs that the Orthodox Church will restore even the ordination of deaconesses which was present at the time of the apostles.

Since 70’s of the last century, Protestant churches which at that time opposed the ministry of women changed their policy and in 1970 Ellsabeth A. Platz became first minister of Lutheran church in USA, and after that also Episcopal churches

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293 *Ibid.*, p. 307.

294 *Ibid.*, p. 307.

295 Timoti, Ver. *Pravoslavna crkva (Orthodox Church)*, Zavet, Belgrade, 2001, p. 227-228.

approved women the right to be ordained for ministerial position.<sup>296</sup> Still, women even today face the strong opposition from church, since the traditional image of a woman and her position never completely disappeared. Women are still facing the norm and standard of the title set by men - implying authority, elite, separation from people, etc. women are more ready to enter into a partnership with the congregation than to be in a hierarchical relation; to be open for support and compassion to believers. In this sense they introduced some changes at the pulpit, in the style and method of explanation and work which also some men started to take over. They also highlight the importance of music, acting and praying in a ritual.<sup>297</sup> Women are introducing a new twist and spirit in the priest's calling, and this is very important at times of alienation of human beings, when people are trying to find closeness, warmth and place not burdened with authority, hierarchy and power.

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296 MacHaffie, Barbara. *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, p. 308-309.

297 *Ibid.*, p. 312.



## 4. WOMEN IN ISLAMIC TRADITION'S LEGACY

### 4.1. Creation of Woman and Man in the *Qur'an*

Stories about the creation of man and woman have a significant place in theological and legal Islamic thought but they are not the basis of dogmatic teaching about the original sin and the consequences it had on humankind. The *Qur'an* speaks about the creation of a human being (*adam*) at several places and in different ways, but there is not a chapter on it, there is no Book of Origins (*Genesis*) like in the *Bible*, but these stories are intertwined through several chapters (*surahs*) of the *Qur'an*. Stories about the creation of the human being can be divided into two categories: first, speaking generally about the creation of the human being, and second group of verses (*ayahs*) speaking about the creation of Adam and his contact with Iblis (*Satan*). Narrations about creation could also be divided according to periods of their revelation – Meccan or Medinian period of revelation of the *Qur'an*, since it was revealed gradually during the period of 23 years, as the community was growing and maturing.<sup>298</sup>

In this part I will analyze several Qur'anic stories, since the lack of space is not allowing us to elaborate each story separately:

**„We created human being from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape; And the Jinn race, We had created before, from the fire of a scorching wind. Behold! thy Lord said to the angels: “I am about to create human being, from sounding clay from mud molded into shape; „When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obedience unto him.” So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together: Not so Iblis: he refused to be among those who prostrated themselves. (Allah) said: “O Iblis! what is your reason for not being among those who prostrated themselves?” (Iblis) said: “I am not one to prostrate myself to human being, whom Thou didst create from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape.” (Allah) said: “Then get thee out from here; for thou art rejected, accursed. “And the curse shall be on thee till the day of Judgment.” (Qur'an, 15:26-35)<sup>299</sup>**

In this first story, the focus is on the manner of creation of Adam – from clay and mud, but also other beings present along with malaikah (*angels*) during this event

298 Freyer Strowasser, Barbara. *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions and Interpretations*, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 26-27.

299 <http://www.islam101.com/quran/yusufAli/> approximated for inclusive translation where necessary

are mentioned since Allah Almighty gathered them to show them the human being they should all prostrate (*sajda*) before. The one refusing obedience was called Iblis, i.e. shaytan (*devil*). The interesting part is that jinns are mentioned later. They are created from fire, and they also prostrated before Adam, all but Iblis. This implies that he is one of them, and *Qur'an* speaks about it in the following sentence:

**„Behold! We said to the angels, “Bow down to Adam”: They bowed down except Iblis. He was one of the Jinns, and he broke the Command of his Lord.” (Qur'an, 18:50)**

The second part of this story explains the concept of evil, stemming out from disobedience to God's order. Iblis did not obey, but not only that; he openly objected it by saying that there is no reason for him to submit himself to a being that is made of soil and who, according to his judgment, is not worthy of his prostration and respect. Therefore, later Muslim scholars said that this is a proof against the people that favor analogy and rational interpretation of the faith.<sup>300</sup> *Surah 38* speaks about an event similar to the above mentioned one and I will not quote its integral text. The difference is in the first statement, since *Surah 15* begins with: **„We created human being...”,** while *Surah 38* begins its story with: **„Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: “I am about to create a human being from clay: “When I have fashioned it (in due proportion) and breathed into it of My spirit, fall ye down in obedience unto it.” (Qur'an, 38: 21-22).**

Generally, Qur'anic speech contains different formulations of God's address to humans. In the first person singular (**“I am...”**), third person singular (**“He is your Lord...”**) or first person plural (**“We are...”**):

**It is We Who created you and gave you shape; then We bade the angels bow down to Adam, and they bowed down; not so Iblis; He refused to be of those who bow down. (Allah) said: “What prevented thee from bowing down when I commanded thee?” He said: “I am better than Adam: Thou didst create me from fire, and Adam from clay.” (Allah) said: “Get thee down from this: it is not for thee to be arrogant here: get out, for thou art of the meanest (of creatures).” He said: “Give me respite till the day they are raised up.” (Allah) said: “Be thou among those who have respite.” He said: “Because thou hast thrown me out of the way, lo! I will lie in wait for them on thy straight way: “Then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left: Nor wilt thou find, in most of them, gratitude (for thy mercies).” (Allah) said: “Get out from this, disgraced and expelled. If any of them follow thee, - Hell will I fill with you all. “O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, and enjoy (its good things) as ye wish: but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression.” Then began Satan to whisper suggestions to them, bringing openly before their minds all their shame that was hidden from them (before): he said: “Your Lord only**

300 Ibn Jarir narrates from El-Hasan that in the interpretation of this ayah he said: “Iblis used analogy and he was the first one to do it”, see Ibn Kethir, *Tafseer: abridged version*, Bosnian translation: High Saudi Committee for BiH, Sarajevo, 2000, p. 455.

**forbade you this tree, lest ye should become angels or such beings as live for ever." And he swore to them both, that he was their sincere adviser. So by deceit he brought about their fall: when they tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the garden over their bodies. And their Lord called unto them: "Did I not forbid you that tree, and tell you that Satan was an avowed enemy unto you?" They said: "Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: If thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost." (Allah) said: "Get ye down. With enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood,- for a time." He said: "Therein shall ye live, and therein shall ye die; but from it shall ye be taken out (at last)." (Qur'an, 7:11-25)**

This story is quite detailed and contains elements of other stories too since it speaks about the creation of Adam, the disobedience of Iblis, his expulsion from Jannah, life of Adam and Eve in Jannah, their weakness and submissiveness to Iblis' promises and expulsion. Nevertheless, this story includes another part related to Iblis' expulsion from Jannah due to the fact that he did not bow to Adam. Here we learn that he was punished for disobedience and that his first task afterwards was seduction of Adam and his wife so that they would break the God's command. And he succeeded in this. The manner in which he did it is subject to many interpretations, and one of them is found in Zamahshary's tafseer *Al-Keshaf*, in which he analyses this story from *Surah 2*, by posing the question:

How could he (Iblis) whisper to them and seduce them after he was said: "Get thee down from this..."? When answering this question Zamashary says: "Iblis wanted to enter Jannah so he entered it through snake's mouth, and they did not even notice it". The evidence for this Zamahshary finds in the following sentence: "Get thee down from this...", which is related according to him to Adam, Eve and Iblis.<sup>301</sup>

From these stories it is possible to conclude that both Adam and Eve were equally invited to stay away from the forbidden tree so that they would not sin; together they tasted the fruit and together they were subject to shaytan's stories and his persuasion and in the end, they were together expelled to Earth from where they prayed Allah for forgiveness and mercy and He eventually granted them both.

In the second story, Allah Almighty informs angels (*malaikah*) that he will create a human being and that they should bow to him, by showing them in this way also the superiority and gifts given to the human being. Gifts of naming things and deciphering the symbols. Then Satan (*shaytan*) seduced Adam and Eve and they both tasted the forbidden fruits and were therefore expelled from Jannah. The story from the *Surah 2:30-38* is from early Medina period of the revelation of the *Qur'an* and in a

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301 Al-Zamahshari. *Al-Kaššaf 'an Haqaiq Gawamid al-Tenzil va 'ujun al-Aqawil fi Wujuh al-Ta' wil*, Arabic issue, Book I, Jerusalem, 1215. H., p. 128.

certain way it represents a summary of all previous stories present in different surahs; still this story does not contain all elements of all previous stories. This, as well as all previous stories, introduces explanatory elements. In this case it is about the knowledge adam (human being) was given so that he/she was able to name things and beings around him/her, which represents one of God's gifts to the human being, agent and representative of God on Earth who is in comparison with other beings entrusted with the special mission and legacy. Humans are now able to name things and make notions of them and „creating notions means understanding them.“<sup>302</sup> Therefore this story speaks about two important elements: human agency on Earth (*caliphate*) and intellectual strength which humans were given in comparison to other beings. This was important in the Medina period since Muslims were the ones that were now establishing a new community which was supposed to be organized on the basis of the new faith. Therefore Ali, fourth righteous caliph, said:

Allah Almighty gave to angles (malaikah) intellect without instincts; to animals he gave only instincts, and to humans both. The one who manages to control his instincts with his intellect will be superior to malaikah, and the one whose instincts rule over his intellect will be inferior to animals.<sup>303</sup>

Both men and women received the same gift, and with their decision to violate God's order and act in their free will, they became responsible for their actions before God. From all this it is clear that there are no indications about the creation of the woman. The crooked rib is not at all mentioned in these stories, nor is the name of Adam's wife mentioned. Only hadith and great commentators of the Qur'an (mufasssir) will use the name Eve for the first woman – identical to Hebrew *hayyim/life* with the same meaning – *alive, created from alive matter*.

#### 4.1.1. Adam and Eve in Tafseer tradition

Although the *Qur'an* on several occasions speaks about the creation of Adam and Eve, and about their original state before the expulsion, the hadith tradition, and especially tafseers (commentaries) of prominent Muslim scholars also speak about *Qur'anic* stories. Muhammad p.b.u.h., spoke about this to first Muslims, and some of those statements were recorded in hadith collections, accepted today as very important second authority after the *Qur'an*. Tafseer science developed from different perspectives, but traditional tafseers are most widespread and are based mostly on the *hadith* attributed to Muhammad p.b.u.h. Ahadith relating to this topic speak

302 Iqbal, Muhammad. *Obnova vjerske misli u islamu (The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam)*, p.21.

303 Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka. *Principi gender perspektive u islamu (Principles of Genders Perspective in Islam)*, available at the web site of Belgrade Open School, [http://veraznanjemir.bos.org.yu/html/10\\_tekstovi.htm](http://veraznanjemir.bos.org.yu/html/10_tekstovi.htm)



about the inferiority of woman's nature in comparison to man's containing very similar content about the creation of similar to the one in the Bible.

Most famous ahadith about this are recorded by Abu Huraira, one of the narrator of the hadith, present in canonical hadith collections of *Buhari* and *Muslim*, whose authority is controversial and disapproved by some, since he had a dispute with Prophet's wife Aisha and second caliph Umar. He narrates six ahadith with similar content:

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah 's Apostle said, "Treat women nicely, for a women is created from a rib, and the most curved portion of the rib is its upper portion, so, if you should try to straighten it, it will break, but if you leave it as it is, it will remain crooked. So treat women nicely."<sup>304</sup>

These stories are well known among the Islamic scholars but also among common people, since they are used in numerous scholarly works as well as in the ritual practice when speaking about the supposed relations between men and women. The concept of the „crooked rib“, and consequently of the problematic and sensitive female nature entered the Islamic tradition and practice through these sayings and was supported by the tafseer tradition of great Islamic authorities so that today it is accepted by most Muslims, and very often their vision of the gender relations is based on this concept.

One of the most famous commentators of the *Qur'an* Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839-923) in his outstanding tafseer of the *Qur'an Jami' al-Bayan* elaborates in details the issue of the creation of Adam and Eve. In time when he wrote his tafseer, major number of stories from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, known as *israiliyats*,<sup>305</sup> were accepted in the Islamic tradition, so that he used them abundantly, although he was cautious and at the end of every comment he said – “God knows best”.<sup>306</sup> Al-Tabari mentions two opinions about the moment when Eve was created. This first opinion is advocated by Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn Mas'ud and other Prophets companions (*sahaba*) who consider that Eve was created after Adam was placed in Jannah with an aim to have him find repose next to her.<sup>307</sup> Al-Tabari further explain this with a story resembling the Biblical episode about the creation of Eve and says that Allah Almighty put Adam to sleep, and then took a rib from his left side and created a woman so that he would find peace next to her. When he awoke Adam saw a woman next to himself.

304 Memić, Jakub. *Izbor Poslanikovih hadisa (Selection of Ahadith of the Prophet)*, Seat of Islamic Community BiH, Sarajevo, 1985, p. 87-88.

305 Israiliyats are narrations from Judeo-Christian tradition used by Muslim authorities when there was no other source related to a certain topic or issue, highlighting always that *God knows best* what it true.

306 Freyer-Strowasser, Barbara. *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions and Interpretations*, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 28.

307 Kwam E. at all.. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, p. 186.

Another story says that he asked her: "Who are you?", and she said: "A Woman."; He said: "Why were you created, she said: "so that you could find repose in me." After this, malaikah who wanted to test Adam's knowledge and power, asked him to name things – asked him what is the woman's name, and Adam replied: "Eve (Eve) because she was created from something living (*hayy*)".<sup>308</sup>

Second opinion is the one of Ibn Ishak:

When God had finished reprimanding Iblis, He turned to Adam and taught him all the names. Then He said: Adam, tell them their names." – up to (sic) – Surely, you are the All-knowing, the All-wise." (...) Then He cast slumber upon Adam – according to what reached us from the people of the Torah, the people of Scripture and from other people of knowledge, through 'Abd Allah b. Abbas and others – and He took one of his ribs from his left side, and joint together the place where it had been with flesh. (Meanwhile) Adam slept, and he did not stir from his sleep until God had created his wife, Eve, from this rib of his. And He arranged her as a woman in whom (Adam) could find repose. When his slumber was lifted from him, and he stirred from his sleep, he saw her beside him, and he said – according to what they claim and God knows best -: "My flesh, my blood, and my wife." And he found repose in her. When God duplicated him, and made a means of repose for him from himself, He spoke to him face to face: "Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in the Garden and eat thereof easefully where you desire; but do not draw near this tree, lest you become evildoers." ...<sup>309</sup>

These comments mostly lean on Biblical stories and contain the same argumentation about the origin of women – created from the rib – which as we saw in ahadith refers further to female nature, her weaknesses and faults, and therefore nice and attentive treatment is recommended as well as the control of woman based on this same sensitive nature. Further on, although there are several places in the *Qur'an* where Allah Almighty says **"O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden..."** (*Qur'an* 2:35), implying that she was created before they entered it - some Islamic scholars still think that she was created in the Jannah – from the crooked rib which is explicitly not mentioned in the Qur'anic text.

Another great Muslim scholar and commentator of the *Qur'an*, Fahr al-Din al-Razi, brilliant scholastic theologian and representative of Ash'arite theological school of Islam, when using Al-Taberi's work, spoke about a consensus (*ijma'*) of Muslim scholars in relation to creation of Eve from the crooked rib basing it on ahadith from canonical hadith collection implying inferior nature of woman in rela-

308 Freyer-Strowasser, Barbara. *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions and Interpretations*, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 28-29.

309 Kwam, Scheering, and Ziegler. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, p. 187.

tion to man.<sup>310</sup> Still, Al-Razi focuses his attention more to repentance after the expulsion concluding that Adam was the one who repented and Eve only followed him. Adam was punished with hard work, including support for his wife and family.<sup>311</sup> Based on the repentance and punishment he claims the superiority of man over woman and her exclusion from the public life. And in support of this submissiveness of woman to man, he quotes the saying narrated by Abu Hureira, said by the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h: "If I were to order anyone to prostrate himself to another but God, I would command the woman to prostrate herself before her husband, because of magnitude of his right over her."<sup>312</sup>

Although this saying is not in accordance to *Qur'anic* principles of belief in one God (*tawhid*), and prohibition of associating partners to God (shirk) and equal responsibility of each individual before God – it has been used, and is still used to justify the authority of man over woman. Great number of contemporary commentators of the *Qur'an* claim: "The Qur'an never orders a woman to obey her husband. It never states that obedience to their husbands is a characteristic of the *better woman*".<sup>313</sup> Although great commentators of the *Qur'an* had reserves about Biblically founded stories about creation, these stories have been narrated for centuries, and shaped the mind and cultural frame of the gender policy in the Islamic tradition. In this way Eve became the one guilty for the sin and expulsion from Jannah carrying all consequences related to this act. This is confirmed with another saying of Ibn Wahb, taken from Ibn Zaid:

Satan tempted Eve with the tree and eventually brought her it (fruit), and then he made her beautiful in Adam's sight. (...) So Adam called her out of desire. She said: "No, Not unless you come here." When he came to her, she said: "No, not until you eat from this tree." (...) Then Adam became a fugitive in the Garden...<sup>314</sup>

310 Al-Razi, Muhammed Ibn 'Umar Fakhr al-Din. *Al-Tafseer al-Kebir*, Cairo, Al-Matba'a Al-Bahiyya Al-Misriyya, 1934, vol. 3, p. 2.

311 *Ibid.*, vol. 23, p. 125.

312 Freyer-Strowasser, Barbara. *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions and Interpretations*, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 32.

313 Amina Wadud. *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p 77.

314 Kwam E. at all.. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, p. 189.

### 4.1.2. Adam and Eve in Arabic Legends and Stories

Such attitudes of not only Muslim scholars, but also of common people as well, were shaped greatly by the Arab oral literary tradition, with legendary stories of Muhammad Ibn 'Abd Allah Al-Kissa'i. Most famous are definitely *The Tales of the Prophets*, collected in 12<sup>th</sup> century representing allusion to *Qur'anic* stories with details added in order to make them more interesting and attractive. Vivid imagination of this great Arab narrator describes Adam and Eve in details:

Eve was as tall and beautiful as Adam with seven hundred tresses studded with gems of chrysalides and incensed with musk. She was in the prime of her life. She had large, dark eyes; she was tender and white; her palms were tinted and her long, shapely, brilliantly colored tresses which formed a crown, emitted a rustling sound. She was of the same form as Adam, except that her skin was softer and purer in color than his was, and her voice was more beautiful... When God had created her, He seated her at Adam's side. Adam saw her in his sleep on that long ago day and loved her in his heart. "O Lord, he asked, 'who is this?'. "She is my handmaiden Eve", he said. "O Lord, asked Adam, for whom has thou created her?" For one who will take in trust and will preserve in thanks for her", said God. Then Adam said: "O Lord, I will take her on one condition, that thou marry me to her." And so Adam was married to Eve before entering Paradise."<sup>315</sup>

The fact is that not only al-Tabari but also a well known commentator of the *Qur'an* Ibn Kathir also included the content of these stories and sayings of the followers of the Torah and Sacred text (*israiliyats*), as well as opinions of other Islamic scholars whose statements do not satisfy the criteria of authenticity. Without explanation, argument or warning this author skillfully interwove these mentioned stories and statements. Other commentators as well non-selectively used them in their works - strengthening thus the consensus on Eve's responsibility for expulsion.<sup>316</sup> It is interesting to see how Adam and Eve are described; which characteristics they have and how, in the end, they in fact shaped the image of the true man and true woman which in the culture of that time was perceived as the prototype of maleness and femaleness. Eve had to have big black eyes insinuating thus the qualities of Jannah houri with big eyes which will be the reward for the true believer in the Jannah; her skin is soft, voice nice, figure slim and she has everything that was considered desirable at that time. These beautiful stories are result of the people's need to breathe life energy and drama to short *Qur'anic* passages, according to esthetical and literary values of that time. Even today the contents of this *Qur'anic* story should and could provoke thinking, new comments and interpretations about the relation between man and woman. If today a story like this would be told – within contemporary cultural patterns – Adam and Eve would most probably have different characteristics

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190-191.

<sup>316</sup> Ibn Kethir. *Tafseer*, p. 53.

of desirable men and women. It is interesting that there are still no such attempts since Muslims still do not have answers to some questions, which are, as M. Arkoun says “unthought” and are not discussed in orthodox Islam nor taken into account.<sup>317</sup>

### 4.1.3. Egalitarian Concept of Creation

We saw that in the *Qur'anic* statements about the creation of Adam and Eve there is no mention of the crooked rib, nor of Eve's creation – whether before or after the entry to Jannah. Nevertheless, in ahadith, which many classical tafseers of the *Qur'an* were based on, the crooked rib appears not only to explain Eve's creation but, more than anything, to indicate her nature, weakness and submissiveness to man. In this part of the book I will present *Qur'anic* ayahs speaking about the creation, independent from the episode in Jannah and events related to that story. Since the *Qur'an* is not a collection of stories but a book of messages gradually revealed to people in order to prepare the human mind to accept monotheism and ethical principles forgotten through centuries, many surahs contain ayahs about the creation that include additional messages:

**“O humankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).” (Qur'an, 49: 13)**

**“Among His Signs in this, that He created you from dust; and then,- behold, ye are men scattered (far and wide)!” (Qur'an, 30: 20)**

**“It is He Who hath produced you from a single person: here is a place of sojourn and a place of departure: We detail Our signs for people who understand.” (Qur'an, 6:98)**

There are several more *Qur'anic* ayahs that speak about creation of human beings but even these three are enough to describe the egalitarian concept of creation of man and woman who were both equally rewarded with the soul – the Gift from God - intellect and free will which puts every believer in a position of having an active relation towards God's word and its application in the world:

**“...Every soul draws the meed of its acts on none but itself: no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. Your goal in the end is towards Allah. He will tell you the truth of the things wherein ye disputed.” (Qur'an 6:164)**

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317 Arkoun, Mohamed. *Rethinking Islam Today*, in Kurzman Charles, *Liberal Islam*, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 208.

One of the attempts to approach the *Qur'an* and the interpretation of its messages and rules in a different way was made by M. Abduh, Egyptian theologian and reformer who lived in 18<sup>th</sup> century and tried to prove that Qur'anic messages are not opposing the western scientific theories or modernism. His attitude is that the creation of Eve from the crooked rib has no foundation in the *Qur'an* and that this concept is based on unreliable sources of faith. He compares how the story gradually evolves in the period of ravenousness and greed, suffering and disharmony, and in the future there will a period of regret, guidance or reason and thinking.<sup>318</sup> Abduh thinks that women are created and prepared for all tasks and issues like men and that there are no reasons for them to be excluded, degraded and suppressed.

Riffat Hassan, a Pakistani scholar is a rare Muslim female author who through feminist theology requires justice and equality and completely rejects the concept of the crooked rib since such understanding places the woman in a secondary position and submission to man. She criticizes classical Islamic scholars who base this concept on Judeo-Christian sources that promote Eve's guilt for evil and mortality in the world. Riffat Hassan, as well as other authors, mentions the ahadith that speak about the creation of woman from the crooked rib, but also other ahadith which are narrated by Abu Hureira with an aim to deconstruct the myth on his role of devoted ahadith narrator, taking into account that he is the one that narrated the ahadith which represent women in a negative context. Riffat Hassan says that Abu Hureira, namely, is the only one that narrates all six ahadith about the creation of a woman from the crooked rib, and that this does not satisfy the authenticity criteria and cannot be accepted as relevant.<sup>319</sup> The problem is in the fact that Muslim scholars reached the consensus on adoption of these ahadith and the concept of creation from the crooked rib, and it is very hard to bypass historical layers of patriarchal viewpoint under which the egalitarian idea of creation is buried, demanding justice and liberation from all traditionalisms and authority.

But since for years interpretations and commentaries of the *Qur'an* insisted on narration of the concept of the crooked rib and the guilt which Eve has for the evil in the world – and consequently every woman – it was thought that woman should be controlled and monitored – especially her sexuality – since she is the reason for the fall which Abu 'Ala al-Mawdudi explicitly mentions in this tafseer of the *Qur'an*.<sup>320</sup> Such simplified opinion, creating the concept of female guilt in relation to moral deviation of human beings, served the gender segregation policy implemented by patriarchal elites by putting on the women the burden of responsibility for preservation of moral and purity of the family and community.

318 Freyer-Strowasser. p. 34-35.

319 Riffat Hassan. *Women's and Men's Liberation – Testimonies of Spirit*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1991, p. 78-79.

320 Abu 'Ala al-Mawdudi. *The Meaning of the Qor'an*, Vol.2, Lahore, 1976, p. 12-15.

Nevertheless, in newer interpretations of this *Qur'anic* story on the creation of the first human being we see philosophical and symbolic messages as well, as M. Iqbal explains:

Thus we see that the Qur'anic legend of the Fall has nothing to do with the first appearance of man on this planet. Its purpose is rather to indicate man's rise from a primitive state of instinctive appetite to conscious possession of a free self, capable of doubt and disobedience. The Fall does not mean any moral depravity; it is man's transition from simple consciousness, a kind of waking from the dream of nature, with the a throb of personal causality in one's own being. Nor does the Qur'an regard the Earth as a torture-hall, where an elementally wicked humanity is imprisoned for an original act of sin. Man's first act of disobedience was also his first act of free choice and that is why, according to the Qur'anic narration, Adam's first transgression was forgiven.<sup>321</sup>

In relation to this concept of demystifying „the human fall“ from Jannah, through a form of spiritual maturity which allows humans to go from the state of simple awareness to self conscience, it is possible to work on the gender policy which would exclude any type of discrimination. Fathi Osman speaks about this as of a serious transgression and sin against the Creator and Legislator who created men and women as equal participants in the humanity.<sup>322</sup> In support of this is also the following ayah:

**“O humankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)“.** (Qur'an, 49:13)

Man and woman are equal before God and the only criterion of their differentiation is their piety that includes acting and living with a constant awareness of God's presence. Biological differences are a given thing and no one is denying them nor trying to cancel them, but the problem arises when these differences are used to degrade women in their dignity of human beings and when such a policy is supported through interpretation of God's messages. This is against Qur'anic principles “Since the Qur'an teaches the principle of equality of the sexes as an ontological fact, it cannot, logically teach the principle of inequality of husbands and wives”.<sup>323</sup> Today, both men and women, conceiving the creation as the beginning of the common life and action of two conscious and reasonable creatures, together try to

321 Iqbal, Muhammad. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Ashraf Printed Press, Lahore, 1986, p. 67.

322 Fathi Osman. *Prava muslimanske žene u porodici i društvu (Rights of Muslim Women in Family and Society)*, in Karić, Enes. *Ljudska prava u kontekstu islamsko-zapadne debate (Human Rights in the Context of Islamic-Western Debate)*, Pravni centar/Law Centre, Sarajevo, 1996, p. 237.

323 Barlas, Asma. *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations on the Qur'an*, University of Texas Press, 2004, p. 182.



find the way to rethink the gender policy which will not be possible if it remains positioned on exclusory grounds.

## 4.2. Concept of Gender Relations in Islamic Tradition

Domination of andocentric images about the role of women in family and society has been present for centuries now in the interpretations of Islam. These images indicate:

... that women were considered inferior in comparison to men who tried to maintain their superiority through the interpretation of the faith that focused on the preservation of patriarchal concept of life in which women have secondary position.<sup>324</sup>

Based on the classical Islamic literature in which the scholars tackled the issues of the position of woman in the society, it is obvious that the roles that are glorified are that of a mother, sister, housewife, nurture, and that respected female characteristics are: submissiveness, humbleness, patience, shame, unobtrusiveness, etc.<sup>325</sup> Such attitudes were supported by different *ahadith* in which these female characteristics are glorified, and although the life of Muhammad p.b.u.h. and women that were active in the first centuries of Islam testify that dignity of every person needs to be respected and that moral virtues are equally desired and important with men and women. In the literature, nevertheless, women with the following characteristics are glorified: obedient, faithful, do not speak a lot, make the husband happy, put up with the husband, do not complain, do not do anything against the will of the husband, serve the husband and put herself and her interests behind the ones of her children, husband and others, preserves morality and authority of her husband, family and society.<sup>326</sup> Her empire is her house, the best is if she is unheard and unseen, acting as a shadow. The reason for such an image of a Muslim woman promoted even today, especially in puritan Wahabi ideology, is the centuries-long domination of masculine interpretive practice so „those women who had a significant role in narration and interpretation of Prophets tradition, like his wife Aisha, were suppressed by ‘more important male names’ appearing as *ahadith* narrators in so many situations of the Prophets mission and life that one has the impression as if they were members of his

324 Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka. *Žena u islamu (Woman in Islam)*, magazine *Habitus*, Centar za multikulturalnost/Centre for Multiculturalism, Novi Sad, No. 6-7, February-March, 2002, p. 71-86.

325 Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka. *Žena kroz prizmu interpretacija islama (Woman Through Prism of Interpretations in Islam)*, Glasnik Helsinškog komiteta za ljudska prava u BiH/BiH Helsinki Human Rights Committee Bulletin, No. 4, Sarajevo, 2004, p. 38.

326 Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka. *Žena kroz prizmu interpretacija islama (Woman Through Prism of Interpretations in Islam)*, Glasnik Helsinškog komiteta za ljudska prava u BiH/BiH Helsinki Human Rights Committee Bulletin, No. 4, Sarajevo, 2004, p. 38.



family.”<sup>327</sup> In this part of the book I will present both classical opinions and policies of theological and juridical elite, but also new interpretations and understandings of the Qur'anic messages by both men and women in relation to education, economic status of women and participation in ritual and political life of the community.

#### 4.2.1. Women and Education in Islamic Tradition

Education represents a precondition for any type of emancipation of women and fulfillment of basic human rights in any society, what was confirmed in 20<sup>th</sup> century, when women throughout Europe and world were given the right to education, work and participation in the public life. Although most Islamic scholars and authorities proudly highlight that Islam improved the position of women by giving them respect and appreciation of their personalities - and in support of this they mention the examples of the life of Muhammad p.b.u.h. and first Muslim women - in reality women were pushed to the margins of the social life, which at the same time reduced their possibilities to receive education. The revelation of the *Qur'an* started with the words:

**“Proclaim! (or read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created- Created human being, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood. Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful,- He Who taught (the use of) the pen, Taught human being that which it knew not.” (Qur'an 96:1-5)**

This was the first message which Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. conveyed to people and he kept coming back to it during his whole life by warning Muslims that they should “seek knowledge even in China”,<sup>328</sup> which at that time, in their geographical terms represented an extremely distant place. Another of his sayings highlights the importance of learning, and for centuries it inspired Muslims who lived by its message and left behind them valuable cultural and civilization heritage: „Seeking knowledge is the best *ibadat* (devotion)”.<sup>329</sup> During the time of the Prophet women were also invited to read the *Qur'an*, to study the Sharia law, Arabic language and be the narrators of his tradition. A special role definitely was the one of his wives, especially Aisha and Umm Salama, since the two of them were mostly engaged in the social life of the first Muslim community, but also later since the two narrated a significant number of ahadith. Aisha was most educated woman of that age and the Prophet used to say for her: „Learn a portion of your religion from this red colored

327 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

328 Memić, Jakub. *Izbor Poslanikovih hadisa (Selection of Ahadith of the Prophet)*, Seat of Islamic Community BiH, Sarajevo, 1985, p. 138.

329 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

lady Humayra".<sup>330</sup> A well known historian and expert for tradition Ibn Hagar al-Askalani gives us interesting data on her and says: "I did not see anyone who knew as much about religion, poetry and medicine as Aisha".<sup>331</sup> So, women did have access to education, and were even encouraged to it, but masculine elite, taking over the authority during the times of Mu'awiyah, the first Ummayyad caliph, imposed a patriarchal value system as a norm in which the best place for a woman is her family home, and she should study the *Qur'an* and ahadith in the privacy of her home. Therefore there were no women at the first University in Cairo in 10<sup>th</sup> century, nor in the first Nizamiyya School in Bagdad in 11<sup>th</sup> century, nor in many other scientific institution of the Muslim world.

Cultural context in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century was strictly patriarchal so that Muslim scholarly elite interpreted the *Qur'an* according to the spirit of that culture and civilization, which was the basis of the dichotomy of male and female roles. This is best seen through the placement of a curtain (*hijab*) between men and women, behind which women were suppressed into the sphere of harem, caliph's harem or a private one of the family.<sup>332</sup> Instead dealing with science, as they are invited, women were mostly forced to be educated in those areas that will ensure them a way to caliph's heart or to the throne. A female slave Khayzuran, managed to become caliph's wife and make her two sons Al-Mahdi and Harun al-Rashid the successors of the throne but she had to invest a lot of effort to achieve it. She attended tutoring in Islamic law (*fikh*) and art.<sup>333</sup> So that already in the Abbasid "Golden era of Islam", which Muslims around the world remember with regret by retelling the anecdotes from the life of great Harun al-Rashid, a woman is present in the caliph's court like singer, dancer, poetess and possibly as a connoisseur of the Arabic language and the Sharia law but not so that she would be using this for her job or carrier but to mesmerize the caliph or a vizier with her eloquence, intellectual sharpness and oratorical skill. Historical sources also speak about specialized schools and teachers who were preparing and educating the slave girls in order to raise their price at the slave market. Ibrahim, son of the caliph al-Mahdi in this way bought a slave girl Sharya for 300 dinars. She was trained for a year and when he brought the experts to offer their evaluation, they said that her worth in the market is 8.000 dinars.<sup>334</sup> Once she was brought to caliph's court, whether as a prisoner of war, as a gift or a commodity bought because of some special quality, a woman always had two possibilities: to become an educated slave and find her way to caliphs heart and very often to the throne; or to be swallowed by

330 Imam Muhammed Ibn Bahadur al-Zarkashi. *Al-Ijaba li-Irad ma Istadrakathu 'Aisha 'ala al-Sahaba*, Beirut, Lebanon, 1980, p. 31-32.

331 Al-Asqalani, Ibn Hajar. *Al-Isaba fi Tamyiz al-Sahaba*, Cairo: Maktab al-Dirasa al-Islamiyya Dar al-Nahda, Vol. 8, p. 17.

332 Mernissi, Fatima. *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, Polity Press, UK, 1993, p. 180-181.

333 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

334 *Ibid.*, p. 55-56.

the dark shadow of the harem in which women fought for power among themselves.

Still, it is important to mention that the harem life with the slaves for sexual pleasures and drinking, does not in any case represent the overall Muslim society, since such practice as Fathi Osman explains are „the result of historical circumstances in which Muslim women were not the only oppressed women in the world, or the only oppressed people in the society “. <sup>335</sup> It is the fact that women from higher classes were privileged in comparison to other women since they were able to have private teachers paid by their families or were, themselves teachers and women masters (sheikhas) not only for women, but men too. For example great historian and teacher Ibn al-Asakir (died in 1177) had more than 80 female teachers. <sup>336</sup> Further on, Ibn Arabi, Ibn Hazm and others also had many women among their teachers; but unfortunately such data remain very skillfully hidden so that even today most Muslims are unaware of it. Still, what remains unclear is the fact that women, although they could get education, did not publicly act as university professors or school teacher but they were more like private teachers or respected individuals worth visiting and learning some things from them.

So, for example Ibn Halikan in his biographical dictionary *Wafayah al-A'yan*, in which he collected biographies of famous Islamic figures, mentions numerous women prominent in science. One of them was Zainab bint al-Shari (died in 1218) from Nishapur in Persia, who studied Islamic law and received her degree confirming that she can teach others. He describes her as great and respected professor. <sup>337</sup> Also, in Islamic history we find significant names in the Sufi tradition where educated women had the title of "sheikha" but they were mostly daughters, wives or close relatives of great teachers or sheikhs. Among prominent women saints, teachers and scholars was sheikha Rabi'a, bint Abi Bekr, a wife of the famous sheikh Ahmad Rifa'i. <sup>338</sup> Ibn Batuta, great Muslim traveler, says that during his stay in Syria he had the opportunity to learn from great women like sheikha Umm Muhammad 'Aisha b. Muhammad bint Muslim bint Salama al-Hawani and sheikha Ruhla al-Dunya (*The Goal of Everyone's Journey*) but also listen great imams like Siraj al-Din evoking the authority of women sheikhs in interpretation of the Prophet's tradition. <sup>339</sup> Still, their role in education was not socially nor generally accepted which resulted in reduction of their participation not only in education but, in social life in general.

335 Fathi Osman. *Prava muslimanske žene u porodici i društvu (Rights of Muslim Women in Family and Society)*, in Karić, Enes. *Ljudska prava u kontekstu islamsko-zapadne debate (Human Rights in the Context of Islamic-Western Debate)*, p. 261.

336 *Ibid.*, p. 253.

337 Ibn Khalikan, *Wafayah al-A'yan*. Baron. W.M. de Slane, Beirut, Library Lebanon, 1970, Vol. I, p. 551.

338 Adams-Helminski, Camile. *Women of Sufism: A Hidden Treasure, Writing and Stories of Mystic, Poets, Scholars and Saints*, Shambhala Publication, Boston-London, 2003. p. 77-87.

339 Smith, Margaret. *Muslim Women Mystics: The Life and the Work of Rabi'a and Other Women Mystics in Islam*, Oneworld Oxford, 2001, p. 182.

Further on it is important to mention that there were no women who established legal or theological school of thought, nor wrote commentaries of the *Qur'an*, if we exclude Bint al-Shatti who did write commentaries of some surahs but this is less known. The reason for such examples being only exemptions is that the official establishment of the Muslim ulema wanted, as soon as possible, to suppress them into oblivion in order for the new generations not to be inspired by them. Therefore this universal message and principle of the first words of the *Revelation*: **“Read in the name of thy Lord...”** were turned into the privilege of men, who ruled the intellectual scene so that these few examples of brave and smart women were skillfully hidden from the public eye, by ignoring policy. Such policy and attitudes of the ulema resulted in a huge illiteracy rate among women, but other marginalized groups as well, so that today Muslim countries are at the top of the scale of the countries with high illiteracy rate.

Women had to fight hard in order to enter the universities. Egyptian pioneers of female movements are a proof for that. Musa al-Nabaviyya, teacher of the female department of the primary school, was the first woman in Egypt who demanded to take the state exam in order to receive the university diploma and become certified high school teacher. In that time, in 1907 only men could take that exam and women did not even dare, since generally there were few women that attended school. When she submitted her request for the examination, the Ministry of Education representatives were shocked as well as other students she wanted to take the exam with. She was even advised to withdraw the application which she refused. All (male) students took the examination in one room, and she in a separate room. She passed the exam, founded her own school and became first female teacher and also obtained same salary as men, being thus a forerunner of equal wages for women and men generally in the world.<sup>340</sup>

Even today in some countries with the Islamic prefix women are not given equal rights in education due to the interpretation of the Sharia law in which strict segregation of sexes is obligatory in school, at work or any other institution. If a woman manages to obtain certain degree of education, this still does not mean that she can use it equally as men. A woman can teach at the university, mostly to women; work with women, and must not spend time alone with the men who are not her relatives. But, examples of other countries: Egypt, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan and Turkey show that Muslims managed to find ways to transfer the divine message into modern context so that it would be effective in practice. Reform ideas of Abduh Afgani, and later of Iqbal brought the change of state policies in the

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340 Badran, Margot. *Feminists, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt*, Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 39-45.

Maghreb and other Muslim regions by allowing women free access to schools and universities – preconditions for any type of social engagement.

#### 4.2.2. Women and Economic Status in Islamic Law and Practice

Economic status of a person is defined according to her/his position in family and society, inheritance laws, and practical application of the legislation. Globally women even today belong to the unprivileged since their participation in the ownership of the property is very low. There are different reasons for such a practice, and one of them is definitely the influence of religious and cultural legacy, in which women are very often excluded from the inheritance law. Islamic inheritance regulations are based on the following *Qur'anic* ayahs:

**“From what is left by parents and those nearest related there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large,-a determinate share.” (4:7)**

„Allah (thus) directs you as regards your Children's (Inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters, two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half.” (4: 11-12)

It is obvious that Islam recognizes the right of the woman to inherit property, and this right is not related only to her role of the wife but she is a legal inheritor as a daughter, sister, mother, grandmother. This right was granted to all women not only the ones belonging to the higher class – which represented a change in comparison to Arabia before Islam. In this way a woman received legal guarantee for a part of the inheritance, even if it was half of the man's. Sharia regulations in details define how and under what conditions is property inherited. In the explanation offered by classical Islamic jurists related to the part of the property inherited by a woman reads that such division is conditioned by the Islamic marriage concept in which according to another ayah **“...But he (father) shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms”** (*Qur'an* 2:233)

The concept of the Islamic marriage implies the responsibility of the man to fully support his family since his wife is not capable of doing so due to her biological motherhood function which requires protection, attention and economic security. Further on, woman inherits one third of her parents property, and her brother two thirds which allows for him to support his family, and for her to bring her third into the marriage and make, with two thirds of her husband's, again a whole. Of course, woman is not obliged to invest her property if she does not want; she can independently manage her own affairs and if she wants, she can invest. Ibn Kethir says that woman and man were, in essence, equal in their right to inherit property from their parents (*Qur'an*, 4: 7), but that there is the difference in their inheritance since the

man is obliged to support the family.<sup>341</sup> When observed from this perspective, taking into account the context of time in which the family was really supported by the man, such a division was satisfying the needs of all, and woman was even in a better position than man, since she could independently dispose of her property, she would receive marital gift (*mahr*) and other gifts and the man remains with the obligation to support the family. This, according to interpretations is the only reason for which women inherit less.<sup>342</sup> Classic juridical Islamic thought defined the rights of woman and man which clearly state that a woman did not have any connection with raising children, performing house works, or any other works she did not want, since the most important obligation of the woman was to ensure sexual relations for her husband, as Imam Shafi defines it.<sup>343</sup>

But, later neoconservative contemporary interpretations will impose on women obligations not present in the classical law:

The woman is naturally conditioned and created by Allah to perform the functions of pregnancy, giving birth, and taking care of the internal affairs of the house. Man, on the other hand has been endowed with more physical strength and clearer thought and he is, therefore, more befitting to be the leader of the household and the one responsible for providing the means of livelihood, protecting the family and bringing about security and continuance in the family.<sup>344</sup>

In this way the original practice is changed but to the detriment of women, since they only received new obligations and remained under the patronage of the men, which completely corresponds with patriarchal value system.

#### 4.2.2.1. *Kawama* – Material Security or Superiority?

Rights and obligations of the woman came down to her role being mostly related to family and children, whereas the man was the one who economically supported her and the family. This situation was mostly influenced by andocentric interpretation of the following Qur'anic ayah: **“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has preferred one over the other, and because they support them from their means...”** (*Qur'an* 4: 34)

Commentators of the *Qu'ran* explain this issue of protection or maintenance (*kawama*) in different ways; one part of them represented the opinion that the man protects the woman and takes care about her since is his duty and that this is primar-

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341 Ibn Kethir. *Tafseer*, p. 258.

342 Haverić, Ismail and Izeta. *Islamski brak i porodica (Islamic Marriage and Family)*, Haver, Sarajevo, 1991, p. 67.

343 Kecia, Ali. *Progressive Muslims and Islamic Jurisprudence*, in Safi Omid, *Progressive Muslims*, Oneworld Publication, 2003, p. 169.

344 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

ily related to material support. Still, there are opinions that this is related to superiority of the man as explained in a well known tafseer of the *Qur'an* by Ibn Kethir – recently translated into Bosnian as well.

Translators of Ibn Kethir's tafseer translated the first part of this ayah in this way: **"Men are superior to women"** instead: **"Men are the protectors of women"** (Arabic: verb *qame 'ala* – 'maintaining', 'fully supporting' and 'holding oneself in balance'), as translators used to translate this into Bosnian,<sup>345</sup> and the author adds the explanation that the man has the right to lead the woman and be her superior – as well as her educator, if she 'digresses'. But, how do we act in a opposite situation if the man 'digresses' – no one thought this issue deserved attention since the man is *a priori* given the status of a superior side.

The ayah continues: **"Allah has preferred one over the other, and because they support them from their means"**. The interpretation of this part in the tafseer of Ibn Kethir is that men are more valuable than women, i.e. men are better than women. With no detailed explanations this commentator concludes that – since man are better and more valuable than women – women must be submissive and obedient to their husbands.<sup>346</sup> This is one of those specific *Qur'anic* ayahs on which the commentators and jurists created gender inequality in marital relations and inheritance. Patriarchal interpretations of this ayah imply that woman and man are not only biologically different but that the man is ontologically superior to woman since she was created second and from the „crooked rib“. She was created for him – morally and socially - since God gave men a degree (advantage) over women by giving them the role of protector and maintainer of his wife and children.

Egalitarian interpretations of the *Qur'an* differently define the issue of protection (*kawama*) and advantage (*faddala*). In this case I will discuss hermeneutics of the *Qur'anic* text, since it is important to show on this *Qur'anic* ayah that the part of the text cannot be observed as a separate unit, nor can one make universal rule and principle on the basis of one ayah.

345 For example, in the two most known Bosnian translations of the *Qur'an*, the term *qama 'ala* (*kawama*) is translated as to include care and protection. Translation of Besim Korkut, widely used in BiH, says for this part of the ayah: '**Muškarci vode brigu o ženama**' (**Man take care of women**), while Enes Karić says '**Muškarci su zaštitnici žena**' (**Men are protectors of women**), with the explanation that this includes taking care of women and protecting their rights. Translators of Ibn Kethir *Tafseer* into Bosnian transformed this care and protection into superiority which completely suits Puritan Wahabi ideology which diligently insists on segregation of women and men considering as the greatest temptation for men and the morality of the community. See, *Tafseer* Ibn Kethir, Saudi Committee for BiH, Sarajevo, 2000, p. 274-275.

346 Ibn Kethir. *Tafseer*, p. 274.



When approaching the text of the *Qur'an* it is important to consider three aspects at least:

- The context in which the text was written (in the case of the *Qur'an*, in which it was revealed)
- the grammatical composition of the text (how it says and what it says )
- the whole text , its Weltanschauung, or world-view.<sup>347</sup>

In order to explain the 'advantage' (*faddala*) mentioned here it is important to go back to the rest of the *Qur'anic* text and see how this term is used and with what meanings. *Qur'an* namely speaks about two types of advantage:

#### 1. **Darajah** – level/degree

"But such as come to Him as Believers who have worked righteous deeds, - for them are ranks exalted (darajah)." (20:75)

"And to all are (assigned) degrees according to the deeds which they (have done)" (46:19)

This is a degree that one receives on the basis of his/her good deeds and credits, but Amina Wadud highlights that the *Qur'an* is not specifying the categories of good deeds, leaving thus the possibility for each social system to determine it.<sup>348</sup>

#### 2. **Faddala** – advantage/priority

Other type of advantage is *faddala*, the term used in different ayahs as a means to distinguish advantage of human being over other creatures (*Qur'an* 17:70), or of one group of people over other groups of people, prophets whom God raised to degrees (*Qur'an* 2:253).

So this term *faddala* is not absolute but relative; one receives it on the basis of good deeds and Allah gives it to the one whom He chooses. Especially in interpretations of such parts of the text it is important to have a holistic approach i.e. the entirety of the text must be taken into account, we should be cautious about the used term, and the way in which it is translated, and interpreted. According to this a man can have advantage only in two cases: if Allah gave him this advantage (in knowledge, spirituality or something else) and if he spends his property in support of his wife. If one of these conditions is missing, or „if the woman is contributing financially to an equal extent, or perhaps the woman has an equal earning potential that she chose to forgo, than man's *qiwama* cannot exist “,<sup>349</sup> that person is not *kawwamun* (the one ensuring protection and taking care of the woman), i.e. the man is not taking care of his wife nor protecting her. Therefore, degree/ advantage/

347 Wadud, Amina. *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, p. 3.

348 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

349 Abou El-Fadl, Khaled. *The Search for Beauty in Islam*, Rowman and Littlefield publishers Inc, Maryland, 2006, p. 182.



faddala is relative, since in the mentioned ayah it is not stated that men have advantage over women, but the pronoun used is some of them (*ba'd*) over some of them (*ba'duhum*). So that men can have a degree - *faddala* – from God, but some women too, depending on these two conditions which need to be fulfilled (that someone is gifted with something from God and is spending his/her property on his/her family). Since in our context in most families both man and woman work and support the family with their joint assets than this automatically excludes the possibility of men being *kawwamun* – protectors and having *faddala* over woman. Further on, this also has implications to inheritance rules which need to be reconsidered in these new living conditions.

Azizah al-Hibri one of leading jurists of the Sharia law today, interprets this part of the ayah – speaking about advantage of some over other – in the sense that this advantage (*faddala*) is not clearly defined, i.e. it is not said that they (men) have advantage over them (women), which is clearly a sign that this should be seen in the context of humankind and that only some of them – and not all men – are above women, as well as some women are above some men. As argument she offers another Qur'anic ayah which says that men and women are protectors, i.e. friends of one another, they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil (9:71), so that this term **awliya** – friend/protector– has a similar meaning as the term *qawama*/protector. How can than women be *awliya*/friends to men if they are their superior and have absolute dominance over them?<sup>350</sup>

Fathi Osman says that this responsibility – protection or taking care (*kawama*) is related to family and cannot be broaden so that it would become a general rule in the whole society. Also man's obligation to support the family is not in collision with women's right to work; nor is prohibiting her to work is she wants to, so that the daily schedule of both spouses can be mutually agreed through a constructive discussion the result of which can be a joint decision. When the man does not work, and cannot afford his family a decent life due to any reason he cannot take over *kawama* only because he belongs to male sex. The point of view which makes man superior to women due to his physical strength does not have a support in the *Qur'an* nor in Prophet's practice, since God Almighty is speaking about "care" and "responsibility" within the family and not superiority, he concludes.<sup>351</sup>

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350 Al-Hibri, Azizah. *A Study of Islamic Her Story: or How Did We Get into This Mess?*, Women and Islam, Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 5. 1982, p. 218.

351 Fathi, Osman. *Prava muslimanske žene u porodici i društvu (Rights of Muslim Women in Family and Society)*, p. 258-259.

#### 4.2.2.2. *Mahr* – Material Security for Woman

After detailed analysis of the *Qur'anic* verse (*ayah*) known in literature as “the ayah on *kawama*”, we need to say that a woman when entering marriage is not loosing her economic independence exactly due to the property she inherits, but also due to the nature of marriage which is, like in the Jewish tradition, a “contract” according to which two sides voluntarily accept the common life. Still, legal schools<sup>352</sup> had different opinions related to freedom of woman to make a decision to enter a marriage. However, majority of legal schools condition marriage by father's or guardian's consent who also then participates in decision about the amount of the marital gift (*mahr*) which the bridegroom pays to his wife. This would then allow the bridegroom to ensure – through *mahr* - complete obedience of the wife and her submission to his control. Esposito considers the guardianship practice was accepted as a result of cultural and traditional norms impact on the law.<sup>353</sup> Although Muhammad p.b.u.h. insisted on *mahr* being moderate in order not to serve as an obstacle for people to marry and an object of misuse – which it later even became – Muslims exchanged the Prophet's advice and his personal practice with the customary practice of their countries, calling it still the Islamic *mahr*.<sup>354</sup> If divorced, which is allowed – but as defined by the Prophet is “the worst thing Allah allowed”, the woman should be economically secured according to regulations on inheritance and *mahr*.

Further on, she has the obligation to wait for three months until pregnancy might be established, or four if she is a widow. While waiting, she has the right to spend time in her husband's house, with the right to be fully supported. When this period elapses, wife receives her *mahr* and she can start her own life, whether by marrying another man or independently, what should be ensured by her marital gift which will cover at least initial costs until she does not manage to ensure her living expenses.

Historic sources show that women, especially from the higher classes, disposed of property, and we find that in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Turkey and Egypt. They were buying and selling – trading, but it is obvious that the part they would inherit was quite humble and that certain economic areas were closed for them unless they would inherit something from their parents.<sup>355</sup> In the end, one should take into account the fact that in the societies of the Middle Ages the class was crucial and that

352 In Islamic tradition four legal schools developed: Maliki, Hanbali, Shafi and Hanefi – which is most liberal and to which the biggest part of Sunni Muslims belong.

353 Esposito John. *Women in Muslim Family Law*, Syracuse University Press, 2001, 17.

354 Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. used to say: “The best *mahr* (marital gift) is the lightest one”, Jakub Memić. *Izbor Poslanikovih hadisa (Selection of Ahadith of the Prophet)*, Seat of the Islamic Community BiH, Sarajevo, 1985, p. 191.

355 Ahmad, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam*, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 111-112.

woman's rights – ensured by the law, like in the case of Islamic inheritance regulations - largely depended on her social status.

### 4.2.3. Participation of Muslim Woman in Public Worship

Worship life is very important determinant of the Islamic practice without which religious life is not complete. Muslims are invited to maintain five *fards* (strict obligations) in order to testify their belonging to Islam which we spoke about in the forth chapter. Women are equally as men invited to perform rituals and prayers representing the pillars of faith as Muhammad p.b.u.h. defined it: "Prayer (*salat*) is the pillar of the faith."<sup>356</sup> How important is the everyday prayer we can see also through this: fasting can be replaced by giving charity if you are ill, or you can make up for it later, while one is obliged to perform the *salat* laying if ill, or even in thoughts if that is the only option. Therefore, contact with God is very important and this connection must not be broken when a person is ill. The obligation to perform the prayer is commanded for every adult and mentally sane person. There is the exact procedure of preparation and performance of the *salat*, which Muslims must adhere to daily, including ritual washing – ablution (*wudu*), clean place and proper clothing. *Salat* can be performed at home or in the mosque in the *jama'at* (congregation). A woman can participate in the congregation (*jama'at*) although, according to some interpretations, she is not obliged to come to the mosque as men are, but she is still obliged to perform the prayer at home. The reasons for this are family obligations which do not allow women enough time to visit the mosque five times a day.

During the time of the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. women participated in the communal prayers and not only the daily ones but also on Friday during the weekly prayer (*Jum'a salat*), and on Aid prayers – two times a year. The case of Umm Salama, Prophet's wife testifies how women understood the *Revelation* and applied it in practice. We see her opinion also from the example of the crier who would walk the streets of Medina and announce something important or invite people to come to the mosque so that the Prophet could tell them the news:

It was related that Um Salama, a wife of the Prophet (PBUH), was in her room with her maid combing her hair, when she heard the crier calling for a community gathering for an announcement in the mosque: "O people!" Her maid says, "You don't have to go; he is calling for the men, not the women." Um Salama replies: "Indeed, I am one of the people."<sup>357</sup>

356 *The Five Pillars of Islam*. <http://www.qadiri-rifai.org/html/pathofsufism/fivepillars.htm>

357 Abou Bakr, Omaima. *Gender Perspective in Islam*, <http://www.minaret.org/gender.htm>

Nevertheless, in the space of the mosque there was, and still is, segregation of men and women – with clearly determined space for men and for women. Depending on the construction and the style of the mosque women were or in the same space, behind the rows in which men sit, or in separated rooms, or in space divided with a curtain, or on balconies (*musandar*). The order is such that men stand in the first rows behind the imam, and women behind them; sometimes it is also parallel to them, or in separate rooms, or divided with a curtain. The reason for this was, like in the orthodox Jewish practice, not to divert the attention of men. Ibn al-Jawzi – although the Prophet left clear opinion and practice about this from the first centuries of Islam – considered that: “If they are fearful of creating disorder in the minds of men, it is preferable for them to remain at home.”<sup>358</sup>

#### 4.2.3.1. Exclusion of Women from Mosque

Although covered from top to toe, and positioned in the last rows women became a threat to male spiritual elevation and contemplation; therefore, they were supposed to be removed from the sight ensuring thus a ‘dedicated’ believer to perform the prayer without any temptations and distractions. No one speaks about men representing temptation for women, or men diverting women's attention away from the prayer so that one has the impression that women are or more dedicated believers so that their attention is harder to distract, or their opinion was never taken into considerations in this domain – which seems to have been the case, and is even today. Therefore, the saying according to which the last rows are best for women, and first rows for men whenever they come to the mosque – highlights a lot. Luckily, the opinion of Ibn al-Jawzi was not obligatory nor generally accepted so from different historical sources we learn that women very actively participated in rituals in mosques. Moroccan traveler and historian Ibn Battuta wrote about this. When travelling through Persia he saw groups of women in mosques in Shiraz, and not only during regular prayers but also on Friday during central prayer Jumma salat:

The people of Shiraz are distinguished by piety, sound religion and purity of manners, especially the women. These wear boots, and when out of doors are swathed in mantles and head-veils... One of their strange custom is that they meet in the principal mosque every Monday, Thursday and Friday, to listen to the preacher, sometimes one or two thousands of them, carrying fans in their hands with which they fan themselves on account of the great heat. I have never seen in any land an assembly of women in such numbers.<sup>359</sup>

358 Guity, Nashat and Beck, Lois. *Women in Iran: From the Rise of Islam to 1800*, University of Illinois Press, 2003, p. 105.

359 Mernissi, Fatima. *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, p. 82.

Unfortunately, the practice of female exclusion from the mosque – advocated by Al-Javzi and others – in time became institutionalized which is confirmed by the opinion of Al-Kanuji, a Muslim scholar from the 20<sup>th</sup> century who found a hadith attributed to Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. which says: “The Friday service is a duty for all Muslims, with four exceptions: slaves, women, children and the ill.”<sup>360</sup> Women therefore are once again in the same category as slaves, children and the sick i.e. the category of underprivileged, against all original Prophet's messages and practice testifying their presence in the mosque.

### **4.3. Participation of Women in Public and Political Life of Community**

In previous chapters I showed what status - relating to education, property rights, and participation in the religious life of the community - was given to women in Islamic tradition. Although Qur'anic messages and the practice of the Prophet undoubtedly show that women have the right to receive education, study and learn about science, the Muslim practice still, for centuries excluded women from the public sphere. Nevertheless, there were numerous women prominent in science, poetry and law, which unfortunately was not socially valorized and women were not accepted as equal participants in the community. Namely, as Muslim societies were religious and not secular, Islamic law defined the role and the status of women and men in it, and this is still the case in few countries where Islamic law is applied (*Sharia*).

#### **4.3.1. Models of Female Rulers, Prophetesses and Women Imams in Islamic History**

When the question of the leadership of women is posed today, whether in spiritual or secular sphere of life, than the usual answer is given explaining how such practice was never present in Muslim societies and that women are not capable of performing such functions and that, in the end, “people ruled by a woman will never be successful” (*hadith*).<sup>361</sup> When Fatima Mernissi, a well-known Muslim sociologist and feminist from Morocco asked if a woman could be a leader of Muslims in

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360 *Ibid.*, p.136.

361 A famous hadith, found in canonised ahadith collections, remembered by the Muslims better than any other saying attributed to the Prophet since it was of the utmost importance when it came to their protection and protection of their position in power, which had to remain free from presence and temptation of women.

Morocco in 1970<sup>th</sup>, the answer was very similar to this earlier mentioned hadith.<sup>362</sup> Therefore she decided to embark on a longer journey through history and analyze it further.

In this part I will represent three women – three paradigms – which each in her own way strongly marked the history of Islam. I will speak about Bilqis, wise ruler from Yemen, who was a secular ruler; Maryam, spiritual paradigm of a perfect woman; and Aisha, Prophet's wife, who was prominent in science and political arena after his death.

#### 4.3.1.1. Bilqis, Queen of Sheba

Bilqis will be introduced to you since she is the only woman mentioned in the *Qur'an* in the function of a ruler; she ruled over southern part of the Arabic peninsula, in Sheba/Saba or today's Yemen. Although the revelation of the *Qur'an* historically happened in 7<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims also accept the revelations of previous Prophets, believing that they were *muslims* (submitted to one God), and therefore they serve as role-models in the *Qur'an* and represent examples and paradigms for believers. Bilqis also accepted the faith in one God and together with Sulayman (Solomon) lived and ruled in her kingdom. Since the *Qur'an* is not arranged historically as chronological sequence of events about different personalities and their lives, there are no concrete details, the story is not whole, in fact there are messages, paradigms, and models of certain behaviors and lives which people are supposed to learn from. One such paradigm is the story of Bilqis. She is mentioned in the *Qur'an* in the contexts of the rule of king Sulayman whom God Almighty presented with a unique present – a capability to communicate with animals, to rule winds, and have armies of jinns obey him. We see this in the following ayah:

**"And Solomon was David's heir. He said: "O ye people! We have been taught the speech of birds, and on us has been bestowed (a little) of all things: this is indeed Grace manifest (from Allah.) (27:16)"**

During one gathering of Sulayman's army – comprising of humans, jinns and birds – he notices that the hoopoe is missing. He was angry and said that he will punish the hoopoe if he does not bring a valid justification. When he appeared, he said to Sulayman:

**"I have compassed (territory) which thou hast not compassed, and I have come to thee from Saba with tidings true. "I found (there) a woman ruling**

362 Mernissi, Fatima. *A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, in Charles Kurtzman, *Liberal Islam*, p. 112-113. Fatima Mernissi, a Muslim feminist, living and working in Rabbat, Morocco, is a well known author dealing with the analysis of misogynist ahadith attributed the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. in the contexts of prohibition of power positions to women. Her well known book is also *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, translated by Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, Buybook, 2005, Sarajevo, which speaks about female rulers from Muslim countries in the period from 10th to 17th century.

**over them and provided with every requisite; and she has a magnificent throne. "I found her and her people worshipping the sun besides Allah. Satan has made their deeds seem pleasing in their eyes, and has kept them away from the Path,- so they receive no guidance,- "(Kept them away from the Path), that they should not worship Allah, Who brings to light what is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and knows what ye hide and what ye reveal. "(Allah)!- there is no god but He!- Lord of the Throne Supreme!" (Solomon) said: "Soon shall we see whether thou hast told the truth or lied! "Go thou, with this letter of mine, and deliver it to them: then draw back from them, and (wait to) see what answer they return" ... (27:22-28)**

After delivering the letter to the people of Sheba and their ruler, hoopoe stayed to watch their reactions in order to convey them to his master. In continuation of the story we witness the dialogue between the ruler and her officials, trying to agree on the reply to this invitation.

#### **4.3.1.1.1. Diplomatic Reply to Sulayman p.b.u.h**

After receiving the letter from Sulayman p.b.u.h., Bilqis thought in which way to answer the new ruler about whom she did not know much, but still enough to understand that he was great and mighty ruler inviting everyone openly to submit to him. Of course, she did not reach the decision alone. She asked her officials in court administration to give her advice. The *Qur'an* speaks about this:

**„Ye chiefs! here is delivered to me - a letter worthy of respect.**

**"It is from Solomon, and is (as follows): 'In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful: „Be ye not arrogant against me, but come to me in submission (to the true Religion).” She said: “Ye chiefs! advise me in (this) my affair: no affair have I decided except in your presence.” They said: “We are endued with strength, and given to vehement war: but the command is with thee; so consider what thou wilt command.” She said: “Kings, when they enter a country, despoil it, and make the noblest of its people its meanest thus do they behave. “But I am going to send him a present, and (wait) to see with what (answer) return (my) ambassadors.” (27:29-34)**

Although they - convinced that their military strength is indisputable - expected order for military intervention, she still decided to go for diplomacy and negotiations in order to see how strong her enemy is. Therefore, she sent presents to see if in this way she can win over the great ruler. The stories collected by Abu Ishaq Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Nisaburi, more known under his nickname Tha'labi, a Muslim author from the 11<sup>th</sup> century says that Bilqis decided to send such gifts to examine the unknown ruler in order to see if he is only king or God's Messenger too. Jacob Lassner brings details of this story. Bilqis gathered equal number of young maidservants and young lads, ordering them to exchange their clothes and jewelry in order to test whether Sulayman will be able to notice the disguise, then she



prepared a box with expensive perfectly smooth pearls and shells perforated with curved lines. She wrote a letter asking him to distinguish girls from boys, to say what is in the box before he opens it and to make holes in the pearls so that a thread can pass through them. Just in case, she ordered the boys to speak as girls with thin voice, and the girls to speak like men if the ruler asks them anything.<sup>363</sup> She also sent golden and silver bricks, but Sulayman, when he learned about it, ordered jinns to make golden blocks and place them along that way which her emissaries took. When they saw them, they were disappointed since their gift looked small in comparison to the riches they saw.<sup>364</sup> In the continuation of the *Qur'anic* story we see a different end:

**Now when (the embassy) came to Solomon, he said: Will ye give me abundance in wealth? But that which Allah has given me is better than that which He has given you! Nay it is ye who rejoice in your gift! Go back to them, and be sure we shall come to them with such hosts as they will never be able to meet: We shall expel them from there in disgrace, and they will feel humbled (indeed). He said (to his own men): "Ye chiefs! which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?" Said an 'Ifrit, of the Jinns: "I will bring it to thee before thou rise from thy council: indeed I have full strength for the purpose, and may be trusted". Said one who had knowledge of the Book: "I will bring it to thee within the twinkling of an eye!" Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him, he said: "This is by the Grace of my Lord!- to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful! And if any is grateful, truly his gratitude is (a gain) for his own soul; but if any is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Free of all Needs, Supreme in Honour!" He said: "Transform her throne out of all recognition by her: let us see whether she is guided (to the truth) or is one of those who receive no guidance." So when she arrived, she was asked, "Is this thy throne?" She said, "It was just like this; and knowledge was bestowed on us in advance of this, and we have submitted to Allah (in Islam)." And he diverted her from the worship of others besides Allah for she was (sprung) of a people that had no faith. (27:36-43)**

Sulayman refused gifts and said that he will send a great army on her land if she does not respond to the invitation, and in the mean time he decided to test the queen and he made her throne come to him before she arrived. He did this in a miraculous way since **"the one who had knowledge of the Book"** brought her throne in a blink of an eye. Exegetes wondered how come that Sulayman this great king and prophet – who was given knowledge and power – did not know what "the one who had knowledge of the Book" knew. Who was this person? Was it possible that his subordinates knew something he did not know? There are different answers to this. Ibn Kethir says that this was malak Gibril, or some other malak whom Allah

363 Lassner, Jacob. *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba. Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam*, The University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 55

364 *Ibid.*, 56-57.



Almighty sent to help Sulayman.<sup>365</sup> Muhammad b. Munkadir says: "it was rather Solomon himself for God had given his prophet knowledge (*'ilm*) and understanding (*fiqh*)."<sup>366</sup>

According to Muslim scholars the one who helped bringing the throne invoked the greatest God's name, that might be: *Ya Hayy Ya Qayyum*, or *Our Lord and Lord of everything* or some other God's name.<sup>367</sup>

#### 4.3.1.1.2. Meeting Sulayman p.b.u.h

When Bilqis came to Jerusalem she was tested: she was supposed to recognize her throne. Her answer was: **"It was just like this"**. It is unclear whether she did not know, or did not want to answer directly. She avoided a direct answer, so another test followed, since Sulayman p.b.u.h. was aware of her intelligence:

**She was asked to enter the lofty Palace: but when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she (tucked up her skirts), uncovering her legs. He said: "This is but a palace paved smooth with slabs of glass." She said: "O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul: I do (now) submit (in Islam), with Solomon, to the Lord of the Worlds." (27:44)**

In the end, Bilqis understood that Sulayman is truly God's Messenger, and that his power and knowledge are far beyond hers, so she decided to accept the faith in one God. Still, the historians tried to diminish the importance of her figure and position with the story of her origin being half-human. Mas'udi, great historian, says that her father was human and that her mother's origin was from jinns: "With a throne and the whole people at her feet, Bilqis could not be a complete human."<sup>368</sup> The story goes like this: one day her father went hunting, and saw two snakes. One black, other white. When he killed the black one, two jinns appeared before him. The older jinn gave his daughter as a wife to Bilqis' father, under certain conditions; and the fruit of this mixed marriage was the Queen of Saba.<sup>369</sup> This origin is proven with her hairy legs. Namely, when entering the hall she lifted her dress, and her hairy legs appeared. Sulayman did not like this and he asked for help. According to some stories<sup>370</sup>, jinns made depilation resin, and according to others Sulayman asked help from shaytans, since humans or jinns did not know how to solve this issue. Then

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365 Ibn Kethir. Tafseer, p. 977.

366 Lassner, Jacob. *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba. Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam*, p. 59.

367 *Ibid.*,

368 Mernissi, Fatima. *The Forgotten Queens*, p. 143.

369 *Ibid.*, p. 233-234.

370 Abdul Aziz, Ahmed. *Kazivanja o Vjerovjesnicima (Stories of the Prophets)*, translated by Adilović Ahmed, Organizacija aktivne islamske omladine/Organisation of Active Islamic Youth, Zenica, 1997, p. 537-538.

shaytan made depilation resin, so Ibn Abbas concludes that this was the first time that depilation was performed.<sup>371</sup>

Such stories have been used to diminish her importance, ascribing her “an impure” origin. Others used as evidence her virginity and claimed that since she was a virgin when she married Sulayman, he married her because of that. By this they wanted to equalize her story with a standard story of a virgin desirable for marriage, and not an independent intelligent woman: “Bilqis was a woman of irreproachable conduct; she remained chaste. And she was not the slightest bit interested in men, she remained the virgin until she met Solomon and married him.”<sup>372</sup>

After she married him, she went South to rule her kingdom. Sulayman would visit her three times a month. But, there are other stories claiming that this did not happen and that he had her married to the ruler of the Hemdan tribe, whom he entrusted the rule over Yemen.<sup>373</sup> It was obviously hard to acknowledge that a woman was on the throne, showing her intelligence and power and in the end accepting the faith of Sulayman. Not all this was enough; but since she is mentioned as a ruler successfully managing her kingdom these pieces of information were impossible to erase from the pages of the *Qur'an*. So, through other stories different justifications were inserted claiming that she does not represent a good role model supported by illogical and unfounded conclusion. Bilqis showed that a woman can rule successfully, can be wise in decision making, is a good analyst who is judging the situation well, has attitude in her speech and does not rush since it is not a characteristic of intelligent people. She therefore avoided a direct answer since she knew she was being tested and, in the end, she did not stubbornly stick to her attitudes but she was pragmatic, apprehensive and open for new and different ideas offered to her. She was a woman that can serve as an example to both men and women even today.

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371 Lessner, Jacob. *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba. Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam*, p. 201.

372 Mernissi, Fatima. *The Forgotten Queens*, p. 143.

373 Abdul Aziz, Ahmed. *Kazivanja o vjerovjesnicima (Stories of the Prophets)*, p. 538.

### 4.3.1.2. Maryam – Prophetess and Spiritual Paradigm of a Perfect Woman

Maryam is the only female character in the *Qur'an* mentioned by her name. Nineteenth Surah of the *Qur'an* bares her name *Maryam*, and is dedicated to the story about her and her son Isa p.b.u.h. (Jesus). The *Qur'an* mentions her 34 times, directly or indirectly, and she has a very prominent position in historic and well as dogmatic realm of the Islamic tradition. Whether she was a prophetess, spiritual paradigm or only mother of a great prophet of God, remains a topic for further discussion and research. Maryam is considered most pious and most honorable person in the whole Muslim history. She is ascribed purity, virginity, and immaculate conception for which she had been prepared from the very beginning. Muhammad p.b.u.h. said about her: "The best women of all the women are Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, Fatimah bint Muhammad, Maryam bint Imran, and Aasiyah bint Muzahim (the wife of the Pharaoh)." <sup>374</sup>

Her origin is linked to Imran's family, also mentioned in the *Qur'an*. Third *Qur'anic* chapter (*surah*) is named after this family. Maryam has been chosen by God, like her son Isa p.b.u.h. – Word of God (*Kelimet Allah*) and Spirit of God (*Ruh Allah*), as well as other numerous God's prophets and messengers through history. Purity of Maryam and her son Isa p.b.u.h. implies also life without sin and fault, and the two of them – according to the sayings of Muhammad p.b.u.h. – were exempted from shaytan's touch as opposed to the rest of humanity: "Every newly born baby is touched by Satan (*shaytan*) when it is born, and the baby starts crying because of this touch, except Maryam and her son."<sup>375</sup> Her special position is also highlighted by the next *Qur'anic* ayah: **"Behold! the angels said: "O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee- chosen thee above the women of all nations."** (3:42)

Her story begins before her birth, when her mother Hana learned that she was pregnant and decided to dedicate her child to God:

**"Behold! A woman of Imran said: "O my Lord! I do dedicate unto Thee what is in my womb for Thy special service: So accept this of me: For Thou hearest and knowest all things." When she was delivered, she said: "O my Lord! Behold! I am delivered of a female child!"- and Allah knew best what she brought forth- "And no wise is the male Like the female. I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection from the Evil One, the Rejected."**(3:35-36)

Her mother hoped to give birth to a son, since male children were mostly given to the temple; but when she gave birth to a girl, she was surprised because of her vow she gave to God. She decided to fulfill the vow, and sent her to the temple. She

<sup>374</sup> Abdul Aziz, Ahmed. *Kazivanja o vjerovjesnicima (Stories of the Prophets)*, p. 600.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

was a girl whose life from her early childhood was filled with wonders and divine presence and she was being carefully and watchfully prepared for what was to follow once she grew up.

#### 4.3.1.2.1. Maryam's Special Status

In the temple her uncle Zakariya (Zachariah) took care of her. He witnessed not only her devotion to God but obvious divine presence and care of woman who was to bring to the world one of the greatest prophets in human history. Signs of her elevated status and closeness to God are confirmed by the following *Qur'anic* sentences:

**"Right graciously did her Lord accept her: He made her grow in purity and beauty: To the care of Zakariya was she assigned. Every time that he entered (Her) chamber to see her, He found her supplied with sustenance. He said: "O Mary! Whence (comes) this to you?" She said: "From Allah. for Allah Provides sustenance to whom He pleases without measure." (3:37)**

She devoutly prayed in a niche (*mihrab*) in the temple, and Almighty God gave her food and drink which was a *mujiza*, supernatural act attributed only to God's prophets and the chosen ones. Nevertheless, great commentators of the *Qur'an* al-Taberi, Ibn Kethir and Fahrudin Razi, who almost represent a consensus of the theological thought, claimed that Maryam was given a *karamah* – supernatural act attributed to the holy people, and not *mujiza* – a supernatural act given to prophets as confirmation of their mission. Their argument is based on the following *Qur'anic* ayahs:

**Nor did We send before thee (as apostles) any but human beings, whom we did inspire,- (humans) living in human habitations. Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them? But the home of the hereafter is best, for those who do right. Will ye not then understand? (12:109)**

**And before thee also the apostles We sent were but human beings, to whom We granted inspiration: if ye realise this not, ask of those who possess the Message. (Qur'an 16:43)**

In these ayahs Arabic term *rijalen* is used. Translators of the *Qur'an* usually translated this term as "people" meaning men, or in newer translations of the *Qur'an* "men".<sup>376</sup> Still, as Ibn Kethir says in this Tafseer, one group of Arabs rejected Muhammad as a prophet mission by saying: "Allah is too great to have a human as his messenger!" After this the following ayah was revealed: "Is it a matter of wonderment to men that We have sent Our inspiration to a man from among themselves..."

376 Besim Korkut in his Bosnian translation of the *Qur'an* translated the term *rijalen* as *people and citizens*, and Enes Karić in his Bosnian translation of the *Qur'an* translated the same term as *men*. Also English translation of the *Qur'an* by Yusuf Ali uses *men*.

(10:2). The aim was to explain to people, as Ibn Kethir claims to explain to people that God's messengers are humans, and not angels (*malaikah*) or some other beings.<sup>377</sup> Still, the basic argument against Maryam as a prophetess was related to the issue of cleanliness / purity (*tahara*), which in the classical juridical thought means physical cleanliness. Malaikah did reveal to Maryam that God selected and cleaned (*tahhara*) her, but it was not precisely defined what was meant by that. Still, from Prophet's hadith we learn that Maryam had her menstruation as any other woman, which confirms the fact that her cleanliness is not related to biological natural functions. There were attempts to explain her spiritual cleanliness and perfection by the idea that Maryam in fact was considered a man "because of the perfection she is ascribed, since among women there are also the ones that are perfect and knowledgeable in the same way as men are".<sup>378</sup> But, in Sufi tradition maleness was norm for both men and women, "when they attained the fullness of human the state in which the soul serves the intellect".<sup>379</sup> Ibn Al-Arabi use the notion man (*rajul*) for God's friends who reached the human perfection, but as Muratta notices: he is careful to point out that it is not gender specific."<sup>380</sup> Some Sufis also use the same interpretation as a basis for the right of women to be imams, according to the following *Qur'anic* ayah: **"O Mary! Worship Thy Lord devoutly: Prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down."** (3:43)

Muslim Zahiri theologian from Cordoba (11<sup>th</sup> c.) Ibn Hazm claimed that Maryam was a prophetess, and that she and Aasiyah – wife of the Pharaoh, are among the most perfect woman. In his explanation he makes distinction between two types of prophethood: *resul* (God's messenger) and *nabii* (the one receiving and bringing the Message from God – Arabic verb: *naba'* - message). Maryam, Sarah, Hagar and Musa's mother were Messengers (*nabia'* – spreaders of the Message from God). Ibn Hazm cites different reasons for her prophethood, and among other things he says that these were: being accepted to serve in the temple, her sinless nature, the food she would miraculously receive in the temple, receiving massages from malaikah and immaculate conception through reception of God's Word (*Kelimet Allah*).<sup>381</sup> Al-Qurtubi says that the *Qur'anic* words: **"Allah hath chosen thee"** mark Maryam's admission into the sphere of prophets. He says that through malaikah she was inspired by God's words in the same way as other prophets were.<sup>382</sup>

377 Ibn Kethir. *Tafseer*, p. 716.

378 Al-Qasimi, Muhammad Jamal a-Din; *Tafseer al-Qasimi*, Cairo, 1914, Vol 4. p. 841.

379 Sachico, Murata. *The Tao of Islam - A Source Book on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought*, State University of New York Press, 1992. 318.

380 *Ibid.*, p. 268.

381 Ibn Hazm. *Al-Risala fil Mufaddala bayna al-Sahaba*, izdanje Said al-Afgani, Beirut, Dar al-Fikr, 1969, p. 223.

382 Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad al-Ansari al-Qurtubi. *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, Beirut, Dar Ihya al Turath al-Arabi, 1965, Vol 4, p. 82-83.

In Sufi literature she is compared to Eve, first woman, since she conceived a son without a father, and Eve came to this world without a mother. Since she carried the Word of God, Muhammad p.b.u.h. compared himself more to her than her son Isa p.b.u.h., since he also was the carrier of the God's Word - the *Qur'an*,<sup>383</sup> linking thus the *Qur'an* and Isa p.b.u.h. – two Words of God revealed to Maryam and Muhammad p.b.u.h.:

**Behold! The angels said: "O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah. "He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous." She said: "O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?" He said: "Even so: Allah createth what He willeth: When He hath decreed a plan, He but saith to it, 'Be,' and it is! (3:45-47)**

**"To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety." (5:48)**

Maryam was therefore revealed a unique Word of God – her son 'Isaa p.b.u.h. (Jesus) breathed in her through God's messenger Gibril (Gabriel).<sup>384</sup> She did not question nor reject God's intent, although she knew she will have to face the consequences awaiting her in her family and community. Like Muhammad p.b.u.h., Maryam accepted the entrusted mission and showed it to her people. In Islamic tradition she is mostly known as the mother of Isa p.b.u.h., although in some Muslim areas there are different cults worshiping the honorable mother Maryam, whom women especially ask for health, pregnancy and other needs.<sup>385</sup> Her role of spiritual paradigm and woman achieving human perfection was neglected. Today the question of her prophethood and status of the "chosen one" is revisited requesting thus new approaches and understandings of this phenomenon.

#### **4.3.1.3. Aisha – First Female Mufti, the Mother of Believers and Controversial Political Leader**

Aisha was the daughter of Abu Bakr, first righteous caliph, the youngest wife of Muhammad p.b.u.h. and his only virgin bride. Namely, after the death of his first wife, widow Khadija who was 15 years his senior, who gave him four daughters and with

383 Arkoun, Muhammed. *Al-Qur'an min al-Tafseer al-Mawruth ila Tahlil al-Kitab al-Dini*, Beirut, Dar al-Tali'a, 2001, p. 23.

384 Ibn Arabi explains that "Jibril was the messenger for the Word of God in the same way as the Prophet (ar-rasul) served as messenger of the Word of God to his people."; see: Ibn Al-Arabi, Muhhyi-d-din, *Dragulji poslaničke mudrosti (Seals of Wisdom)*, translated by Rešid Hafizović . Bemust, Zenica, 1995, p. 188.

385 Freyer-Strowasser, Barbara. *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions and Interpretations*, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 81.

whom he lived in monogamous marriage until she died, Muhammad p.b.u.h. decided to remarry.

Ibn Taberi writes about these events and says that Muhammad p.b.u.h. consulted his aunt Hawla about whom should he marry, and she said:

"Do you wish a girl, which has never married (bikr), or a woman which has been in marriage (sayyib)? The girl is Aisha, the daughter of the dearest person to you (i.e. Abu Bakr)", and the woman is Sawda Bint Zam'a, who believes in your mission and follows you.<sup>386</sup>

After this Hawla spoke with these families about this in order to receive their consent so that the Prophet married both, but the marriage with Aisha was consummated only three year later since she was too young. Other traditions speak about a malak/angel Jibril (Gabriel) showing Muhammad p.b.u.h Aisha's image as his future bride.<sup>387</sup> This, allegedly, was during the period when he was enormously sad due to Khadija's death that according to stories, he never forgot since she was the first to believe his words; she encouraged him and aided him – materially and morally – and supported his mission until the end of her life.

Respecting Aisha's youth, Muhammad p.b.u.h. had understanding for her playing with her girlfriends and attending parties with Abyssinian female slaves singing. This marriage represented an important alliance with his faithful friend Abu Bakr, who after his death became the first caliph and ruler of the first Muslim community. Aisha grew up with Muhammad p.b.u.h. and his other wives, older women who were more like mothers to her than opponents. Prophet was attracted to her youthful curiosity, intellect and her readiness to learn and act. She continuously asked questions, wanted clarifications, and tried to understand and remember the *Revelation* which was gradually revealed to the Prophet. It was already mentioned, in the chapter about education of women, that Aisha was the most educated woman of her time, and that the Prophet recommended to his companions to consult her and learn from her. During this time it was rare for women to be involved in science and teach. Aisha therefore represents a paradigm of a woman that acquired knowledge about different topics, especially religion - since she was invited to disseminate her knowledge - and even offer her opinion in matters of Islamic law (*fatwa*), which ensured her the title of a first woman mufti in the history of Islam. She also, together with other wives, obtained the honorary title of "the mother of believers" which represented respect and authority which a mother is generally given in Islam: "Jannat lies under the feet of the mother" (*hadith*).

386 Abbot, Nabia. *Aisha the Beloved of Mohammed*, The University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 3.

387 Freyer-Stowasser, Barbara. *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions and Interpretations*, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 114.



Considering the fact that she was the youngest and that of all wives she was spending most time with the Prophet, Aisha very often also appears as a narrator of his sayings (*hadith*). She would even argue with a well-known *hadith* narrator, Abu Huraira, who was earlier mentioned, and who narrates most of the *ahadith* about the creation of a woman from “the crooked rib” and numerous other *ahadith* that mention women in a negative light. The reasons for this were the Prophet’s sayings that Abu Huraira narrations were partial or out of context.<sup>388</sup> After Muhammad p.b.u.h. death Aisha had a significant role in the first Muslim community, even as a political leader. During the rule of the forth caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib she was a member of his opposing party; she was on the other side of the battlefield, fighting against him during the Battle of the Camel. This episode is always neglected in the history of Islam, and it is always painful since it involves two very important people from the Prophet’s life. Aisha his wife and Ali his son-in-law married to his daughter Fatima. Immediately after the Prophet’s death, turbulent political events were shaking the political scene in the Muslim community. This resulted in first conflicts and divisions. Aisha was involved in one of these conflicts since some of the Prophets companions invited her to participate in solving of the murder of the third caliph Uthman: “As the wife who closest to God’s messenger”, Talha said: “you have the authority to raise and army and find the murderers.”<sup>389</sup>

Under the pressure of close friends and relatives, she led the army and travelled to Basra to win over the leaders and inhabitants on her side. Her meeting with the governor of Basra, Abu Bakr is interesting. It testifies best what was to attitude of Muslims toward a woman in power. Namely, after the Battle of the Camel, in which thousands of Muslims were killed, Aisha spoke to respectable people of Basra in order to explain to them why the conflict happened and why Basra will be occupied. Abu Bakr told her on this occasion the words of the Prophet: “People ruled by woman will never be successful” (*hadith*).

This saying is present in the canonical collections of *ahadith*, and the narrator is Abu Bekr which for most Muslims would mean that this Abu Bekr is Aisha’s father, the first caliph. But, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani explains the whole situation in details and says that the transmitter is Abu Bakr, the governor of Basra, liberated slave from Taif, originally liberated by the Prophet and managed to rise to the position of a governor in the Islamic state.<sup>390</sup> Further, F. Mernissi especially highlights the particular moment when he remembers this saying: this is the time after the Battle of the Camel, 25 years after Prophet’s death, when Aisha lost the battle. The elaboration of this saying attrib-

388 Mernissi, Fatima. *Women's Rights in Islam*, in, *Liberal Islam*, ed. Kurzman, Charles Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 121.

389 Murphy Rudolf, Claire, at all. *Daughter of the Desert: Stories of Remarkable Women from Christian, Jewish and Muslim Traditions*, Skylight Paths Publishing, 2003, p.160.

390 Askalani Ibn Hajar. *Fath al-Bari*, Vol. 13, first version, p. 50-51.



uted to Muhammad p.b.u.h., is important since its content is even today reflected in the minds of Muslims throughout the world and used as one of the key arguments in rejecting women the right to political engagement. So, Aisha had a significant role in the life of Muhammad p.b.u.h. and first Muslim community, and as the most educated person of that age, but also as a woman she dared to cross the border of the private sphere and be active in the political arena where no one expected to see a woman. Although this step provokes controversies and uncertainties with Muslims, she still remains a woman that marked the political scene of the Muslim state in the first century of Islam, and who with her authority in transmission and interpretation of the Prophet's tradition and the *Qur'an* marked whole Muslim history.

### 4.3.2. Women Imams

The issue of imamhood of women has been ignored for centuries in the Islamic tradition as a phenomenon not worthy of any discussion; or was rejected by short and austere comments about no woman ever being God's Prophet not leading a jama'at in a prayer. A consensus of both Sunni and Shiite theological and legal thought and practice supports rejection of any thought that a woman could perform the function of imam. Traditional classical commentators of the *Qur'an*, rejecting prophethood of Maryam and other women God spoke to and sent them message (*naba'*) through angels (*malaikah*), excluded any possibility of a woman claiming the right on equal access to spiritual sphere. What does it in fact mean to be an *imam* (Arabic: *leader, head*) or *hoja* (Persian and Turkish term for imam)? The word *imam* in the Qur'anic context is used in different ways: *mark, marking, role model, pattern, leader*; and in everyday practice it is used for three basic meanings:

- 1. imam is the leader of the jama'at** – group of believers praying in a mosque;
- 2. imam was also the title of the caliph**, so that every caliph was an imam too since "his responsibility included leading of the prayer (*salat*), legal consultations (*futja*), trial (*al-kada*), holy war (*jihad*) and city administration (*al-hisba*).<sup>391</sup> The title of imam was also held by eminent scholars, like Imam Malik, Imam Abu Hanifa etc.
- 3. in Shiite tradition, imamhood holds** a very complex meaning, but the essence is that Shiites consider that Ali ibn Abi Talib was the first imam – spiritual leader after the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h., since they believe that spiritual leadership is not broken with the death of Muhammad p.b.u.h.: "The real imam is considered a divine institution with an aim to prolong Prophet's mission, and lead the humankind".<sup>392</sup>

391 Mernissi, Fatima. *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, p. 51-67

392 Smailagić, Nerkez. *Leksikon islama (Lexicon of Islam)*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1990, p. 268.

In the context of this study I will speak about the importance of imamhood in the sense of a person leading a prayer, since women are not prohibited to act as scholars in Islamic studies, and the proof for that is the case of Aisha, who was considered the first woman mufti and the person most suited to interpret ahadith and Islamic law at that time. Also, even earlier I spoke about many women that held the title of sheikha and spiritual leader that left a strong imprint especially in Sufi Islamic tradition. Nevertheless, the truth is that there is no example of a woman leading a prayer in the mosque in a mixed jama'at (men and women). In Arabic there is no feminine noun depicting *imam* or *caliph*, although the Arabic term *halifetun* is a masculine noun with a form of feminine noun.

Additionally, when speaking about the conditions necessary for a person to perform the function of an imam, Ibn Haldun in his *Mukaddima* lists the following criteria: knowledge, fairness, competence and physical capabilities. When explaining why imamhood does not include women, Ibn Haldun comes back to the *Qur'anic* ayah: **"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more than the other..."** (4: 34, which I previously explained in details exactly because of the fact that most commentators and scholars exclude women from spiritual and secular leadership on the basis of this *Qur'anic* ayah.) The opinion of Islamic scholars and great imams on this issue is divided, so that for example Imam Shafi and Imam Abu Hanifa (founders of Shafi and Hanafi legal school of thought) allow women to lead a female prayer. Imam Malik (founder of Maliki legal school of thought) prohibits it completely, while Abu Sevr and Taberi allow women to act as imams for women and for mixed groups. But, the consensus of Muslim scholars is not to accept the imamhood of women for a male or mixed jama'at.<sup>393</sup> Ibn Al-'Arabi's understading of female leadership is closely related to spiritual perfection that can be equally reached both by male and female:

The Prophet testified the (spiritual) perfection (*kamal*) of some women just as he witnessed of some men, even though they maybe more men than women in such perfection. This perfection is prophethood. And being a prophet is taking on the role of a leader. Thus women's imamate is sound. The basic principle is allowing women's imamate. Thus whoever asserts that it is forbidden without proof, he should be ignored. The one who forbids this has no explicit text (*nass*). His only proof in forbidding this is a shared (negative opinion) of her. This proof is insubstantial and the basic principle remains which is allowing women's imamate.<sup>394</sup>

393 Ibn Rushd. *Bidaya al-Mujtahid, wa Nihaya al-Muqtasid*, Bairut, Dar al-Fikr, Vol. 1. p. 105.

394 Ibn Al-'Arabi. *Futuh al-Makiyya (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, 1911a, p. 447, in Shaikh Sa'diyya, *In search for al-Insan: Sufism, Islamic Law and Gender*, Journal of the American Academy of Religion, vol. 77, 2009, p. 814.

### 4.3.2.1. Women Imams in Modern Context

Today Muslims are coming back to this issue by trying to find the justification for women imams based on the universal principles of equality of women in nature, intellectual and spiritual strength, individual responsibility and contractual issues of all types.<sup>395</sup> One of examples that is supporting this the fact that Muhammad p.b.u.h. allowed a woman to act as imam to mixed jama'at is the case of Um Varakah, whom the Prophet allowed to be the imam in her household since she was the only one who was knowledgeable in religion and who had qualifications for it, although there are sayings claiming that it was only for the female part of the family. Data, nevertheless testify that the *muezzin* (the person marking the beginning of the prayer) was an elderly man and that she led the salat/prayer.<sup>396</sup> But, this case is completely forgotten and any attempt of a woman being an imam was condemned and ridiculed in the past. The example of caliph al-Valid, who was too drunk to lead the congregation (*jama'at*) so he sent his disguised slave Navar to lead the prayer in his clothes is even today reminding us about that "shameful act" which needs to be condemned. This example becomes even more grotesque and apocalyptic when we remind ourselves that a disguised slave girl and drunken caliph crudely ridiculed the position of an imam in a mosque.<sup>397</sup> Taking this into account, as well as the whole environment in which women did not have an equal status, there were no attempts – until 21<sup>st</sup> century – of women determinately claiming their right to act as imams to mixed jama'ats.

Amina Wadud is among rare women who in today's time decided not only to speak about this issue but also practically act in this regard. She acted as imam to a jama'at of men and women during Jumma salat, the main weekly Friday prayer. Since she was not allowed to perform the prayer in any of the mosques, she rented a church in New York and publicly showed her attitude that a woman should be allowed to be imam and that her act is "a challenge to hegemony of the patriarchal elite." While she and a group of male and female believers were performing the Jumma salat, numerous male and female Muslims were protesting around the church holding different posters some of which contained even threatening messages, while the police were securing public order and security.<sup>398</sup> Her act was a historic one since she was courageous enough to face strong and threatening messages coming from puritans but also from traditionalists who do not want to change centuries' long practice.

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395 See more about the universal *Qur'anic* principles of gender equality in: Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, *Principi gender ravnopravnosti u Islamu (Principles of Gender Equality in Islam)*, Belgrade Open School, 2004,

396 Sayf al-Islam. *Women Imam Leading Men and Women in Salat*,

397 Mernissi, Fatima. *The Forgotten Queens*, p. 137-138.

398 Wadud, Amina. *First Muslim Woman to Lead Mixed Friday prayer*,

Great number of male and female Muslims support this public act of Amina Wadud. Ahmat Naseef, founder of Progressive Muslim Union of North America, helped the organization of this event in New York and publicly supported this initiative. Sheikha Fariha al-Jerrahi, a rare female Sufi sheikha, leading Nur Ashki Jerrahi Sufi Order of a community of dervishes of Halveti-Jerrahi Tarikat, also supported her act by saying:

"This luminous path of spiritual liberation that is called Islam cannot be dominated by one gender, or one class or one ethnicity. The prophet Muhammad, may Allah shower glorious peace upon him, is the Mercy to all the worlds. He is the Messenger of the Most Merciful of the Merciful. How can we say that we have the fullness and beauty of Islam if we are still subjecting one half of the human population to indignity and spiritual restriction?"<sup>399</sup>

Another thing that is also rare among Muslims are women leading women-only prayers. Such examples we see in China where women have led female jama'ats and thought religions since 1950. Vang Shan and Jin Meihu are two female imams who say that such practice occurred due to segregation that was practiced between male and female spheres of action and prohibition of women to come to common prayers. As a response to that, women organized themselves and established parallel female jama'ats.<sup>400</sup> This reminds us of reactions of Jewish women in America who started with parallel services and prayers before they were allowed to be ordained as rabbis.<sup>401</sup> This issue is reopened in Islamic tradition, after centuries of silence, and time will show what will be the answer of men and women. A step forward was done by a large organization *Islamic Society of North America* by opening the space for women to be educated for women imams.<sup>402</sup> Women are trained for all the tasks performed by imams, like tutoring the members of the community, participation at religious rituals as naming, conclusion of marriage etc, but still it is not known whether they will be allowed to lead a joint prayer for men and women.

The only country that made progress in this regard at the state level is Morocco, since the Ministry of Faith made a training program for women imams with 50 women successfully graduating from it, and they are now at disposal to work as imams. Still these women will not be allowed to lead the prayer but will act as preachers and perform all other duties of imam. Khadija al-Aktami, one of women

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399 Sheikha Fariha al-Jerrahi's Reflections on the Wadud Prayer: [http://www.pmuna.org/archives/the\\_womenled\\_prayer\\_initiative/index.php](http://www.pmuna.org/archives/the_womenled_prayer_initiative/index.php)

400 *Women Lead Prayer in China*, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/1678957.cms>

401 Ross, Tamar. *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism*, Brandies University Press, 2004. p. 72-73.

402 Islamic Society of North America, *Imam's Training Program*, <http://www.ildc.net/imam-training-program/>

imams in Morocco considers that women are predisposed for this function since they have more feelings, understanding and patience than men.<sup>403</sup>

These are only first steps for women gradually entering the space which until now has been exclusively male. Since this process has been only opened, it remains to be seen whether women will be legitimized to perform the function of imam in full capacity.

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403 Islam's pioneering women preachers, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/6392531.stm>



## **5. WOMEN AND POLITICS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

The struggle for women's rights began two centuries ago with requests for the equal status of women and men in society, including the right to vote. Unfortunately, women are still being denied that right in some countries that, under the cloak of religious laws, exclude at least half of their own population from public life. As a result of a long-term struggle and the dedication of women and men all over the world, a platform was created for the contemporary context of human rights in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* was adopted. That act has been followed by a number of declarations, conventions, and other international documents ensuring political, economic, cultural, and other rights to women, as well as by specific documents that protect women from any type of discrimination. In the beginning of the third millennium women still fight, but this time for the practical application of these rights that are not applied in practice because of national policies, socio-cultural and political obstacles.

In this chapter I will give a brief overview of the historical background of women's exercise of the right to vote and their representation in the political life of BiH in the period from 1946 to 2007.

### **5.1. Political and Socio-Cultural Context of BiH (1946-1990)**

#### **5.1.1 Obtaining the Right to Vote in SFRY and the Activities of the Women's Anti-Fascist Front (AFŽ) BiH**

Bosnia and Herzegovina became a constituent part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) after World War II as an equal republic in the federal state. In its 1946 Constitution, the SFRY proclaimed equal rights for men and women, and adopted the right to vote for women and men from the age of 18.

The Constitution in its Article 23 said that:

...all citizens, without distinction as to sex, nationality, race, religion, level of education and place of residence, that have reached 18 years of age, shall have a

right to elect and be elected in all entities of state government. The electoral right shall be general, equal, and direct and shall be exercised in secret ballot.<sup>404</sup>

The constitutional provisions clearly defined the status of women in the new social and political environment of the SFRY; however, in practice, women's organizations had to fight for the application of the guaranteed rights. The Women's Anti-Fascist Front (AFŽ) of the SFRY, founded in 1942, encouraged a wide range of women, regardless of class or any other affiliation, in the fight against Fascism. Immediately after the liberation of Sarajevo on April 6, 1945, the AFŽBiH was founded in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and already on June 1, the first city conference was held, attended by some 1,000 women. Sofija Kosovac was elected the first president and Hiba Ramadanović and Ivanka Škarić were elected vice presidents.<sup>405</sup> Beside the care provided for the wounded, the orphans, the social care for the most vulnerable categories, and teaching literacy, the AFŽBiH devoted a great part of its activities to preparing for the first elections after women got their right to vote. Women organized themselves to draw up ballot lists and encourage women to vote.

The success was visible, as many women voted and some were elected among the representatives. In the first years following the war, the AFŽ Bosnia and Herzegovina particularly focused on a very important, but controversial issue in history: unveiling (removing of burqa – face cover) as a precondition for the emancipation of Muslim women. Muslim intellectuals had even earlier advocated resolving this issue for the benefit of women's emancipation at numerous conferences as well as in the Muslim and other printed press.<sup>406</sup> Particularly noticeable in that regard was Reis Džemaludin efendi Čaušević who publicly stated that faith and religious rules do not oppose the unveiling of Muslim women (*Politika*, 12/09/1927). This caused strong reactions from the *ulema* (the Muslim clergy) and the Majlis (the local board of the Islamic community), who insisted that Čaušević should take back his words; however, the brisk polemics were terminated by a decision of the Islamic Electoral Curia that confirmed that Čaušević was right and that Muslim women could walk with their faces unveiled and could wear hats.<sup>407</sup> However, Muslim intellectuals and religious authorities never decisively asked for it to be applied in practice, so the matter rested until the Law on the Prohibition of Veiling was passed in 1950. The AFŽBiH contributed greatly to its adoption.

404 Markov, Slobodanka. *Pravo glasa žena (Women's Right to Vote)*, Centar za slobodne izbore i demokratiju/Center for Free Elections and Democracy, Belgrade, 2001, p. 17-18.

405 Divčić, Marija. *Organizacija antifašističkog fronta žena u Sarajevu u Socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji (Organization of the Women's Anti-Fascist Front in Sarajevo in the Socialist Yugoslavia)*, Istorijski arhiv/Historical Archive, Sarajevo, 1988, p. 295-296.

406 Milišić, Senija. *Emancipacija muslimanske žene u BiH nakon oslobođenja 1947-1952: poseban osvrt na skidanje zara i feredže (Emancipation of the Muslim Woman in BiH after the Liberation of 1947-1952: With Particular Overview of Unveiling)*, MA Thesis, Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, 1986, p. 23.

407 *Ibid.*, p. 20-21.



Women mostly worked on the issues of social problems in the war torn country, but they also gradually started participating in political life in order to reach positions of authority from where they could more significantly influence the solutions to such problems. Even though women's participation was to a great extent conditioned by wartime events, it had its roots in previous women's civil (bourgeois) movements like the Yugoslav Women's League and the Alliance of Women's Movements in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. What separated them from the civil movements was:

A strict line established primarily by the ideological exclusion of the workers' movement inspired by the activities of the illegal CPY that separates feminist/civil women's organizations from the activities of women in the workers' movement of the interwar period.<sup>408</sup>

However, both movements fought against the legal inequality that pervaded all spheres of life. A limiting factor for the AFŽ was its close connection with the Communist Party that, through this movement, wanted to mobilize as many women as possible for the implementation of its own goals: the consolidation of the revolutionary government, the reconstruction of the ravaged country after the war, and the functioning of everyday life burdened by numerous social problems.<sup>409</sup> In all this the AFŽ did not deal with the women's issue but, as a constituent part of the National Front, it carried out in practice the pre-determined political goals.<sup>410</sup> A heavy bureaucracy with a whole range of branches, boards and other entities; strictness and discipline imposed on members through various pressures; work led by directives; and a lack of sensitivity to the real problems of women: all this turned the AFŽ into a cumbersome organization lacking any true power and compliant with the hierarchical structure of the CPY at all levels of authority. The question why the AFŽ was abolished was given a very powerful answer by the doyenne of the AFŽ movement Neda Božinović:

I came to the conclusion that that event, in its foundation, has a patriarchal feature – it was hard to accept a woman as an equal human being. And then socialism proclaimed the equality of women but “under our control” – under the control of the socialist party.<sup>411</sup>

Thus, formally the egalitarian concept of gender policy was advocated, but in practice the remolded patriarchy again succeeded in keeping women far from political power and government by including them at lower levels of governance and in less important managing positions, thus providing them with the illusion that

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408 Sklevicky, Lidia. *Konji, žene, ratovi (Horses, Women, Wars)*, edited by Dunja Rihtman, Auguštin, Druga, Zagreb, 1996, p. 80

409 *Ibid.*, p.117.

410 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

411 Stojaković, Gordana. *Neda, jedna biografija (Neda, a Biography)*, Futura publikacije, Novi Sad, 2002, p. 48.

women did participate in government, though in reality they could not reach the summits of political power and decision-making. After the AFŽ was abolished, the political activity of women continued within the Socialist Party. One of the most important activities of women in the county and republic boards was organizing the celebration of March 8<sup>th</sup>, an occasion also used to prepare for the assembly elections, as happened for instance in Sarajevo in 1958.<sup>412</sup>

In rural areas the situation was rather different, as the activities of AFŽ and other organizations did not greatly influence the status of women who spent their time on agricultural holdings. As farming cooperatives were established and developed, women joined their local cooperatives, as the data show from as early as 1947, but unfortunately very few could be found in the administrative and executive bodies. According to the 1955 data from the counties, women were most represented as members of cooperatives in the counties of Bihać, Banja Luka, Derventa, Prijedor, Livno, Mostar, and Goražde, where they made up 2/3 of the membership; however, there were no women on the steering boards in any of the 24 cooperatives.<sup>413</sup> That is just another indicator that shows that women did get the opportunity to participate in different forms of organizational activities, but the decision-making positions were reserved for men.

### 5.1.2. Participation of Women in the Political Life of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1946-1990)

At the third session of ZAVNOBiH (National Anti-Fascist Council of People's Liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) held in Sarajevo in 1945, this body was constituted into the People's Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by the establishment of the People's Government of BiH. The adoption of the first Constitution of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1946 finalized the process of constituting the statehood of this Republic within the SFRY.<sup>414</sup> The first elections for the Constituent Assembly of the People's Republic of BiH were held in 1946, after which the first constitution of the republic was adopted, laying down the framework of its internal organization and structure.<sup>415</sup> Until 1974 the social and political organi-

412 Materić, Marženska. *O Savezu ženskih društava u Sarajevu u Socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji (On the Union of Women's Associations in Sarajevo in the Socialist Yugoslavia)*, Istorijski arhiv/Historical Archive, Sarajevo, 1990, p. 164.-165.

413 Jarak, Nikola. *Učešće žena u zemljoradničkim zadrugama NRBiH (Participation of Women in Agricultural Cooperatives in PRBiH)*, ABH Glavni zadružni savez/ABH Main Cooperative Union, 18/1956, p. 5.

414 Imamović, Mustafa. *Historija Bošnjaka (History of Bosniaks)*, Bošnjačka zajednica Kulture Preporod/Bosniak Cultural Association, Sarajevo, 1997, p. 543.

415 *Ibid.*, p. 556.

zation of the SFRY was based on the *representative system* with bicameral bodies, formed in the republics by the republic councils and the councils of producers.<sup>416</sup>

The participation of women in political life in the first years of the new state was negligible despite the proclamations of equality of rights and constitutional guarantees, as can be seen from the following table:

**Table 1 - Participation of women in the People's Assembly of BiH from 1946 to 1953**

REPRESENTATIVE ENTITY	1946	1950	1953
People's Assembly PRBiH Total	155	270	196
Women	8 (5.16%)	15 (5.55%)	8 (4.0%)

The following table shows the growing presence of women on the county, republic and municipal level.

**Table 2 - Participation of women in the Assembly of the SFRY, republics and municipalities in the period 1958- 1969<sup>417</sup>**

REPRESENTATIVE BODY	1958	1963	1965	1967	1969
SFRY Assembly	7.0%	19.6%	11.3%	6.1%	6.6%
Republic Assembly	10.3%	20.8%	19.0%	11.4%	7.5%
Municipal Assemblies	6.0%	16.4%	14.4%	9.2%	7.9%

These data clearly show that the participation of women in the assemblies was growing in the early sixties but was later reduced to almost the same level as in the late fifties. Namely, in the first years after the war women were educated, employed and entered into the sphere of politics, but it was soon obvious that the political establishment of the period did not allow women to participate in politics to a greater extent. Smiljana Leinert-Novosel notes, among other reasons for this situation, a greater number of both female and male candidates, i.e. stronger competition, but also the inability to practically implement the criteria of gender equality established by law.<sup>418</sup> Thus, it was already then clear that the legal framework was not a sufficient guarantee for the establishment of equality, and that it would require long-term work on the elimination of gender discrimination and stereotypes.

416 Jugoslavija 1918.-1988.: Statistički godišnjak 1989 (Yugoslavia 1918-1988: Statistical Yearbook 1989), Belgrade, p. 27.

417 Leinert-Novosel, Smiljana. *Žene politička manjina: perspektive sudjelovanja žena u javnom životu (Women, the Political Minority: Perspectives for Women's Participation in Public Life)*, NIRO, Radničke novine, Zagreb, 1990, p. 29.

418 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

**Table 3 - Women in the SFRY Assembly and municipal assemblies from 1958 to 1969<sup>419</sup>**

REPRES. ENTITIES	1953	1957	1958	1963	1965	1967	1969
<b>Rep. Assembly</b>	196	217	217	400	400	400	399
<b>Women</b>	4 %	5.52 %	5.52 %	21.5 %	17.75 %	8.25 %	5.26 %
<b>Municipal Assemblies</b>	9.07 6	9.68 8	9.688	7.146	7.160	7.188	7.636
<b>Women</b>	1.14 %	3.50 %	3.50 %	18.10 %	14.17 %	8.04 %	6.02 %

When we compare data from Bosnia and Herzegovina with the overall data in the SFRY, it is interesting that in 1958, the number of women both at the republic and municipal levels was significantly lower than the overall average in SFRY. However, in 1963 that percentage increased to 18.10%, which is 2% above the overall average, while in the following years the representation is close to the overall average of the SFRY. S. Leinert-Novosel concluded in her analysis of the participation of women in the political life of this period that there were several reasons for the decrease in the number of women in politics, but that the key reason was "a mindset of a pronouncedly traditional character."<sup>420</sup> She further elaborates that the "ratio of the factor of prejudices to over-commitment and family obligations was 65,5:39,1%".<sup>421</sup> That in fact shows that the traditional mindset never really disappeared but was only suppressed. As soon as conditions became favorable, it revived and was reflected also in the reduced participation of women in political life.

Taking into consideration that no surveys have been conducted in BiH about the role of religion as an important factor of primary socialization in particular, we can compare the stated role of a traditional mindset as an explanation for the small percentage of women in politics in that period with the situation today, which is not much different. No matter how hard the social and political system and the communist ideology tended to push religion to the margins of the social field, it in fact survived thanks to women who, in the privacy of their home and family, preserved and cherished religion through the preservation of traditional values that implied hierarchical relations among the sexes and a strict division of spheres of activity. Women, then, were the conveyors and guardians of tradition both in those times and today.

419 Statistički godišnjak SR Bosne i Hercegovine, 1989., godina XXIII (Statistical Yearbook of SR Bosnia and Herzegovina. 1989, year XXIII), Republički zavod za statistiku/Republic Statistical Institute, Sarajevo, 1989, p. 32.

420 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

421 *ibid.*, p. 31.

Later, in 1974, a delegate system was introduced in the belief that it would amend the situation and ensure more space for women in the assembly bodies.

**Table 4 - Women in the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of BiH and municipal assemblies from 1974 to 1986<sup>422</sup>**

REPRESENTATIVE ENTITIES	1974	1978	1982	1986
<b>Republic Assembly</b>	320	320	320	320
<b>Women</b>	15.62%	22.17%	23.12%	24.06%
<b>Municipal Assemblies</b>	10.229	10.916	10.941	10.955
<b>Women</b>	15.59%	17.58%	17.87%	17.27%

The data show a new increase in the number of women at all levels of government and a trend of stabilization after 1978. It is interesting to see that the percentage of women in the Republic Assembly is higher (23-24% from 1978 to 1986) than the percentage of women in the municipal assemblies (17% from 1978 to 1986). Clearly this is still not satisfying, especially if the fact is taken into account that very few women managed to get to the top of the pyramid of the social and political system and reach more significant positions in the legislative and executive powers. Slobodanka Markov probably defined it best:

Women are no longer, as was claimed fifteen years ago, outside of the matrix of the political and self-management sphere, but they are still outside of the decision-making matrix in our society.<sup>423</sup>

This is confirmed also by the data that, for instance, in 1985 women comprised 29.2% of the Communist Party members and 19,5% of the Central Committee (CC) members.<sup>424</sup> It is a significant percentage if we keep in mind that the CCBiH included a total of 13% of women, and in the Presidency of the CCBiH there were only 7.4% of them.<sup>425</sup> After 1980 the formal and legal conditions existed for the equal participation of women in political life, which as Leinert-Novosel discusses was favored by the delegate system, but the question still remains: "Where lie the real causes for the negligible number of women on the political decision-making ladder?"<sup>426</sup> The results

422 Statistički godišnjak SR Bosne i Hercegovine, 1989., godina XXIII (Statistical Yearbook of SR Bosnia and Herzegovina. 1989, year XXIII), Republički zavod za statistiku/Republic Statistical Institute, Sarajevo, 1989, p. 32-33.

423 Markov, Slobodanka. *Položaj i uloga u sistemu političkog odlučivanja* (Position and Role in the Political Decision-Making System), Šema No. 3, Belgrade, 1984, p. 54.

424 Ramet P. Sabrina. *Gender Politics in Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999, p. 102.

425 *Šesti kongres Saveza komunista BiH* (Sixth Congress of the Communist League of BiH), NIŠP Oslobođenje, Sarajevo, 1974, p. 332-333.

426 Leinert-Novosel, Smiljana. *Žene politička manjina: perspektive sudjelovanja žena u javnom životu* (Women, the Political Minority: Perspectives for Women's Participation in Public Life), p. 34.

of a survey conducted by Tanja Renner in Slovenia show that beside socio-economic factors, institutional, socio-cultural and other factors should be considered.<sup>427</sup>

Surveys conducted in BiH show that relations between women and men on the political scene correspond to their relations in family life where the patriarchal culture grants men a decision-making role and power that is also transferred to the public sphere of action.<sup>428</sup> Accordingly, the aim of the present work is to consider the socio-cultural background with particular stress on religion, which permeates all spheres of life and represents a part of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian cultural environment that cannot be ignored. However, in this chapter I will reflect further on the socio-economic factors and see how they correlate with the participation of women in political life. In the survey of correlative factors of the socio-political activity of women I once again refer to the survey conducted by S. Leinert-Novosel on the participation of women in public life because, unfortunately, no similar surveys have been conducted in BiH, making it very hard to obtain data. She states that employment, education, position at work, and age are very important factors that affect the engagement of women in politics:

Employment greatly correlates with the social and political activity of women... It turned out that the differences between the employed and unemployed women in that regard were greater than the differences between men and women as a whole. Employment carried more weight with regard to the activation of women than education did. In other words, education without employment does not affect political activity, while employment, despite lower education, leads to greater political activity of women.<sup>429</sup>

According to the data on the engagement of women within their labor organizations, it is obvious that the women participated in organizations of associated labor (OURs), which facilitated their participation in politics.

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427 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

428 Bakšić-Muftić, Jasna et al. Socio-economic Status of Women in BiH: Analysis of the Results of the Star Pilot Research done in 2002, World Learning Star Network, Jež, Sarajevo, 2002, p. 52.

429 Leinert-Novosel, Smiljana. *Žene politička manjina: perspektive sudjelovanja žena u javnom životu* (Women, the Political Minority: Perspectives for Women's Participation in Public Life), p. 35.

**Table 5 - Delegates in the workers' councils of the organizations of associated labor (OUR) in the Socialist Republic of BiH<sup>430</sup>**

YEAR	OURs with workers' councils		OURs without workers' councils	
	Total	Women	Total	Women
1957	13.672	1.757 (12.85%)	10.294	2.483 (24.12%)
1958	39.870	5.532 (13.87%)	10.414	2.494 (23.94%)
1960	45.616	6.612 (14.49%)	6.463	1.705 (26.38%)
1962	42.331	5.383 (12.71%)	5.147	1.251 (24.30%)
1964	48.254	13.514 (28.0%)	4.680	1.128 (24.10%)
1966	52.086	14701 (28.93%)	5.063	1.256 (24.80%)
1970	50.832	14314 (28.15%)	4.333	1.003 (23.14%)

### 5.1.3. The Socio-Cultural and Economic Framework in FRBIH

In this part, I will tackle the social, economic and cultural framework of Bosnian and Herzegovinian society in the period from 1946 to 1990. Though women in the SFRY formally realized their right to vote, to education, and to work, in practice it was hard to apply the proclaimed laws due to strong resistance arising from the traditionally defined roles of men and women in the society of the time. In order to understand the family, marriage, and property relations, it is important to remember that until the establishment of the SFRY, the status of a woman was regulated primarily by customary law, by civil law, and by religious law in the framework of the religious communities. As far back as the Ottoman Empire, and later during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the religious communities had the autonomy to regulate family, matrimonial and property relations.<sup>431</sup>

During the time of the Ottoman Empire, customary law regulated the family, matrimonial and inheritance relations of non-Muslims, and the *Sharia* law regulated

430 Statistički godišnjak SR Bosne i Hercegovine, 1989., godina XXIII (Statistical Yearbook of SR Bosnia and Herzegovina. 1989, year XXIII), Republički zavod za statistiku/Republic Statistical Institute, Sarajevo, 1989, p. 26.

431 Sladović, Eugen. *Ženidbeno pravo (Matrimonial Law)*, Tisak zaklade tiskare Narodnih novina u Zagrebu, 1925, p. 27.

the rights of Muslims.<sup>432</sup> A similar situation remained after the Austro-Hungarian occupation, even though the *Austrian Civil Code*, introduced in 1811, generally took a negative attitude towards customary law. Vojislav Spaić researched the customary inheritance rights of non-Muslims on the territory of former Yugoslavia in the period of Austro-Hungarian occupation, concluding that the customary law was still being applied, especially in rural areas, in a very complex correlation with the *Sharia* law and supplemented by the Austrian Civil Code in those areas that had not been regulated in Turkish Laws.<sup>433</sup> Though in practice the *Sharia* courts had jurisdiction over the property relations of non-Muslims in specific cases (juveniles and the mentally ill), non-Muslims regulated those issues among themselves, with the leaders of the community and families, in the presence of the clergy. Only in 1918, with the *Order of the National Government*, the Supreme Court passed a plenary decision completely abolishing the competence of *Sharia* courts in the domain of property rights of non-Muslims. In the *mulk* (real estate) inheritance of non-Muslim Bosnians and Herzegovinians, one was to apply the customary substantive law that had applied to inheritance in the testator's religious community until the Order of the National Government dated April 14 1885 no. 2442/III. It was to be determined for each individual case through the questioning of the interested parties and by the opinion of the *Sharia* judge and the spiritual leader of the testator's religious community. In case it was determined that there was no customary inheritance law for members of the testator's religion in his place of residence, or when it could not be determined at all, the inheritance rules of the Austrian Civil Code were to apply, and in no case the *Sharia* law.<sup>434</sup>

There followed a wider reception of the *Austrian Civil Law* provisions which, however, in many instances respected the customary law. This is confirmed by numerous court cases over property rights. As an illustration, here I will consider the case of the daughter of a Bosnian Roman Catholic, who filed a claim against her father for dowry (*miraz*) and *oprema*. Though the District Court decided in favor of the daughter, according to the provisions of the *Austrian Law*, the Supreme Court annulled the decision a year later, with the following explanation:

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the customary law shall be taken into account to a greater extent than the Austrian Civil Code, as it supplements the incomplete written law. The customary law shall particularly apply in the field of family prop-

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432 Spaić, Vojislav. *Nasljednopravni običaji u BiH nakon austrougarske okupacije (Legal Customs of Inheritance in BiH after the Austro-Hungarian Occupation)*, in Radovi/Works, Book XXXII, Odjeljenje društvenih nauka/Department of Social Sciences, ANUBiH/Academy of Science and Art BiH, Sarajevo, 1967, p. 85.

433 *Ibid.*, p. 84.

434 *Ibid.*, p. 96-97.



erty rights of non-Muslims, which was not regulated during Ottoman rule and which fell under the competence of the spiritual authorities.<sup>435</sup>

In this case the District Court again ruled in favor of the daughter, but the Supreme Court again annulled the ruling, justifying its decision by stating that it had been determined, through the examination of the Sarajevo parish priest of the Vrhbosna Diocese Ordinariate, and the Provincialate of Bosnian Franciscans, that the spiritual authorities respected the customary law of dowry and *oprema*, according to which the father was not obliged to provide a dowry for his daughter.<sup>436</sup> The economic status of women and men was closely linked to marriage, which brought duties as well as rights for both sides. Muslims married according to *Sharia* rules that included the institution of *mehr*, mentioned in Chapter IV in this book, i.e. the right of women to request in the marital contract a sum of money or an equivalent value in gold from her husband in return for marital relations.<sup>437</sup> A similar institution known as *mohar* was applied by Jews in BiH, as discussed in the second chapter of this book. Catholics and Orthodox had no such institution upon the conclusion of marriage, and marital relations were under the jurisdiction of the Church, while the property questions were resolved by civil courts.<sup>438</sup> In civil law, the spouses were independent of each other concerning property that they had acquired before marriage, and the wife could authorize her husband to manage her property.<sup>439</sup> In practice, however, what prevailed was customary law, according to which the husband was not only the head of the family but also the unquestionable owner and manager of all affairs. Women, according to customary law, mainly received dowry and *oprema*, while the real estate was inherited by male relatives in the paternal line up to great grandchildren. In case there were no such relatives, female relatives had the right to use the property until marriage, when the inheritance was transferred to the closest male relative.

Accordingly, women received dowry even though civil law did not provide for it. Furthermore, the woman had a right to the so called marital reward after the dissolution of the marriage or after the death of her husband, which was a form of guarantee for the economic subsistence of the woman.<sup>440</sup> But what is important to underline regarding matrimonial relations, and is still reflected in gender relations today, is the provision of the canon law of the Catholic Church from 1917 according to which women have the right to participate in the common affairs of the family: however, the husband is the head and is obliged to provide for the family, and the

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435 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

436 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

437 Sladović, Eugen. p. 91.

438 Sladović, Eugen. p. 19.

439 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

440 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

wife in return owes him obedience and housekeeping.<sup>441</sup> These provisions have been revised in the Code from 1983, which grants more rights to laypersons and women, but their application in practice is still negligible. Muslims had similar regulations, as the husband had the obligation to support the family, and the wife in return had the obligation of coitus, but not of housekeeping,<sup>442</sup> though this was not respected in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian practice. A woman inherited dowry according to *Sharia* rules, or remuneration in money. As Fikret Karčić points out, however, in rural areas, due to isolation and lack of education, most Muslim women very rarely had an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of their legal position.<sup>443</sup>

When the SFRY was established, all religious laws formally and legally went out of force, and the 1946 Constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia guaranteed the equality of women and men:

Women shall be equal to men in all areas of state, economic and social life.

Women shall have the right to the equal salary as men for equal work and shall enjoy special protection in a labor relationship.<sup>444</sup>

Emancipation and the equality of women were integral parts of the socialist concept of social equality that sought to abolish the class differences of bourgeois society. A woman in bourgeois society was owned by her husband, to whom she owed obedience in exchange for economic security and being provided for. Though socialism proclaimed an egalitarian policy and the social equality of men and women, it did not abolish patriarchal relations and the subordination of women to men, because:

Emancipatory values were added to the corpus of existing traditional beliefs about the (natural) place of women in culture, and the traditionally defined "female" values and the social roles based on them were unquestioningly incorporated into the process of the socialist revolution.<sup>445</sup>

No ideology, laws or decrees could have changed and emancipated the culture of a people in a short span of time; thus, it was illusory to expect that the new communist authorities would establish the *de facto* equality of women and men. In this period, although the religious communities lost the competencies they had had, and religion was marginalized and considered a barrier to social development and emancipation, the system of values and the culture of the people of the region,

441 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

442 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

443 Karčić, Fikret. *Šerijatski sudovi u Jugoslaviji 1918.-1941. (Sharia Courts in Yugoslavia 1918-1941)* 2nd edition, El-Kalem, Sarajevo 2005, p. 139.

444 *Društveno-ekonomski položaj i uloga žena u razvoju ruralnih naselja na brdsko-planinskom području BiH (Social and Economic Position of Women in the Development of Rural Settlements in the Mountainous Regions of BiH)*, Ekonomski institut/Economic Institute, Banja Luka, 1986, p. 216.

445 Sklevicky, Lydija. *Konji, žene, ratovi (Horses, Women, Wars)*, 1996, p. 57.

deeply rooted in religion, did not significantly change, especially in the private sphere.

Great progress was made by opening up possibilities for women's education. Primary education was a legally prescribed obligation, but still, a great number of women, especially in rural areas, remained illiterate or only completed lower primary education (four grades). Women that managed to finish secondary school or university were in position to get better jobs, but very rarely in the better-paid fields and in the better-paid positions. The tables that follow show that women worked mainly in the so-called "female professions" and that in the SRBiH period, too, the tendency was for women to be employed in the sectors of education, social protection, health and light industry.

**Table 6 - Women in the public sector by field of activity 1986-1988 (annual average)<sup>446</sup>**

FIELD - ACTIVITY	1964		1966		1969	
	total	women%	Total	women%	Total	women%
Education	12,836	51.7	14,436	51.1	17,089	49.8
Science	547	42.8	785	38.4	769	35.6
Healthcare	10,374	62.6	11,741	62.4	12,425	62.0
Social work	1,372	54.4	1,453	59.5	1,657	58.8
Catering	4,984	49.8	5,199	51.3	5,362	52.7

Comparing these two tables (Table 6 and 7), we see that the representation of women in the fields of education, science, health, social work and catering was on average 50% in the period from 1964 to 1969, but that percentage rose in the eighties to as much as 73% in the health sector and 78% in the field of social protection. That also shows that women mostly specialized in these areas, that is, they chose these professions during their education, professions that in principle represent the logical continuation of tasks and duties that women undertake at home.

Women also mostly worked in the low-pay secondary production sector of the textile and leather industries that was badly paid, as pointed out by Stipe Šuvar:

In the secondary sector, and that is where the key industry lies, women were distributed according to the principle of selective discrimination in branches that included the, seemingly, female tasks, most having outdated technologies, lower educational structure and weaker personal income and OOUR income.<sup>447</sup>

446 Statistički godišnjak SRBiH (Statistical Yearbook of SRBiH), 1970, p. 61.

447 Šuvar, Stipe. *Diskusija u raspravi: Društvena svest, marksistička teorija i emancipacija žena danas* (Discussion in Debate: Social Conscience, Marxist Theory and Emancipation of Women Today), Žena/Woman, No. 2-3, Zagreb, 1972, p. 73. OOUR (Osnovna organizacija udruženog rada/Basic

**Table 7 - Women in the social sector by field of activity 1986-1988 (annual average)<sup>448</sup>**

FIELD - ACTIVITY	1986		1987		1988	
	total	women%	total	women%	Total	women%
<b>Education</b>	27.685	56.8	27.746	57.0	27.581	57.0
<b>Primary</b>	19.672	60.4	19.722	60.6	19.531	60.4
<b>Secondary</b>	6.074	49.9	6.049	50.2	6.104	50.8
<b>College- 2 years</b>	125	52.3	124	52.5	123	54.4
<b>University</b>	1.689	49.4	1.739	49.6	1.697	49.3
<b>Scientific research</b>	1.495	40.9	1.478	41.2	1.541	40.7
<b>Healthcare</b>	31.538	73.6	33.521	73.4	33.402	73.8
<b>Social work</b>	4.933	77.7	5.246	77.5	5.396	78.0
<b>Catering</b>	19,475	57.2	19.788	58.1	23.485	60.0

The access to education, employment, even political participation, was one side of the coin, as the real reason for the inclusion of women was to obtain a workforce in extensive production, supposed to compensate for the lack of capital and modern technology, so "many women considered their jobs more a necessity than the means of satisfying their human potentials."<sup>449</sup> Women got the opportunity to be educated and to work, but in order to balance their motherhood and their career, they were forced to choose professions that represented a kind of extension of their family obligations, the so-called "female professions," thus creating an "asymmetry of power in gender relations, that was noticeable in professional careers and in family obligations, even in ways of gender socialization."<sup>450</sup> There was also another type of pressure exercised on women in the field of work and employment, namely the overt or covert discrimination of women, or a preference for men in certain jobs.<sup>451</sup> A woman was not relieved of her obligations in the private sphere as she continued to take care of the children and household, which placed a double burden on women, given the lack of a sufficient number of public institutions in the area of social rights. Most working women also did the housework,<sup>452</sup> which was neither socially recognized nor paid, though its value in public economy and services exceeds workplace earnings. That means that the seemingly egalitarian

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Organization of Associated Labor) was a type of company unit in the former Yugoslavia's self-management system.

448 Statistički godišnjak SRBiH (Statistical Yearbook of SRBiH), 1989, p. 83-84.

449 Joana, Regulska, and Mindy Jane Roseman. *What is Gender*, Transitions, Vol. 5 no. 1, 1998.

450 Tomić-Koludrović, Inga and Kunac, Suzana. *Rizici modernizacije: žene u Hrvatskoj devedesetih (Risks of Modernization: Women in Croatia in the Nineties)*, UG Stope nade, Split, 2000, p. 13.

451 Ikić, Desanka. *Mjesto žene u udruženom radu (Woman's Place in Associated Labor)*, Pregled, (a social research magazine), No. 3. Sarajevo, March, 1975, p. 319.

452 Božinović, Neda. *Položaj žene u FNRJ (Position of Woman in FNRJ)*, Savezni odbor SSRNJ/Federal Board of SSRNJ, Belgrade, 1953, p. 26.

policy did not lead to any changes in the private sphere, as women, under the illusion of social emancipation, still remained caught up in patriarchal roles in the family, but now also in their working places.

Overall relations between sexes were to a large extent dictated by patriarchal culture, shot through with a matrix of religious values that, instead of emancipation and freedom, brought only new obligations and burdens that women took on without shedding the old ones. Women were primarily expected to lead respectable family lives, to fulfill the role of mother and caretaker, and to be model workers, and, finally, if they had any strength left, to be engaged in politics.

### 5.1.3.1. Specificity of Women's Position in Villages

Rural women were in a less favorable position, as life in extended families and cooperatives was strictly hierarchically organized, so it was absolutely clear what the role and status of a woman was. One factor contributing to this was the stronger maintenance of religious practice and customary rules, according to which the man was still the head of the family, and the woman was subjected to his authority. I will briefly consider the position of women in rural environments regarding education, property relations, employment and matrimonial relations. Women were institutionally and legally equal to men; however, the struggle for full emancipation and equality of women did not end there. Relapses to the past, expressed mostly in the traditional cultural values that defined the value system of roles of men and women in the society, slowed down that struggle and made it impossible.

The attitude of the rural environment towards women is formally reflected in the following: they are excluded from public decisions, they must respect all male members of the cooperative (especially their husbands), they perform less valued tasks, and generally, women are given low social positions and esteem. All exceptions from this established ideal-type order are regulated by special norms that, also formally, enable women to "take male positions" in certain situations...<sup>453</sup>

In special circumstances, depending on the social status of the family and the customs that were characteristic for certain families, women were very powerful, especially mothers-in-law, the oldest daughters-in-law or unmarried daughters. Though they formally seemed to submit to male authority in public, the situation was sometimes very different in reality. In the wealthier and more reputable families, women managed the family and made the most important decisions, but again in

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<sup>453</sup> Stojaković, Velibor. *Funkcionalna i socijalna odrednica individualne imovine žena u odnosu na formalni karakter zadružne svojine (Functional and Social Determinant of the Individual Property of Women in Relation to the Formal Character of Associated Property)*, Special Print from: National Museum BiH Bulletin, Ethnology, New Series, Issue 43/44, 1988/9, Sarajevo, 1989, p. 50

accordance with the patriarchal inheritance system that preferred men and their role as the head of the family in public. Even though the law in SRBiH provided that women and men inherit equally, in practice this is not fully applied even today, especially not in rural areas. Marriage was a very important determinant of the status of men and women, because that was how men became full family members and acquired the right to manage their own property. Women, too, acquired the right to manage their own property that was given to them by their families. In the marital exchange both families invested and received certain benefits, in that the groom's family invested in the so called "purchase of the bride", which should be considered a remuneration to the bride's family for the loss of her labor. In return, the groom's family got new labor, descendants, and a wife who also brought the dowry (*oprema* and property, movable or immovable) that her family prepared for her and that was usually determined in advance.<sup>454</sup>

### 5.1.3.2. Dowry

Woman, as a rule, did not receive equal inheritance from her father, but instead she received the so-called *osobac* or *prćija*, also known in some areas as *sermija*<sup>455</sup>, that she would manage in her new family. This usually meant movable property. It is hard to distinguish between *osobac* and dowry (*miraz*), but the most important fact is that it was the individual property of the woman.<sup>456</sup> Before industrial development took off, this part of property helped extended families to produce a surplus by applying certain instruments of customary law such as *kesim* or *ćesim*, *najam*, *napolica*, *na ugovor*<sup>457</sup> and other forms of employing a workforce. The revenue from *kesim* was usually used by mothers to provide *sermija* for their daughters.<sup>458</sup> Immovable property was shared among the male heirs according to the rules of customary law, and daughters received dowry and *oprema*. This could be the purchase of a piece of land (*milać*), furniture for the house, jewelry and similar.

Vera Erlich, in her comprehensive sociological and anthropological study, has presented the rural family and customs in the former Yugoslavia before the establishment of the SFRY. Here we find data on the dowry and economic position of

454 *Ibid.*, p. 53-54.

455 Terms *osobac*, *prćija*, *sermija* denote the property or inheritance that the bride brings as dowry.

456 Stojaković, Velibor. *Funkcionalna i socijalna odrednica individualne imovine žena u odnosu na formalni karakter zadružne svojine* (Functional and Social Determinant of the Individual Property of Women in Relation to the Formal Character of Associated Property), Special Print from: National Museum BiH Bulletin, Ethnology, New Series, Issue 43/44, 1988/9, Sarajevo, 1989, p. 42.

457 Terms denote forms of relations between the landowner and hired workforce.

458 Stojaković, Velibor. *Funkcionalna i socijalna odrednica individualne imovine žena u odnosu na formalni karakter zadružne svojine* (Functional and Social Determinant of the Individual Property of Women in Relation to the Formal Character of Associated Property), Special Print from: National Museum BiH Bulletin, Ethnology, New Series, Issue 43/44, 1988/9, Sarajevo, 1989, p. 42-43.

women, which have not changed significantly since, though they have undergone transformations:

A woman does not bring the dowry right away, she brings *oprema*: a quilt, a hand-wash basin (*leđen*), a waterpot (*ibrik*), a carpet and her handiwork (towels, handkerchiefs, pants and shirts). Later, a woman takes dowry from her brothers, after her father's death. She mostly takes a part of the land, and often receives the value of that part in money. (Bosnian Muslim village; Rogatica)<sup>459</sup>

Though Christian women were legally in a more advantageous position than Muslim women of that time, as the Austrian Code provisions made daughters equal to sons, in practice their situation was very similar:

After marriage sisters relinquish their dowry, in most cases all of it, for the benefit of their brothers. Only a girl without brothers brings dowry. (Bosnian Christian village, Stolac)<sup>460</sup>

The following statement best illustrates the ways of avoiding dowry:

They often divide up the cooperative, when the father sees that his sons are good, that they are neither dissolute (*lole*) nor gamblers (*kartari*), and they are afraid that the daughters will take it away from them to the sons-in-law. In such cases the father transfers the land in the land registry to the sons and divides it among them. (Bosnian, Christian, village; Bijeljina)<sup>461</sup>

Daughters gave up their parents' properties for the benefit of their male relatives. That was expected of women, and those who claimed the inheritance guaranteed by the law would be proclaimed unwanted in the family and the cause of problems and discord among brothers and sisters. Thus women did not even try to get their part of the property, but would willingly or unwillingly follow the set pattern of "donating" that part, most often to the brother who stayed with his parents. The result of such relations was women's complete or extensive economic dependence on men and the family, which greatly limits the emancipation of women even today. According to research from 1981, almost 80% of active women were engaged in agricultural tasks, but only in 8% of the cases were women the owners of the farms, and in those cases these were mostly widows of the older generation.<sup>462</sup> By looking into land-registries, court records and the books of local councils, one can see that women are not exercising their inheritance rights as the law prescribes. Housewives raise children and do housework and agricultural work in the villages, but "the

459 Erlich, Vera. *Jugoslovenska porodica u transformaciji (Yugoslav Family in Transformation)*, Liber, Zagreb, 1971, p. 189.

460 *Ibid.*, p. 190.

461 *Ibid.*, p. 190.

462 *Društveno-ekonomski položaj i uloga žena u razvoju ruralnih naselja na brdsko-planinskom području BiH (Social and Economic Position of Women in the Development of Rural Settlements in the Mountainous Regions of BiH)*, Ekonomski institut/Economic Institute, Banja Luka, 1986, p. 131.



money earned is kept by the husband, in the savings account or somewhere else, while many of them do not have basic living conditions."<sup>463</sup>

This economic policy did not only affect uneducated women from rural areas, but also educated and working women in the urban environment of the cities. Of course, one should take into account the differences in social status, education and property status of individual families, especially in urban milieus that have, while respecting religious rules, ensured a part for women in the family property. According to the data that I have managed to find, in Sarajevo, for example, many women from the more prominent Sarajevo families are mentioned as having inherited houses, shops, land and other business premises, which they later donated as a *Vakuf* (endowment), a permanent good.<sup>464</sup>

Many families considered their obligation towards the daughter fulfilled by providing her with an education and the possibility to earn a living. Of course, these women had it much easier than the women in villages, but they were nevertheless subject to the set forms of behavior of patriarchal society. Given the economic status and traditional values that pervaded the culture of the Federal Republic of BiH, a woman was not motivated to get involved in politics, as it only lead to additional burden and obligations.

#### **5.1.4. Socio-Economic Status of Women in the Period of Transition in BiH**

Since no systematic research has been conducted in this field in the last 15 years, it is not possible to get a true picture of the economic status of women in BiH. The only available research on the socio-economic status of women was conducted in 2002 as a pilot project that provided data on the education, employment, and income of women, as:

To talk about the socio-economic status of women primarily means to talk about their employment, as only employment leads to an income, a decent standard of living and personal fulfillment in general.<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>464</sup> In the decisions of the Commission for Nationalization of Property in Sarajevo, there appear many names of women whose property was seized during the 1950s in the process of nationalization. This confirms that some women were nonetheless in a more favorable position compared to others, as they inherited immovable property from their families. Such is the case of Ašida-hanuma Imaretlić from Sarajevo, whose land and rental building were nationalized in 1960, as well as the case of hadži-Hatidža Kadun from Sarajevo, whose apartment, business building and two parcels of land were nationalized. These data are taken from the Archive of BiH, the Register of Decisions on Nationalization of Property: Decision on Rejection of the Appeal, no. 03/52-NN-208/60 and Decision on Rejection of the Appeal no. 03/54-NN-119/60.

<sup>465</sup> Bakšić-Muftić, Jasna et al. *Socio-economic Status of Women in BiH*, p. 75.



In the beginning of the 1990s Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as other states of the former Yugoslavia, entered a period of political and economic transition, the continuity of which was disturbed by the horrific war from 1992 to 1995 that left the country completely impoverished and devastated. The consequences of the fall of communism, and the wartime destruction, led to the total ruin of industry and the collapse of the economic system, reflected in a high percentage of unemployment and an economic crisis with all its negative social implications. Though the democratic liberal heritage promoted individual rights, compared to the collectivist communist system, political rights did not matter much to people without socio-economic security and the mechanisms that had functioned fairly well in the SRBiH.<sup>466</sup> The political representation of women, in particular, was contingent on the functioning of the socio-economic mechanisms that made the double burden of women more bearable.

The hard economic situation during the war, and in the post-war period, especially influenced women, who were preoccupied with finding ways for their families to survive, so political engagement was only of marginal interest for most women. Furthermore, the reaffirmation of traditional cultural values, linked with the national political establishment that unquestionably ruled the country, led to the relegation of women to the private sphere and to their acceptance of the “most honorable” role in life – the role of a mother and child-raiser. Conservatively oriented politicians held that the socialist system had ruined the family and that, if the nation wanted to survive, women should again take on their traditional role in the private sphere of life.<sup>467</sup> The religious authorities also promoted similar views in their messages. They worried most about the birth-rate, which led to numerous pro-life campaigns, especially within the Catholic and Orthodox churches.<sup>468</sup>

Women are, thus, exposed to various kinds of pressures, from the ideological and cultural to the political and economic. In the harsh economic crisis, the women in BiH and in the neighboring countries find it very hard to get employment, and they often have to choose between work and childcare, as they are not able to pay for kindergartens and other services.<sup>469</sup> Women in transition experience a similar fate to that of women under socialism as they still find themselves in less-paid so-called

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466 Šiljak-Spahić, Zilka. *Political Representation of Women in Croatia: Analysis of the Socio-cultural, Socio-economic and Political Obstacles for Full Representation of Women in Politics*, Master Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the European Regional Master's Degree in Democracy and Human Rights in South-East Europe, CIPS University of Sarajevo and Bologna, 2001/2002 p. 44.

467 Kesić, Vesna. *Gender and Ethnic Identities in Transition The former Yugoslavia-Croatia*, in Rada Iveković and Julie Mostov, (eds.) *From Gender to Nation*, Longo Editore Ravenna, 2001, p. 80.

468 Bracewell, Wendy. *Women in Transition to Democracy in South-Eastern Europe*, in Faber J. M. (eds.) *The Balkans: A Religious Backyard of Europe*, Longo Editore, Ravenna, 1996, p. 215.

469 Šiljak, Zilka. *Political Representation of Women in Croatia: Analysis of the Socio-cultural, Socio-economic and Political Obstacles for Full Representation of Women in Politics*, p. 48-49.

"female professions," with low wages putting additional burdens on their participation in politics.

According to data from 2001, women comprise one third of the employed population in the Federation of BiH (men 68%, women 32%), and similarly in Republika Srpska (men 59%, women 41%). However, of the total number of employed women, most (37.2%) have no qualifications, 27% have completed high school and only 1.3% have a two-year college or university degree.<sup>470</sup> The educational structure confirms that women work in less-paid professions, meaning that their income is significantly lower than that of men, who take most of the better-paid jobs. Because of the hard economic circumstances in the country, as well as in the family, but also because of the process of reaffirmation of traditional values, women face difficult obstacles to their involvement in politics. Every attempt encounters resistance, not only from men, but also from women who sometimes do not want to get into a conflict of interest, and sometimes very conservatively rise to defend the "natural" position of woman in the family and society.

Regarding the property status of women, no research has been conducted, but it is evident that the situation has not changed significantly with regard to the period of socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina. Taking into account that a great population movement took place, the destruction of families, and the loss of property, it would be interesting to determine the ratio of women inheriting property today and the percentage of women property owners. A partial answer will be provided in the fieldwork results, and this will be one of the indicators of the changes that have occurred in the transition period in BiH.

### **5.1.5. Representation of Women in the Political Life of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Period from 1990 to 2006**

At the beginning of the nineties, Bosnia and Herzegovina had its first multi-party elections, in which prevailed the divisions on a national basis that were embodied in the national political parties: the Democratic Action Party (SDA), the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ). In the new, national political climate, with new rules, the percentage of women in politics was negligible.

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470 Bakšić-Muftić, Jasna et al. *Socio-economic Status of Women in BiH*, p. 76.

After the elections in 1990 women won only a small number of positions at all levels:

- **Parliament of BiH:** of 240 seats, women took seven (2.92%),
- **Local level:** of 6,299 seats, women took 315 (5%).<sup>471</sup>

When we compare the percentage of women in 1986 (24.1% in the Parliament of BiH and 17.30% in municipal assemblies), as was stated in Table 3, with the data on the first pluralist elections, it becomes clear that the women were completely squeezed out of the political scene, and one reason cited is that:

The abolition of reserved places for women in the parliament in the beginning of the 90's, after the first multi/party elections, reflected the true nature of political relations and led to the disappearance of women from the political bodies.<sup>472</sup>

The causes of the decrease of the number of women in politics may be sought in the proportional system of voting on closed lists, which enabled the political parties to exclude women completely or to give them the last places on the ballots. A contributing factor, certainly, was the atmosphere of reaffirming traditional cultural values, in a strong symbiosis with the national policies and nationalistic ideologies, as "the nationalistic political discourse defined woman as the mother of the nation, responsible for its survival, for the continuation of offspring and for the maintenance of tradition."<sup>473</sup>

During the war period, this conception was only deepened, and because of their struggle for existence and for physical survival, women had no time for political engagement. Thus the first post-war elections at the state level, held in 1996, did not significantly change the representation of women compared to the previous elections:

- **House of Representatives of the Parliament of BiH:** of 42 seats, women won one (2.38%);
- **House of Representatives of the FBiH:** of 140 seats, women won seven (5%);
- **National Assembly of Republika Srpska:** of 106 seats, women won six (1.89%).

In the local elections in 1997, the situation was similar; the representation of women in the municipalities of the Federation BiH was 6.15%, and in Republika Srpska, 2.4%.<sup>474</sup>

In order for this to change, it was necessary to reintroduce "protective measures" to ensure greater representation of women. Those measures were intro-

471 Bakšić-Muftić, Jasna, et al. *Socio-economic Status of Women in BiH*, p. 52

472 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

473 Kesić, Vesna. *Gender and Ethnic Identities in Transition The former Yugoslavia-Croatia*, in Rada Iveković and Julie Mostov, (eds.) *From Gender to Nation*, Longo Editore Ravenna, 2001, p. 65.

474 Bakšić-Muftić, Jasna, et al. *Socio-economic Status of Women in BiH*, p. 52.

duced by the OSCE Interim Electorate Commission through the so-called “women's quota”, which meant that each political party had to include at least three women on their ballot lists, among the first ten candidates.

At the next elections, in 1998, the situation changed significantly towards greater representation of women:

**House of Representatives of the Parliament of BiH:** 26% women;

**House of Representatives of the FBiH:** 15% women;

**National Assembly of the RS:** 22.8% women;

**Cantonal level:** 18.46% women.<sup>475</sup>

The rules were changed again, so in the 2000 elections, a new model of open lists was introduced, decreasing the chances of women getting support from the traditionally oriented Bosnian and Herzegovinian environment. However, even in those conditions, women managed to survive on the political scene, as is confirmed by the number of seats that they won:

**House of Representatives of the Parliament of BiH:** 2 seats (4.76%);

**House of Representatives of the FBiH:** 24 seats (17.4%);

**National Assembly of the RS:** 14 seats (14.86%).

It is interesting that in the FBiH, the participation of women in the Parliament increased compared to the previous elections, but the number of women at the state level in the Parliament of BiH was significantly reduced – from 26% to 4.76%. It confirms the standard practice in which the number of women becomes negligible as we move up towards the top of the pyramid of political decision-making.

New elections at the local level were held in 2004; a total of 27,427 candidates participated in the electoral race, out of which 9,544 were women. A total of 908 candidates ran for the positions of municipal mayor, 33 of them were women (3.63%). In the end, women won three municipal mayoralties, in the municipalities of Drvar, Oštra Luka and Istočni Stari Grad – small and poor municipalities, where it is quite hard to perform this function. Of the total number of council mandates in the municipal councils, 3,145 women won 18.1%.<sup>476</sup>

The most recent state level elections were held in 2006, and we can see from the results whether there was increased participation in the political life of BiH.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.* For clearer understanding of the complex constitutional and legal setup of BiH, it should be mentioned that the *Dayton Constitution* divided BiH into two entities: Republika Srpska, with the majority of the Serb population; and the Federation of BiH, divided into ten cantons, with the majority of the Bosniak and Croat population; in addition there is Brčko District, as a separate administrative unit. All levels of government have their own constitutions and competencies to legally regulate certain fields, which complicates the application of human rights in general, and the human rights of women in particular.

<sup>476</sup> *Izveštaji o stanju ljudskih prava u BiH 2004. godine i Izveštaj o stanju ženskih ljudskih prava u BiH 2001 (Report on the State of Human Rights in BiH 2004 and Report on the State of Women's Human Rights in BiH 2001)*, Helsinki komitet za ljudska prava u BiH/Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, <http://www.bh-hchr.org/>

Respecting the quotas introduced in 1998, political parties listed women as 34% of their candidates; however, 81 lists were headed by women, and 638 by men. It should also be pointed out that women headed the lists of political parties that objectively did not have huge chances to win.<sup>477</sup> This is confirmed by the statement of the analyst Tanja Topić:

These elections too have confirmed that the party leaderships, even in parties that allegedly work on the promotion of women, see women on the one hand as a decoration, and on the other hand as a 'burden' imposed on them by the Elections Law. Women are not seen as serious politicians – that is why there aren't any heading the lists, and the parties have only the number of women candidates that they must have according to the law.<sup>478</sup>

The results of the 2006 elections show that women got 17% of mandates, and men 83%, which is similar to the previous elections results. The highest positions in the state – the three-member rotating Presidency, the presidents and vice presidents of the entities – were won by men. The three women who ran for these positions got less than 1% of the votes,<sup>479</sup> which is a valuable indicator of actual attitudes to the participation of women in the important positions of decision-making and power.

In the state parliament, which according to the Dayton constitution has 42 members, only six women were elected (14.28%), similar to the results from the 2002 elections. In the House of Representatives of the Federation of BiH, women won 21 seats (21.42%), while in the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, women won 17 seats (20.48%), more than in the previous elections.

At the cantonal level, in the 10 cantons women got 44 seats (15.22%), which is dejecting when compared to 2002, when women's representation was 21.9%. Of this number, the majority of the women – 35 (12.11%) – were in Sarajevo Canton.<sup>480</sup>

These results are the best indicator of the actual situation and attitude towards the participation of women in politics, as women did not manage to achieve better results than in previous elections, nor were they more significantly represented as serious candidates of the biggest and most influential political parties. The analyst Tanja Topić commented on this as follows:

Women did not vote for women. The cited figures tell us that women themselves do not take women seriously in politics. That is of course a consequence of our political and cultural heritage, which has never budged from the traditional

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477 Milojević, Milkica. *Žene na izborima 2006: polovičan uspjeh uz pomoć izbornih kvota* (Women at Elections 2006: Partial Success Thanks to Electoral Quotas), Lara Online,

478 *Ibid.* <http://www.online-lara.com/arhiva/tema%20mjeseca/tema%20mjeseca34.htm>

479 *Ibid.* <http://www.online-lara.com/arhiva/tema%20mjeseca/tema%20mjeseca34.htm>

480 Mandić, D. P. *Žene na margini političkog života* (Women at the Margin of Political Life), Dnevni list, October 31 2006. [http://www.dnevni-list.ba/?mdls=1&mdls\\_tip=2&nid=7273](http://www.dnevni-list.ba/?mdls=1&mdls_tip=2&nid=7273)

understanding of the place and role of a woman in society. A woman's place in everyday life, according to these stereotypes, is in the kitchen; and in the political life of BiH, despite the laws and the engagement of non-governmental organizations, the highest a woman can reach is to be on the candidate list for the Parliament, and on the lower level of government at that.<sup>481</sup>

Thus, we again return to the well-known story about how our traditional cultural heritage presents an obstacle to the more equal participation of women in politics, and that women still do not vote for women and do not think that women can be good top-level leaders. If we look at the candidates of the biggest parties, it is clear that the internal policy of the parties does not favor the inclusion of women in the leading positions on the lists. We will compare these data with the opinions of the informants surveyed in this study, with the aim of discovering the causes of the underrepresentation of women in politics.

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481 Milojević, Milkica. *Žene na izborima 2006.: polovičan uspjeh uz pomoć izbornih kvota (Women at Elections 2006: Partial Success Thanks to Electoral Quotas)*, Lara, Online

## **6. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

### **6.1. Subject of the Research**

The subject of the research is the influence of the religious interpretive heritage of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as of the cultural tradition, on the status of women in public life and politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### **6.2. Hypothesis**

The participation of women in public life and politics is greatly influenced by the religious and cultural heritage; the latter promotes and advocates “traditional cultural values” according to which the most important and most honorable task and duty of a woman, to which everything else should be subjected, is to be a mother and caretaker. As a consequence of gender policy having been thus constituted in the official discourse of the monotheistic heritage, women face huge social pressure and various obstacles to achieving the gender equality that is guaranteed by the constitutional and legal framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In order to determine the link between the religious heritage and the participation of women in politics, I will divide the hypothesis into two parts:

- 1) The higher the level of influence of traditional cultural and religious values on a person, the lower is the person's support for the equal participation of women in political life.
- 2) The participation of women in political life depends not only upon their religious awareness and practice, and the perception of gender roles that is based on this, but also upon the following factors:
  - a) level of education,
  - b) social status and origin,
  - c) sex,
  - d) age,
  - e) political engagement and orientation.

### 6.3. Indicators of Religiousness

Bearing in mind the fact that religiousness is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, we can measure it by various kinds of indicators, which may be hierarchically ordered, stratified, and organized in various ways, and may have different meanings.<sup>482</sup> In order to prove the hypothesis, in this work I will use objective and partially subjective indicators of religiousness, because beside these, the attitudes of informants about other spheres of life are also important, like education, inheritance and engagement in public life. These, again, are closely linked to the religious tradition and to the value system that derives from it.

Objective indicators of religiousness refer to the participation of believers in the performance of religious rituals in places of worship or at home,<sup>483</sup> and they will serve in this study to enable comparisons of the attitudes of practicing believers with those of others, in relation to the status of women in private and public life.

Subjective indicators, on the other hand, relate to that which people take to be an explanation of the ultimate purpose of life. For this work, the most important is the practical ethical level of religiousness. The results from the questionnaires and interviews in the field will show to what extent the traditional values and objective and subjective religiousness on this level influence the attitudes and opinions of people about the status and position of women in public life and politics.

### 6.4. Research Aim

The research aim is to determine whether there is a link between the religious heritage and cultural tradition and the participation of women in the public sphere of life and politics. In this way, in fact, I want to show the extent to which the interpretations of the religious heritage, on the one hand, and its application in practice, embedded in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian cultural framework, on the other hand, influence the increase or reduction of women's engagement in the public sphere of activity. To this end, I will divide the global subject of research – defined through three key words: women, religion and politics – into a number of sub-units. First, it has been necessary to determine the frames of the traditional heritage of monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), based both on traditional commentaries and interpretations (of the Torah, Bible and Qur'an) and modern

482 Kuburić, Zorica. *Religija, porodica i mladi (Religion, Family and Youth)*, p. 40.

483 Ćimić, Esad. *Socijalističko društvo i religija (Socialist Society and Religion)*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1966, p. 92.



interpretations, especially those with a feminist orientation. With the help of data and results from fieldwork, we will be able, on the one hand, to evaluate how religious communities relate to the participation of women in public life, and on the other hand, to determine the extent to which they influence the formation of attitudes and the value system in gender politics.

The second, narrower subject of research is the analysis of religious magazines (following S. Savić, 1997) and the particularities of the discourse of religious authorities in terms of the interpretation of the religious contents of the holy books. Thus, a qualitative and quantitative analysis will be made of the magazines of religious communities in BiH in order to determine to what extent and in what way women are mentioned in the official religious discourse. Religious officials will also be interviewed, and their attitudes analyzed regarding the place and role of women in religious communities and public life in general.

On the basis of the fieldwork and the analyses from the viewpoint of interdisciplinary, gender-oriented studies, we will be able to assess the correlation between the status of women in public life, especially their participation in politics; religious demands and attitudes; and the dominant socio-cultural and political models. Since a study of this kind has never before been conducted either in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in the region, its results will provide the first scientific arguments about the influence of religion on women and their status in public life and politics. Based on the empirical findings and analyses, we will open a space for the creation of possible courses of action, both in terms of the active participation of women in the process of reinterpretation of the holy texts in order to remodel the patriarchal theology into an inclusive theology (equally inclusive of men and women), and in terms of activism in the public sphere in order to eliminate the systematic discrimination of women that takes place in all spheres of life.

## **6.5. Methodological Approach and Research Techniques**

I have used a combination of research methods and techniques: interviews and questionnaires (with a combination of closed and open questions), in order to get a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the research results. I have further conducted interviews with religious officials and analyzed the contents of religious magazines and gazettes that are published by religious communities in BiH. A special feature of the survey were the so-called "verification interviews", scheduled immediately after completion of the questionnaires, with separate groups of women and men, each consisting of 10-12 participants on average. The aim of this verification was to get data for a qualitative data analysis to discover the attitudes and opinions of the infor-

mants about particular questions from the questionnaire to which informants usually give socially acceptable answers.

## 6.6. Sample

The research was conducted in 20 cities and villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it encompassed a total of 529 members of the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish population, on average corresponding to the percentages of the population in BiH, as well as atheists and agnostics who declared themselves as such during the research. The informants were aged 18-70 years, because it was important to see how the older population, which has transmitted the value system to the young through upbringing and education, perceives these issues. The age structure was varied, but the majority of informants were older than 30 (76%), because the aim was to mostly include married persons, due to the number of questions relating to family life. Thus, 24% of the informants were younger than 30.

### 6.6.1. Formation and Description of the Sample

The sample was not only limited to the religious population – men and women belonging to a religion and practicing it in churches and religious communities – it also included a wider social stratum that gathers in non-governmental organizations, political parties, and cultural institutions, as well as in religious communities. The aim was to determine the attitudes and opinions of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, not primarily those of believers, atheists or agnostics. In the sampling I tried, as far as possible, to include cities and villages with majority Bosniak or Serb or Croatian population, but also places that maintained a multi-ethnic population. Cities and villages were selected according to a national/religious key, as the intention was to question and interview Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats and others in numbers approximately reflecting their percentage of the total population of BiH.<sup>484</sup> The intention was to include an approximately equal number of women and men; however, I must confess that it was easier to get women to participate in the interviews than men, so the number of women (299) is slightly higher than the number of questioned and interviewed men (230).

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484 According to the last census (1991), BiH had a population of 4.4 million, of which 43.7% Bosniaks, 31% Serbs, 17.3% Croats, and 7.6% others (minorities). These percentages have partly changed, but since this is the most recent census of the population of BiH, it has been taken as the basis for the present study. See *Bosna i Hercegovina na prvi pogled*, OSCE BiH, <http://www.oscebih.org/overview/bos/>

The ideal ratio is hard to achieve, as it is very difficult to gather the participants for questionnaires and interviews: we must keep in mind the mistrust and insecurity in BiH, especially in rural areas, towards members of other religions or nations. Taking into account that the religious communities are very closed, and that they have not showed interest in this kind of cooperation, I sometimes used personal contacts, but I also consulted the non-governmental organizations, mostly women's organizations, which provided great support in the organization of the interviews, especially in rural areas.

I also received support from the *International Multi-religious and Intercultural Centre (IMIC) Sarajevo* that provided both funding and contacts in the field. The research conducted in 20 cities and villages was financially supported by the *Norwegian and Swedish Embassies in Sarajevo*, through the *IMIC Centre*, within which I successfully finalized this project.

### **6.6.2. Chronology and Overview of the Questionnaire Surveys and Interviews Conducted in BiH**

**The first interviews and questionnaire surveys were conducted in the Muslim village of Hrustovo (September 27, 2005)** in cooperation with the *Peace Centre (CIM)* from Sanski Most and the *Islamic Community organization (Medžlis)* in the town of Hrustovo. The participants were Muslims, and the questionnaire survey and the interviews were conducted in the local mosque. The male group was very nervous, especially the older members, who showed themselves suspicious and impolite before we started, questioning both my own legitimacy and that of the other researcher present in terms of how much I knew about religion and how long I had been practicing it, that I might be able to "question" them. This tension and awkwardness culminated when the researcher stepped into the *mihrab* (niche in the mosque where the imam stands during prayer) asking them whether she might stand there. All of them reacted immediately, saying: "If you were sent by that Amina Wadud ( *first female imam in the USA*), leave this place now." I convinced them that this was not the case, and that I wanted to hear what they thought about some common issues in life. The two most persistent ones did not even want to fill in the questionnaire, but only sat there and listened to the conversation; but when they realized that we were talking about the ordinary things in life, such as raising children, education, and relations in the family, they spontaneously joined in. In the end, they both admitted that it was the first time in their lives that someone had come to ask them for their opinion without imposing his/her own, and said that we were always welcome in that village. They also promised to elect women to the local *Board of the Islamic Community*, which as an unwritten rule had only had male

members. They held their promise and informed me about it in their Eid greetings later. That was the most that they were prepared to do for now, because the religious rules did not allow women to be imams, to govern and to be in high decision-making positions.

The women, however, were very wary, checking all the time if someone was listening to us, as some of them were scared that their husband might hear them. The most interesting woman was an imam's wife who talked for a long time but said nothing. When I insisted that she say what she thought herself, because what she had said so far was what politicians and demagogues say, she smiled and said that she had to act like that, as her every word and action was measured, and her husband might have problems in the jama'at (community) as a result. A wife's obligation was to maintain the reputation of her husband and to act from the background, and he should be the representative of the family in public.

**The second destination was Prijedor (September 29, 2005),** where the non-governmental organization *Pro et contra* provided their assistance. Interviews and questionnaires were conducted in the premises of this organization. The participants were Orthodox and a small number of agnostics and atheists, mostly the organization's members and representatives of political parties and cultural and religious societies. The male group, though consisting of persons younger than 40, expressed distrust and did not want to talk until I had answered a few questions, including how come my husband let me walk around like that and how we had ordered our own relations in the family. After I had answered, in a humorous tone, the situation became more pleasant and they were only then ready to talk. Though they were very educated people, most of them with university degrees, their attitudes reflected a truly patriarchal pattern of inter-gender relations, defining the role of the woman as follows: "It is known where her place is", followed by laughs and inappropriate jokes. They were also glad that their wives were not in the other group, adding jokingly that they might "hear all kinds of things". Religion is an important part of the identity and the values it promotes, the most important being those linked to motherhood and family life.

Women were very cautious in their answers, so in the beginning, it seemed that I was talking to women who exercised all their political and civil rights and who lived in such an environment. In response to my comment that the facts told a different story, women started speaking more openly about the actual order of relations in the family and society, and about the male dominance that they experienced in the family, but also about the fact that they had not changed much in their own families with their husbands and children.

**The third destination was Sanski Most (October 1, 2005),** where we organized the questionnaires and interviews with the cooperation of the *Centre for Peace (CIM)* from Sanski Most and the *Islamic Community (Medžlis) in Sanski Most*. We talked in the Centre premises, and as there was great interest in these interviews among women, we questioned two groups of women and one group of men. Women were deeply polarized in their attitudes. The biggest problem was moderating the interviews, because of constant interruptions and comments from the ultra-orthodox Muslim women of Wahabi provenance – the local term for those who returned to faith overnight under the influence of the Wahhabi missionary organizations). They constantly pointed out that it was important to respect Islamic principles that, in their opinion, required women to respect the moral code of Islam about the separation of men and women and to be obedient and satisfy men in their rights, including, among other things, allowing him to take another wife. Their understanding of religion excluded the possibility of women dealing with politics and any other type of work where a woman had to work together with men. Fortunately, this group is a minority, but admittedly very aggressive in its approach, which is a characteristic of their behavior.

The male group was much smaller, but the conversations with them were very useful. They openly supported the education of women, in particular, as well as their political activities and representation. Of course, no one was ready to make rearrangements in the private sphere in order to give women an opportunity to be in politics. Family obligations and motherhood were, according to both God's law and customary law, the obligation of women, so if they could be combined, let women deal with politics – the usual argument that, in fact, showed how serious they were in their support for women in political life.

**The fourth destination was Višegrad (October 12, 2005),** in cooperation with the women's non-governmental organization *Most Višegrad* (Bridge Višegrad). A curious feature of this interview was that the participants were Orthodox men and women, but the interviews with women were held in the house of the first Muslim returnee to Višegrad, who is supported by this organization. As most of the women were from the non-governmental sector and local administration, they openly criticized the patriarchal conception imposed both by the state government and by religious authorities. For the first time I openly received the answer that the government and the church together support the exclusion of women from the government structures and more significant positions, and that classes of religion in schools are used to bolster this model, which was also confirmed by the students who had undergone this education. Men also openly supported the equal participation of women, but they said that it was the opinion of their group, consisting mostly of the activists of the non-governmental sector, while the majority had a completely

different perception of gender roles. This was indeed confirmed by the answers of men who strongly defended the traditional values, explaining that they did not want to change their tradition for some 'equality' imposed by various Western meddling do-gooders.

**The fifth place was Novo Goražde (October 12, 2005).** the interviews were organized by the women's non-governmental organization *Elisabeth Right* in their premises. The participants were Orthodox, mostly displaced persons from Goražde who had settled in the area during the war in BiH. It was a combination of urban and rural population, so distressed by the war and the economic crisis that they constantly returned to those topics. It is understandable that it is hard to talk about gender policy at all when people are struggling to survive. In the male group, a man who appeared already under the influence demanded to be served alcohol, which was not present on the table. Having failed to provoke me, he told me a story that he used to be best friends with a Muslim who had helped his family during the Second World War, and he had helped them in return and offered them protection so they did not get killed during the recent war. He felt a need to justify himself for something, even though he had neither been asked nor provoked to say anything. Of course, it was my appearance and presence that had prompted such a reaction, though one of my colleagues was Orthodox. However, everything remained in the borders of decency. The male group skillfully avoided giving answers about the relations between the sexes in marriage and public life, interrupting with witticisms and jokes, which told more about their attitudes than they were aware of. The reason why women should not be involved in politics was that they would then have to be absent from home and travel alone, which was in their opinion unacceptable.

To my surprise, the female group was even more conservative; they defended the rights of men against "newly-fledged women" who exploited their husbands and who had, due to the promotion of women's rights, become "obstinate" and "disobedient". A true marriage could not survive, they claimed, if the woman did as she pleased and did not listen to her husband, as he was surely the head of the family, state and church. However, after a longer talk they softened their tone and stated the real problems they had in inter-gender relations. The conversation in the end developed in a totally relaxed atmosphere, so that some of the participants whispered to the organizer: "This woman seems really nice, as if she were one of ours".

**The sixth place was Orašje (October 25, 2005),** where the interviews with women were conducted in cooperation with the *Forum žena SDP* (Women's Forum of the Social Democratic Party), in their premises, and those with men in cooperation with the *Islamic Community of Orašje*, in the mosque premises. All informants were Muslims, as the city proper of Orašje is inhabited by Muslims, whereas the surrounding villages are inhabited by Catholics, who form the majority of the population of

this municipality on the Sava River. The women were happy that someone was talking about this subject. In the beginning, they expressed support for the participation of women in politics and public life, but they were not ready to make changes in their private sphere, where the obligations of men and women were clearly defined. However, later, before the interviews with men in the local mosque, we all attended one of the most important blessed nights in the Muslim tradition, the night of *Lejletul-kadr* (the 27<sup>th</sup> night of Ramadan). As it was men that lead the ceremony and held the lectures and sermons, their address and language was entirely in the masculine form, triggering the wife of a younger local imam to stand up in the mosque full of men and women, and ask to say something. An older imam asked her unwillingly: "Do you really have to do it now?", and she determinedly said: "Yes, I have to!" She publicly criticized them their manner of address and said that they ignored women even though half of the congregation (*jama'at*) consisted of women. They apologized, explaining that it was understood that women were included, and she responded: "Please, don't let it be understood". The lectures continued, now addressed both to women and men: "Dear or respected brothers and sisters".

After that we talked with the male group, mainly younger men who expressed a great deal of conservative views and fear of women. They were not ready to acknowledge that women were capable of doing certain jobs, and they constantly shifted the attention to their morality and responsibility. They were very tactless, mocking and interrupting with indecent jokes, and laughing at every question. The wife of the young imam, who had been listening to them from the mosque gallery (*musandar*), came down, gave them all a motherly scolding, and left. They became more serious after that, and admitted that in their understanding of religion, a woman could not be a leader and that the man was predetermined for that. At the end of the conversation, two younger men told me: "We told you approximately 30% of the truth, but if you had time to stay for another 5-6 days here with us, you would have found out the rest." That is true, unfortunately, but I am satisfied, because had it not been for the open conversations after filling in the questionnaires, I would have probably found out far less.

**The seventh destination was the village of Ulice near Brčko (October 27, 2005),** where our host, the *Catholic Community*, organized the interviews in their premises, as it actually is the only community that, after the wartime suffering, has the authority to gather people for any type of activity. I first talked with the female group, in which there was a nun. She showed me suspicion, seeing me for the first time. She did not allow me to present myself and greet the others, she immediately started questioning me, not in a civil way, about what I was doing, who was behind it, what I wanted to show, and similar. I calmly tried to explain to her, and then she



became impatient, commenting that Croats were completely different from Serbs and Bosniaks, that they were a separate cultural and religious identity, and that they had nothing in common with the rest of us. I told her that I did not agree, because my research proved the opposite, whereupon she proudly pointed out: "We have more in common with the Austrians than with you people here, because we have the same religion and the same customs". Then she questioned me whether Muslim women wore the *burqa* whether they were allowed to leave the house, and whether Catholics in Sarajevo could freely practice their religion. I said that that if she had been working for 40 years at the Kaptol in Zagreb (the seat of the archbishop), she should know what is going on in the region, as Catholics have their own schools, the right to their own language and their own curriculum. In the end she said that she did not want to talk at all and that she did not want to be recorded. An elderly woman then stood up and said loudly: "I think that's enough, if you did not want to talk, why did you come at all?" The nun stood up and demonstratively left the room. In order to relieve this initial unpleasantness, the women made an effort to speak their minds and to make the atmosphere more pleasant and relaxed. It was interesting that the younger women were more conservative, justifying their attitudes with religion and the traditional order of things, while the older ones, probably under the influence of the previous system of governance, were much more open to the equal participation of women in the top positions. However, the position of the president of the state was reserved for men, as it was not, in their opinion, a job for a woman.

The male group was unwilling to talk, but they came anyway because of the authority of the local friar. They were mostly interested in what their wives had said before them, in order to avoid having different stories. All questions were followed by indecent jokes with which they tried to conceal their attitudes, thus expressing them anyway, just differently. Woman was created for and because of man, and why change things when they liked it that way, they laughingly commented. They accepted that a woman could work at home, on the farm and in a workplace, but they were not in favor of women in politics. A woman had to be under the control and oversight of her husband, and that was impossible if she was involved in politics.

**The eight place was Ilijaš (October 31, 2005),** in the surroundings of Sarajevo, with mixed Muslim and Orthodox population, and the interviews were organized by the *Centre for Social Work*, as they were the only ones willing to help and able to gather the target population. In small environments, the biggest problem is to find an adequate organization that has the authority and ability to gather people. Taking into account that most people needed the services of the *Centre*, they came for the interview mostly out of their self-interest. Men, in the familiar way, supported the equality of women in all spheres, but when asked whether they would support their own wives if they got involved, they all fell silent. Their wives



ought to be moral, respectable, hard-working and responsible, as their religion and tradition prescribed. Even though they knew little about religion, they were aware what models they had inherited and they strictly kept to them. They explained to me that those nations that had not kept their religion and tradition had failed, and the recent war served as a reminder of that.

The women were very closed in the beginning, presenting an ideal model of relations in the family, and I reacted to that as I did in other places: let us not fool ourselves, as the practice shows that this is not so. Then a school director very arrogantly said that she had never experienced discrimination, and that women only need to know how to "rule", or better said, manipulate their husbands. The rest of the group denied this, giving numerous examples of discrimination in the family that was very often justified by religion and that was most often exercised by women against women (by mothers-in-law against daughters-in-law).

**The ninth place was Mostar (November 4, 2005)**, where the interviews were organized by the women's non-governmental organization *Žena BiH Mostar* (Woman BiH Mostar), in their premises. The participants were a mixed group of Muslims, Catholics, Jews and others, most of them coming from mixed marriages. Mostar is the very model of a multicultural BiH city, in which nearly half the population lived in mixed marriages, a situation that has largely persisted even after the political divisions. However, that has not annulled the value system of the patriarchal culture that continues to shape the lives and attitudes of people. This was reflected in the conversation with the female group, which mostly consisted of women who were or had been in mixed marriages. Their attitudes to gender relations were not much different from the attitudes of other women, as they had been, as they themselves pointed out, raised on the principles of the patriarchal culture. The female group mostly consisted of activists of the non-governmental sector and their users. The surprise was women who seemingly represented a conservative current of Muslims, judging by how they veiled. They openly talked about the pressures and discrimination that they experienced in their families, justified by religion and the obligation to obey men, as well as about the ways in which they overcame such situations.

The men were younger and surprised me greatly with their backward attitudes towards women, their personality and abilities, referring, again, to religion, where they found evidence that women were unstable due to menstruation, that they were emotional and that, accordingly, they were not ready to be in politics, which requires bravery, self-possession and a firm hand. In a few sentences, they gave voice to all the stereotypes we face on a daily basis. They very often referred to religion, which gave primacy to men over women.

**The tenth destination was the village Kovanići near Zenica (November 6<sup>th</sup> 2005),** where our hosts were the *Local Community* and the *local branch (Majlis) of the Islamic Community*. The interviews were conducted in the mosque, as it was the only available space, and the participants were Muslims. The male group was very welcoming, but they exaggerated in presenting themselves and the situation in their families and surroundings in a totally progressive and positive light. When they saw that I took such statements with reservations, one of them, who had not been participating in the conversation at all, raised his hand and asked to say something: Then he decidedly denied everything the others had said: "Nothing is the way they have told you, *my child*, for we men are rotten, after all, and we cannot accept that a woman has the same rights, nor can we look on a woman as an *insan* (person), because she is simply a female. You will see how sincere we are when the women come, because most of us will not send our own wives to that group, to prevent them from hearing things". They all smiled, and confirmed the words were true with nudges and remarks. Unfortunately, it was indeed true; only the wives of two participants came, those participants who had tried to be as honest as possible in their statements.

The female group was a model of the patriarchal manner of thinking as they, particularly the mothers, emphasized that there could not be the same norms for male and female children, or, in other words, that moral principles and standards were different for sons and daughters. When I reminded them that we were all equal before God and that sin was not gender-determined, they defended themselves by saying that the reason lay in the social pressure and stigma that women experienced when they refused to behave according to the established patterns of behavior.

**The eleventh destination was Srebrenik (November 18, 2005),** where the interviews were organized by the former NGO activist S.S. in her own house, as her organization had stopped working. The female group consisted of very brave and progressive women who showed that they were not for the strongly established division of roles, but when they came to the details, they soon revealed that it was nevertheless clear who was the head of family and who did what work. Regarding decision-making, they said that women mostly made the family policy and made decisions, but in public, the man appeared as the representative of the family, as was expected of him. That model, which they had inherited through their upbringing, had proved to be a good one, and they saw little reason to change the rules of the game, because it was easier to rule from the shadows than to be publicly exposed to all kinds of pressure and the judgments of the public.

The male group consisted of mostly young men that, to my great surprise, to a great extent expressed conservative attitudes and insisted on the existing division of roles, because a man ought to be a man, whatever that meant to them. The only

exception was the young imam, a teacher of religion in school, who opposed this view, providing examples from his own life to show that things could be different. The others said that they knew they could, but they did not like it, because women should not rule. What followed was a clumsy attempt to link religion and tradition to that regard, that does not allow a woman to govern, as in their opinion had been proven true by history.

**The twelfth place was Bijeljina (November 25, 2005),** where we conducted the interviews in cooperation with the women's non-governmental organization *Lara Bijeljina*, in their premises. The women mostly held university degrees, but, to my surprise, they defended the existing hierarchy, especially the church hierarchy, with the clear stance that they would not change anything and that women's place was not at the altar. They all declared themselves for the equality of women, and some of them were working on those issues in the non-governmental sector, but in their lives and environments they were maintaining and transmitting the established patterns of gender roles.

The male group was much more interesting, as they were very open from the beginning. There was a certain nervousness in the conversation, because the fifteen of them were talking with a veiled Muslim about the rights of women, so one young businessman (as he presented himself) said all of a sudden: "How come you propagate women's rights and you dress like that, and how can there be any women's rights in Muslim environments, when their women are completely excluded and hidden? A successful and advanced woman, in my opinion, should wear a mini skirt and look good, then everybody will respect her." Part of the group laughed, while others, especially the older men, opposed this, trying to get the conversation back on its original track. After the interview the young man came up to me and said that many people thought like him, but out of respect they did not say anything, "and it is true that among us Orthodox, women are in a much better position than among Muslims". I said that it might be true, but that I would believe it only after I saw more Orthodox women at decision-making positions and when I saw them at the altar.

**The thirteenth destination was the Orthodox village Novo Naselje near Bijeljina (November 27, 2005),** where I conducted the interviews in an improvised village bar with the help of a journalist from that village. Since the inhabitants of this village are mostly Serbian refugees and their life is hard, this gathering was an interesting event in a place where almost nothing happened, because not even the priest would come when he was supposed to. The women were very cooperative and very open, which was rare, because in most places they claimed at the beginning that everything was excellent. They stated all the problems that women faced, especially those who wanted to break out of the existing frames and do everything that men do.

The men, however, showed that they did not want any kind of equality, nor would they “allow” a wife to go around on her own and leave them at home without lunch. If women had been meant to rule, they said, God would have created a woman first, not the man. With jokes and folk stories, they explained that woman is the cause of evil, that a man must be careful and not give power into her hands. The whole conversation was shot through with such stories, which best revealed their mentality and way of thinking.

**The fourteenth place was Modriča (November 28, 2005),** with a Serb-majority population. The interviews were conducted in a restaurant, with the assistance of the local priest from Miljanovac and a group of young businessmen without whom it would have been very hard to organize such a gathering. Both groups comprised mostly young people, up to 40 years of age. The women tried to show that they were for the equal participation of women in all spheres of life, but soon they pointed to themselves as examples that women, nevertheless, were not always able to make decisions. The reason was menstruation, because of which women took days off from work, and which was used as a tool to make their husbands do things they would not normally do, and that was why women were not appropriate for highly responsible functions. Those who had children claimed that they had realized men and women truly are not the same, as God had said a long time ago in the *Bible*, and that one should not insist on forcing changes.

The male group had similar attitudes, which they linked to the religious tradition, testing at the same time my knowledge of the *Bible* because I deal with that subject. It was very interesting to see my legitimacy questioned (whether I could do certain things), and had there been a man in my place, he would probably not be questioned in such a way.

**The fifteenth destination was village Vrapčiči near Mostar (December 2, 2005),** with a Muslim-majority population, and the interviews were organized by the non-governmental organization *Prijateljice* (Friends). The female group was polarized in their attitudes, as the three most influential women tried to justify the existing division of roles by traditional values that had always been respected and according to which it was understood who the head of the family was. It was an opportunity to publicly criticize the few activists of the non-governmental sector who were trying to introduce some changes in their environment, but at the same time it was also a message to me who walked the villages and cities questioning what people thought instead of being at home like all decent mothers and wives.

The male group tried to manipulate, emphasizing that women did not want to get involved in politics, as some of them, who lead political parties, had tried without success to get the female candidates they needed for the party lists to meet the legal

requirement. They would not let their own wives and daughters meddle with politics, because they had witnessed what women were doing in those circles. At the end of the conversation, they disclosed the real reasons for supporting women in decision-making positions: for the sake of appearances, not because they thought that a woman was capable of doing it: "If she is capable of raising children and working, let her not deal with politics, and we all know the role God entrusted her with."

**The sixteenth place was Livno (December 3, 2005)**, with a Croat-majority population. The interviews were organized by the women's organization *Li-Woman*, lead by a returnee Muslim woman, and the participants were Croats. Since I had earlier had an opportunity to participate in some of the projects of this organization, most of the people present remembered my involvement in the establishment of inter-religious dialogue and reconciliation, so the conversation was more relaxed. Men and women advocated the preservation of family as the greatest societal and Catholic value, and said that was the most important thing, and not the issue of whether a woman should be a director or a minister. Women should devote more time to their motherhood role, as it was the most important thing for them, and the public sphere of decision-making should be left to men. Such an order was, in their understanding, natural, and was supported by the Church, which was trusted and followed. Though most of the women held university degrees, they showed no ambition to participate in high political positions, nor would they support women in such positions.

The men also insisted that the most important thing, to which all else should be subjected, was for a woman to fulfill her God-given duty. Religion is an important and significant factor of identity, and thus it influences gender relations.

**The seventeenth place was Banja Luka (December 7, 2005)**, where the interviews were organized by the women's non-governmental organization *Udružene žene B. Luka* (Associated Women of Banja Luka), in their premises; the participants were mostly members of the Orthodox religion, atheists and agnostics. As in many previous places, young people, especially those linked to the Church, showed themselves more radical in their attitudes. Though they were not strictly for the division of jobs, they considered it important for a woman to keep to traditional values and to the family, which needed to be preserved, as it was slowly disappearing due to the forcible emancipation of women. Religion was important, and if one knew the order in church, one should know the order in the family. A woman cannot be the head, as St Paul defined it in his *Letters*. The older men who did not link their identity to religion supported women and their equal participation in politics.

Women, however, particularly the younger ones, said that different relations could be built when people did not blindly follow the church and traditional teach-

ings, as that prevented women from being represented in all spheres of life. They admitted, though, that they did not raise their children differently, they obeyed the set patterns of male-female relations. The older ones held based on their experience that the family should be the priority for a woman, as everything else came and went, and the family was a permanent good. It is interesting that the younger men were more radical, and the younger women more liberal in their views of life.

**The eighteenth place was Tuzla (December 9, 2005),** where the interviews were conducted in cooperation with the *Behram-begova Library* and the *Islamic Community in Tuzla*, in their premises. The male group tried to show that they supported the equality of women and their inclusion in politics by giving general answers, and saying that religion had nothing against it, only to show in their concrete examples that they did not support women and that it was a problem for them, especially the younger ones, that women had too much freedom in the way they dressed and in other matters. It was a great challenge for them, and they would change it if they were in a position to do so. A minority in that group, who declared themselves mystics and experts in different meditation techniques, claimed that no relation could be good if there was no balance and if someone was deprived of the possibility to choose and make decisions, as women often are by men. In the end, most of them admitted that a woman should be ruled over, in order for her not to rule, because that was how they perceived the relations between men and women. God did order the woman to follow the man.

The women also insisted on the established division of roles, on the fact that God had designated the man to be the head of the family, and that women are naturally predisposed to seek protection and care, as was explained in the *Qur'an*, in their understanding of the holy text.

**The nineteenth place was Zenica (December 17, 2005),** where the interviews were organized by *BZK (Bosnian Cultural Community) Preporod Zenica*, in their premises, and the participants were Bosniak representatives of the religious, cultural and political life of this local community. Men were very open to the inclusion of women in all spheres, but not their own daughters and wives. They tried to make me understand that in the Bosniak cultural tradition that was intertwined with Islamic legacy, women should stay in the "ministry of internal affairs" – the private sphere of life – and men in the "ministry of foreign affairs" – the public sphere of action – in order to maintain the traditional family and the values it brought into society.

The women held that it was, regardless of everything, most important to save the marriage and the family, even at the price of full submission to the goals and lives of husbands. Two women who were active in politics did not accept this model, as they did not represent the cliché image of the "proper wife" who is mostly quiet and

leaves leadership to her husband in public. Religion is a very important factor in inter-gender relations, as upbringing and religious education accept the patriarchal order and value system.

**The twentieth place was Kakanj (January 5, 2006),** a small town in Central Bosnia where the interviews were organized by the *Centre for culture and education Kakanj* and the women's non-governmental organization *Užok Kakanj*. The group consisted of Bosniaks and Croats. The male group declaratively supported equal participation, but only for those women who showed that they could "rule like a man". Of course, here as in other places, they were not ready to accept their own wives' participation in political life because, as one of the participants said: "We don't even trust ourselves to be moral in such games. That is why we do not allow our wives to be in such an environment". Some of the participants emphasized that if one respected religious and traditional principles, then there was no place for women in such an immoral environment as politics. It is interesting that these arguments were used in all places, whether with reference to the religious or to the purely cultural moral code, thus sending a clear message that what is morally acceptable for men is not at the same time acceptable for women.

The women were polarized in their reactions, as those in managing positions held that women could be successful in all spheres, while others dwelt on proofs that women had been conceived different from men, and that their intellectual capabilities were directed to fields different from those of men. In their arguments, they referred to international studies that showed that women have different inclinations than men. The influence of religion on such thinking is evident, as all of them confirmed that they had been raised like that and been taught that the dichotomized picture of the society was a normal order, and that we had been created to fulfill our respective roles.

## 6.7. Statistical processing of the data

The data were processed by the CEIR Agency Novi Sad with the *SPSS for Windows* program for data processing. Several types of statistical analysis were made, including: univariate analysis (determining the frequencies and percentages of answers); bivariate analysis (calculation of the association between the analyzed variables); and multivariate statistical analysis (factor analysis of claims and statements on a value scale).





## 7. RESEARCH RESULTS

### 7.1. Attitudes and opinions of Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics, Jews and others in BiH about the role of women in family and society

This chapter will present the results of the quantitative-qualitative analysis of data obtained through fieldwork in Bosnian and Herzegovinian villages and cities, where Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics, Jews and others were interviewed. A multivariate method of interpretation of the collected data was also used to study the correlation of a great number of variables included in the Questionnaire. The research was not limited exclusively to believers, members of a certain church or religious community; rather, the intention was to talk with different social groups that declare themselves as believers, atheists or agnostics. The aim was to determine to what extent the interpretative heritage of the monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is integrated into the culture, tradition and customs of peoples from these areas, and in what way and to what extent that heritage influences the status of women in public life and politics.

In the socialist period in BiH, religion was socially marginalized, and the assumption was that it would disappear under the influence of self-management practice and social participation<sup>485</sup>, giving room to new values founded on the doctrine of socialism understood in Marxist terms as the process of man's disalienation<sup>486</sup> and his freeing from any type of dependence, including the religious one. By marginalizing religion and exercising various types of pressures upon the believers, especially when they wanted to get actively involved in politics or advance their careers, people were formally "freed" from religion, and religious identity was disregarded and suppressed in public life. However, religion in its traditional form and rituals survived in the family environment, and according to Peter Berger: "...both old and new religious beliefs and practices have nevertheless continued in the lives of individuals, sometimes taking new institutional forms and sometimes leading to great explosions of religious fervor."<sup>487</sup> If we take into account that in the socialization process, the family plays the most important role in the formation of the young personality, "mediating between the two totalities – society and personality",<sup>488</sup> then it is clear

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485 Ćimić, Esad. *Socijalističko društvo i religija (Socialist Society and Religion)*, p. 89.

486 *Ibid.* p. 64.-69.

487 Berger, L. Peter. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Ethics and Public Policy Center Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids Cambridge, 1999, p. 3.

488 Kuburić, Zorica. *Religija, porodica i mladi (Religion, Family and Youth)*, p. 11.

how the influence of religion existed and survived in the periods when it was to a great extent suppressed from the public sphere. The family is, thus, the most reliable factor in the transmission of religious values and the guarantee of their survival. Vladeta Jerotić says that the reason is the fact that family life is regulated by moral and ethical norms, and the source of ethics and morality in most communities is religion.<sup>489</sup> The preservation and transmission of traditional values was mainly due to women, as they, through upbringing in primary socialization, carefully weave those values into the cultural code of their children, so that – although the children in some families grew up without formal religious education or later declared themselves atheists or agnostics – their cultural code is still pervaded and conditioned by religious values and customary tradition. This can best be seen in the opinions and attitudes expressed during the interviews and conversations.

Crucially important to this study were the group talks held with the informants after they filled in the Questionnaire. The talks were recorded, always with the prior approval of the informants. The recorder sometimes was a drawback in the beginning of the discussions, but it would soon be forgotten and the informants would become relaxed and open. A disadvantage of group talks is that they are not anonymous, but on the other hand, this meant that the participants were pressured to answer questions as honestly as possible; since their acquaintances or relatives who were aware of their family situation were present in the group, they could not allow themselves to be completely dishonest. Of course, even such conversations cannot provide a full picture, as it is very hard to confirm all statements. Let me illustrate with the example of a young informant from Orašje, who said, at the end of the conversation:

We told you about 30% of the truth. If you wanted to find out the remaining 70%, you would have to spend at least seven days with us and talk, and then you would see how much truth there was to what you have heard.

Unfortunately, he was right, but the nature, scope and manner of conduct of this research left no space for such in-depth research. That might have been more appropriate in an anthropological study, which would involve longer talks with the inhabitants of a certain place, spending time with them and witnessing the dynamics of relations in that community and in individual families. For the needs of this study, which comprises elements of the sociological, anthropological and politological approaches, these talks required many months of fieldwork, preparation, travels, conduct of interviews and talks, and processing of the collected materials.

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<sup>489</sup> Jerotić, Vladeta. *Vera i nacija (Faith and Nation)*, Izdavački fond Arhiepiskopije beogradsko-karlovačke i Ars Libri/Publishing Fund of the Archbishopric of Belgrade-Karlovac and Ars Libri, Belgrade, 2000, p. 212.

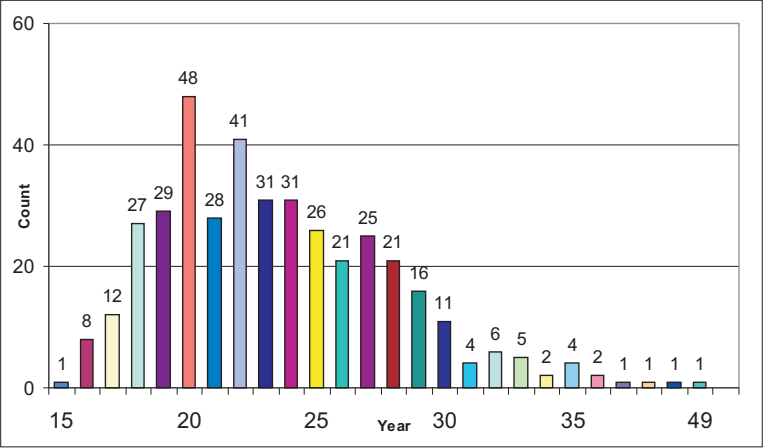
### **7.1.1. Demographic and Educational Structure of Informants**

Chapter 6 dealt with the sample, i.e. the informants and the places where the interviews were held, with brief explanations of how and with whose assistance the research was conducted. Its goal was to encompass as varied strata of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian population as possible: an approximately equal number of informants from rural and urban environments, and an approximately equal gender and age representation, with a diverse educational and professional structure and different levels of social participation. Though the intention was to include approximately equal numbers of informants from rural, suburban and urban parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, this was not possible because we could not always predict precisely where the informants would live. Thus, the majority of the informants, a total of 346, were from urban areas; 95 from rural areas; and 77 from suburban areas. However, due to significant migrations in the war and post-war periods it is very hard to determine who has actually lived in the city for a certain period of time, who has moved there, who is a refugee or a displaced person, and who may have changed their location of residence due to marriage. Questions like these would have encumbered the already large Questionnaire, but would have also caused tensions during the talks that followed, as the memories of war, exile, crimes and destruction are still fresh in people's minds. It often happened that the informants shifted the conversation to the war in order to avoid answering to some question. Such moments required intervention to return the discussion to the subject of the research. For this reason detailed questions about the informants' residence were avoided.

It was not possible to get an approximately equal number of informants according to the chosen demographical variables, for numerous reasons. First, this research was not conducted by a big company or a team of people; it was the individual effort of the researcher herself. Furthermore, it was very hard to gather people in the field to participate in these kinds of interviews and talks, so it was not possible to insist on having an equal number of elderly and younger persons, persons with a specific type of education, specific professions and similar. People often promised to come and then never showed up. In most places there were more women than men; or instead of the invited daughter or daughter-in-law, the mother or mother-in-law appeared; or a husband instead of a wife, wanting, as they explained, to personally check what kinds of talks these were and to "protect" their families from unfamiliar influences. This will also be discussed in the following subchapters.

Most of the informants were married. The average marriage age was 18-20 for women, and 22-25 for men. Regarding marriage, in connecting variables of the type of residence and marriage there is a correlation of  $-0.174$  with a significance coefficient of  $.001$ , pointing out that those that live in the city got married at an older age compared to those in the villages. Women married earlier than men with a correla-

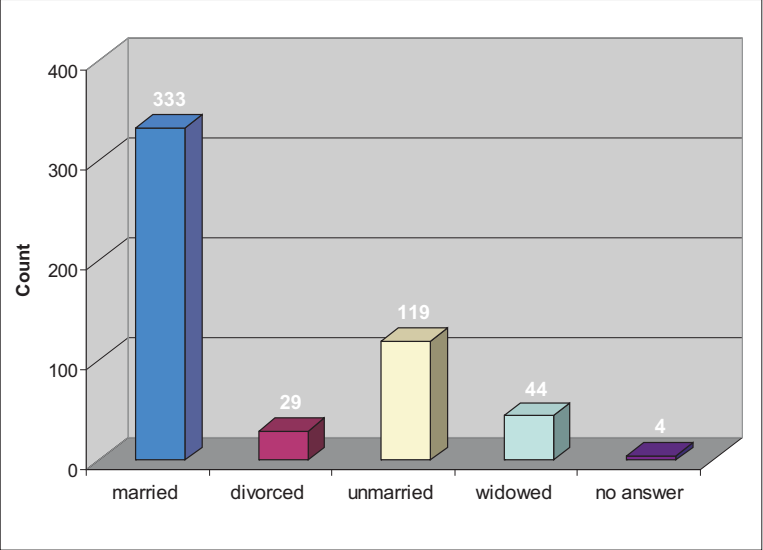
**Graph 1. How old were you when you got married?**



tion of  $-.465$  at the  $.000$  significance level, which is a characteristic of all environments, especially rural areas. (Appendix 1). That is also linked to the level of education, way of life and values promoted in one or the other environment. The aim was to include people with families as far as possible – as it is very important to present, based on the experience in family and marriage, the dynamics of relations and values that are transferred in the process of upbringing.

**The Questionnaire** includes a number of sections, with 57 questions that were answered by a total of 529 informants, 299 women and 230 men. Among the informants, according to the data shown in Graph 2, most were married (333), while the rest were single (119), widowed (44), divorced (29), or did not state their marital status (4). Most of the informants had children (372), while the remaining 157 did not.

**Graph 2. Marital status of informants**



It can be seen from Table 8 that the largest number of the informants had finished secondary schools (46.95% of the men and 41.80% of the women). A higher percentage of men had university education (26.95% of the men and 21% of the women), while a greater share of women had (only) primary education (15.71%) compared to men (4.75%). These data have been confirmed also by connecting the variables of education and sex with the coefficient of association of -.169, significant at the .000 level, which is a very high level of significance.

**Table 8. Education of informants by sex**

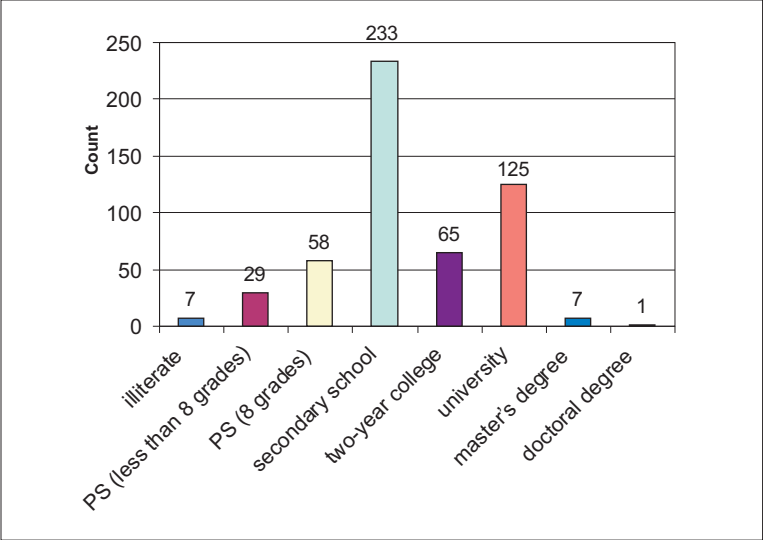
LEVEL OF EDUCATION	MEN	WOMEN	PERCENTAGE
Illiterate	2	5	1.3.
PS (less than 8 grades)	7	22	
PS (8 grades)	11	47	11.0
Secondary school	108	125	44.0
Two-year college	34	31	12.3
University	62	63	23.6
Master's degree	4	3	1.3
Doctoral degree	1		.2
No answer	1	3	.8
Total	230	299	100

The educational level of the informants is linked to the place of residence, with a correlation of -.420 at the .000 significance level; in villages, both women and men are less educated than those from the city (Appendix 1). This greatly influences the attitudes of informants concerning gender policy and the participation of women in public life and politics, as will be discussed below.

Even though education was encouraged and affirmed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of the population finished only secondary schools, and men still have a higher level of education than women. This overview is important for the research as one of the variables: the educational level of informants, will be used to check whether and to what extent the attitudes of the more educated strata of the population differ from those of the less educated. Furthermore, the educational level of informants' parents has also been taken into account, in order to additionally verify, on the basis of that variable also, to what extent education influences attitudes and opinions of people.

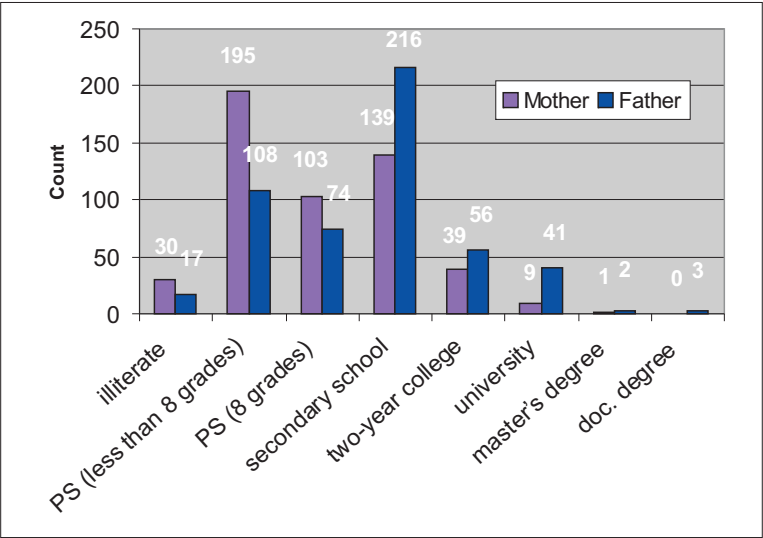
The responses presented in Graph 4 show that among the informants' fathers, the greatest number completed secondary school (40.83%), while the greatest number of mothers completed primary school (36.86% completed less than 8 grades

**Graph 3. Education of informants**



and 19.47% the full primary school). Illiteracy is also higher among the mothers of informants (5.67% of mothers and 3.21% of fathers were illiterate), even though the mothers are the ones that raise children and have greater impact on their upbringing in the first years of life. When it comes to higher levels of education, 7.75% of informants' fathers and 1.70% of mothers had university degrees. There is a connection between the education of the parents and the place of residence. The association for the mother is  $-.327$ , at the  $.000$  significance level, while for the father the association is  $-.336$  at the (quite high)  $.000$  significance level (Appendix 1). The variable **Education of your mother** is significantly associated with almost all variables in the

**Graph 4. Level of education of informants' parents**



questionnaire, which shows that the lower level of education of the mother is connected with rural life, earlier marriage, and the lack of support for women in political and religious life. However, the association between the education of the informants and the education of the father, amounting to .430 at the .000 significance level, is higher than that of the mother, with an association of .368 at the .000 significance level. That further influences other relations in the family, and especially, as we have seen, the education of female children (Appendix 1).

These data confirm the fact that women were less educated and that, in the first years after World War II, colleges and universities were more accessible to men. In accordance with the educational structure of the parents, but also that of the informants, it appeared that women were mostly housewives, or employed in low-paid professions in the secondary economic sector or in the "gray market", as they were forced to work for the survival of their families. That gives further support to the facts stated in the chapter *Women and Politics* - that women are still mostly represented in the less-paid professions and that, especially in the post war period, they work mostly in the black market to ensure the base existence of their families. Even though the female informants were mostly educated women, their experiences speak about how hard it was to finish school in families that preferred men to women, and where the most important thing for women to learn was how to perform household tasks and cook in order to get married. Younger women, and women from the urban parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, have different experiences, as their parents had a more conscious and responsible attitude towards this issue. In villages, most women completed primary schools; the younger women eight grades, and the older mostly four grades of primary school. Experiences differ, but it is interesting to note that women indicated tradition and religious upbringing as obstacles, where women were required to be morally spotless, at the insistence of mothers particularly; but also preferring marriage above everything else:

My father wanted to send me to secondary school, but my mother was against it, she did not speak to him for a month because of that. (Muslim female, Vrapčići, Mostar)

I wanted to go to school, but when I completed four grades of primary school, my mother said, "that's enough for you, it is important that you know how to sign your name, and you don't need more for marriage." (Orthodox female, Novo Goražde)

Both men and women confirmed that their mothers as a matter of principle had a different attitude towards their sons, and that they were much stricter with daughters. One of the reasons could be that mothers were expected to take care of the preservation of the morality and the "good name" of the family. Girls going to schools, especially secondary schools in the cities, raised challenges that mothers could not deal with, so the easiest way out was to forbid daughters from getting further education. The social environment also exercised strong pressure, and every-

thing that could lead to judgments was avoided. The social environment was often cruel, especially towards women who committed a “sin” against the moral code of the community.

**Table 9. Deciding upon the education of children by sex structure**

HOW DID YOUR PARENTS' FAMILY DECIDE UPON EDUCATION OF CHILDREN; WHO HAD THE PRIORITY?	SEX OF INFORMANT	
	MALE	FEMALE
female children	0.44%	4.34%
male children	18.26%	14.38%
both equally	74.34%	78.92%
no response	6.52%	2.34%
total	230	299

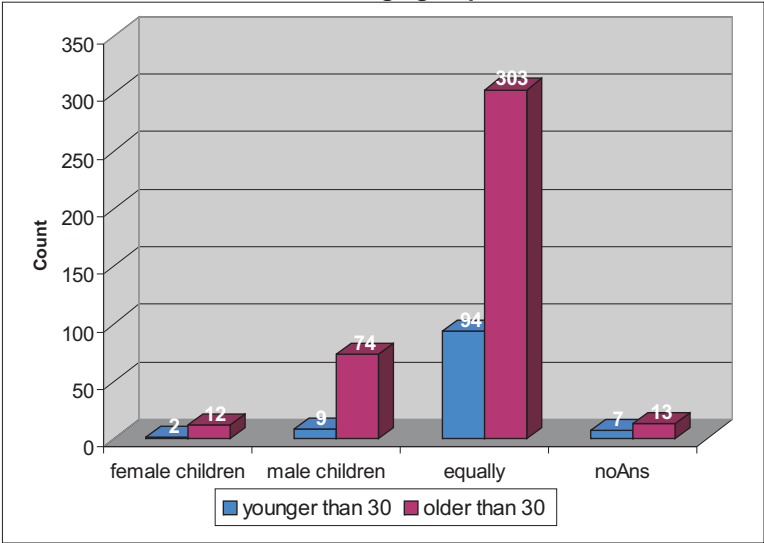
The quantitative analysis of responses from the Questionnaire shows that in the informants' families, male and female children had approximately equal access to education as well (76.93% of informants and 57.27% of informants' parents). In Graph 5 the data is presented according to the age of informants, i.e. the responses of those younger than 30 and those older than 30. When we compare these data with the *Star-Pilot* study, where 21.26% informants said that male children had priority,<sup>490</sup> which is close to the percentage of responses of this research, we can conclude that overt and covert discrimination has existed and still exists in some families, especially in rural areas.

In the talks that followed, the informants older than 40 said in their personal stories that male children had priority, especially for secondary and higher education. Informants of both sexes later explained that they thought that the question in the Questionnaire related only to primary school, so most of them said that they had equal access; this might indeed be true – taking into account their educational structure where we can see that most women and men finished primary school. But, when it came to secondary and higher education, men had the priority, partly because of the financial situation, partly because of the distance between villages and cities, partly to ensure physical strength on family farms; and in a great part because of traditional norms in the upbringing of female children, according to which young women should not go to cities by themselves and mix with men there, a reason particularly visible in Muslim families.

490 Bakšić-Muftić, Jasna et al. *Socio-economic Status of Women in BiH*, p. 43.



**Graph 5. Gender-based differences in the priority assigned to children's education in the families of respondents belonging to different age groups**



My father did not allow my sisters to attend secondary schools, because he thought that they would get corrupted (morally) and that they would lose their good name (honour). (Muslim male, village Hrustovo, S. Most)

We, the parents, are to be blamed, because we listened to what others and older people were saying – and most often they said that female children should be kept under control, so that later you wouldn't burn with shame. (Muslim female, Tuzla)

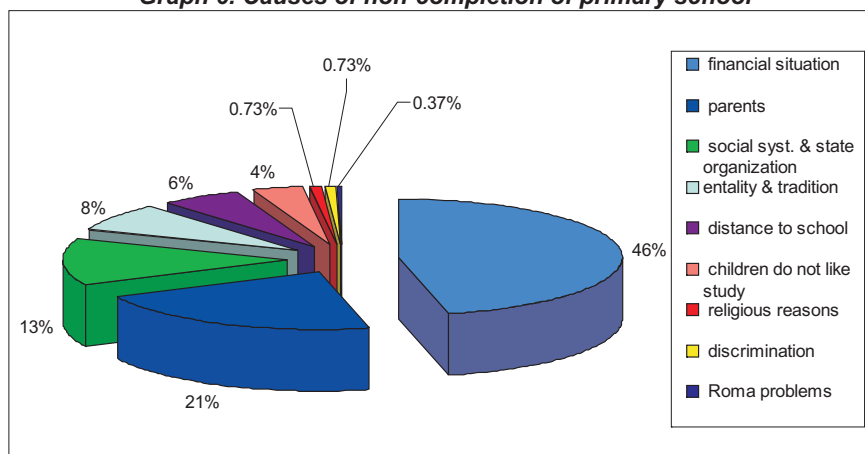
The most important thing for my mother was for us to marry well, and that meant that we needed to learn to manage the household and to have a decent dowry (oprema), which needed to be prepared in due time. (Catholic female, village Ulice, Brčko)

I begged mother to allow my sister go to school, because she was better than me, but she said that it was more important to get me educated so I could become someone, and for her to marry someone educated. (Orthodox male, Bijeljina)

The parents of the older informants, then, especially in rural areas, made a distinction when it came to secondary and higher education. In urban areas, where the educational level and awareness of the population were higher, the attitudes towards the education of children were more progressive.

### 7.1.2. Education of male and female children

**Graph 6. Causes of non-completion of primary school**



In this part the intention was to examine what policies parents apply to the education of children and whether anything has changed in comparison to the conditions under which the informants got their education. Taking into account the high illiteracy rate in BiH, as well as the high percentage of both male and female children who do not complete primary education,<sup>491</sup> one of the questions in the Questionnaire addressed the reasons for this situation. The responses in Graph 6. were varied, but the most often stated reasons were: the financial situation of the parents (46%), and the parents (21%). The parents were given as a reason in terms of an unsettled family situation, divorce, domestic violence, abandonment of children, and so on. The next reason cited was the social system and state organization (13%), in terms of insufficiently strict laws and sanctions and inadequate state measures for raising awareness about the importance and need for educating children. Those who stated this reason said they knew of such cases and claimed that parents who broke the law and did not get their children educated knew that they would not end up in prisons, or be fined large sums of money and that they would not lose the right to guardianship over the children.<sup>492</sup> Therefore, there was no reason for them to change their attitudes, as no strict measures were taken by the state institutions against such violations. The reason that followed was the mentality and tradition (8

491 Inicijalni izvještaj o primjeni Međunarodnog pakta o socijalnim i kulturnim pravima u BiH, za period 1993.-2003. (Initial Report on the Application of the International Covenant on Social and Cultural Rights in BiH for the Period 1003-2003) <http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/PDF/ICESCR.pdf>

492 I had the opportunity to see such cases while working in the *Ministry for Education, Science, Culture, and Sports* in Zenica-Doboj Canton from 1996 to 2004. The education inspectors would report such parents, but the fines were very small, so the parents paid the fine and continued to break the law. They did so not only because the sanctions were not severe, but also because the procedures were long and the overloaded courts were not able to process all the cases in a short time period.

%) of the population in rural areas. This is closely connected to the attitudes of parents, because when people are open to progress, they will fight for the betterment of their children with all their strength and ensure their education:

Things used to be different: parents sent male children to school, not the female.

Today, though, it is more important for a girl to finish school and to be able to earn her bread than for a boy, because he can take a shovel if it comes to that, and she cannot. (Muslim male, village Kovanići, Zenica)

To the question whether in some villages female children, and very often male children too, still did not attend schools, most responded that this only happened in some mountain villages or in very poor families, and that there was no such practice where they live. Furthermore, the decision whether to school the children was jointly made by the parents, even though in their families, as we have seen, it used to be different. It is evident that attitudes have changed over time as the literacy rate increased and a stronger emancipation of women came about, especially in the cities. However, tradition has not disappeared from family and social life, as was claimed – that the patriarchal family, under the influence of the egalitarian values of the socialist system, was weakening and giving place to the modern family with equal rights for all.<sup>493</sup> It is true that women had wider access to education in the time of socialism, and that parents encouraged such processes to a greater extent. But the results show that even then, the deciding factor was the patriarchal tradition combined with the religious views on upbringing that emphasized the importance of motherhood, marital life and the established relations between men and women – which was reflected in the type of education that women were encouraged to get and the jobs they performed, i.e. the less paid ones.

My mother insisted on my graduating from secondary school – but in order to become a teacher or a nurse – in that way I would have more time for my household and family. She always used to tell me, whatever degree you get, at home you'll have the dishes, kitchen and washing waiting for you. (Muslim female, Orašje)

It was important that we finish school, but in our upbringing it was always important that the husband and family took the first place – and they needed their lunch and a clean house – thus the girls were prepared for that, no matter what their profession would be. (Catholic female, Mostar)

Even though a space was opened for women's education, work, and even political activity, their duties in the private sphere did not significantly change. Their upbringing still emphasized the importance of the duties of a wife and a mother,

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493 *Društveno-ekonomski položaj i uloga žena u razvoju ruralnih naselja na brdsko-planinskom području BiH (Social and Economic Position and Role of Women in the Development of Rural Settlements in the Mountainous Regions of BiH)*, Ekonomski institut/Economic Institute, Banja Luka, 1986, p. 54.

primarily to cooking, washing and childrearing. Women only took on new duties, without relieving themselves of the old ones. The reason is that no one tried to introduce new models of behavior into the relations between the sexes in the new context where women worked and contributed to the household budget as much as men did. As Carol Pateman has explained, one feminist request is that the private sphere be reorganized and duties redistributed, leaving women more space for education and other activities.<sup>494</sup> But whenever women's non-governmental organizations organize campaigns for change, men react by saying that women should decide what their priority is. Only on the condition that they can balance their family and career may women work or engage in politics, as men do not perceive participation in the private sphere as their duty. Such relations were set up long ago by Aristotle, the founder of patriarchal relations in society, who thought of the family as an "unequal friendship". Aristotle considered friendship to be possible only among equals, and this is not the case in the family, as it functions hierarchically.<sup>495</sup>

In previous chapters, through discussion of the status of women in religious traditions, it was confirmed that patriarchal relations greatly influenced the shaping of religious practice, so that a high number of religious norms require a hierarchical, or in the best case, a complementary relationship between women and men. This is further projected into the upbringing of children, whether consciously religious or not, directing men and women into given molds of behavior and action, as is shown here in the way schools and professions are selected. Such a practice suggests that the ideological function of religion and the function of interiorized control<sup>496</sup> have a strong presence in the tradition of the monotheistic religions and in the minds of the informants in BiH.

### 7.1.3. Perception of male and female roles

To the question of how they view male and female roles in family life, men and women somewhat expressed their opinions and attitudes partly in their responses to questions from the Questionnaire, but more so in the talks that followed. As was already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the family is one of the most important factors of primary socialization and forms the basis for inter-gender relations and gender policy, and this was confirmed in the field by the views of the informants. All informants, regardless of their sex, national or religious identity, claimed

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494 Pateman, Carole. *Ženski nered (The Disorder of Women)*, Ženska infoteka/Women's Infoteka, Zagreb, 1998, translated by Mirjana Paić-Jurinić, p. 130.

495 Klimentkova, Tatjana. *Žena kao kulturni fenomen (Woman as a Cultural Phenomenon)*, Centar za ženske studije/Center for Women's Studies, Belgrade, 2003, p. 36.

496 Šušnjić, Đuro. *Religija I (Religion I)*, p. 435.

that the family was the pillar, foundation, frame, support, security and basic cell of society – the guarantee of a community's health and prosperity.

The first questions asked during the group talks concerned the families of in which the informants were born, and the families that they themselves had founded. Most of their stories confirmed that Bosnian and Herzegovinian families are traditional, patriarchal, conventional, and to a great extent conditioned by the prevailing attitudes of society about certain issues. That means that it is exceptionally important how society will react to certain actions ("what will people say"), so the conventions and norms of desirable social behaviour are still taken into account. The place and role of women in the family is significantly limited and defined by customary norms and religious values, which are mutually intertwined to the extent that it is very hard to draw a clear line and distinguish what is a custom and what is a religious rule or ethical norm. That is the reality – taking into account that the revealed monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are deeply immersed into the history and culture of the peoples to which they were revealed. The transfer of the ideal of the divine word to the horizontal level, to the dimension of human sacred history, is undoubtedly pervaded by the culture and customs of those peoples, which had, as we have seen in the second, third and fourth chapters, a patriarchal relationship structure where the man was the "norm to which everything was adapted".<sup>497</sup> The patriarchal structure of society rests on collective identity, hierarchy, and the acceptance of male authority in all spheres of life. The question of identity and identification<sup>498</sup> is very important in religious traditions, as the believers are required to express their belonging in certain ways through formal and informal practices. Almost all the statements of the informants were based on the pattern of "our traditional" family, which refers to the traditional family of Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics, Jews and others. Tradition, for all of them, is closely related to religion, which stands as a frame and measure of what is ethically acceptable or unacceptable in society. The norm in traditional families is the hierarchically ordered family, with a man as the head and supporter of the family.

In this part of the analysis the results of the group talks with informants will be included as well, both because it was impossible in the Questionnaire to include all the mentioned viewpoints, and because it was concluded after verifying the Questionnaire in the field that informants had mostly provided socially acceptable answers – in other words they had "beautified" their own reality. This was confirmed in the responses to a number of questions, especially those concerning support for the participation of women in political life. The informants gave such answers that

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497 Lacan, J. *Ecrits*, Travistock, London, 1977, p. 34-49.

498 Šušnjić, Đuro. *Religija I (Religion I)*, p. 435.

one might, at first sight, have concluded that this was not BiH but some Scandinavian country where women participate equally in government; this will be discussed in more detail later, when we analyze the fifth part of the Questionnaire, which addresses the participation of women in politics.

In the fourth part of the Questionnaire, titled *Rights and Obligations in Marriage* the informants gave answers to 15 questions about the equality of women and men in marriage, the division of tasks, and obedience. We will first present a Table of frequency of answers to these questions, and then we will compare the answers with the talks that followed after the informants had filled in the questionnaire, in order to determine what are the real attitudes of women and men.

### 7.1.3.1. Equality in Marriage

Marriage is an important institution of every society, as it ensures the formation of the family in which healthy personalities are best developed. Thus, the family is considered a guarantee for the survival of a healthy social community as a whole. Marital and family life in BiH was for centuries regulated by religious rules and canons; even today, despite the application of civil codes, religious ethical norms have a strong influence on marital and family life. Bosnian and Herzegovinian families may be defined by their type as nuclear families (husband, wife, and children), which prevail especially in urban environments; and extended families (three generations together), which are still found in rural areas. Marriage and the founding of families is a priority for most women and men today, especially those more inclined toward religious tradition, as every religious tradition above all requires its believers to marry, in order to preserve moral cleanliness and procreation.<sup>499</sup> In the religious perspective, according to Đuro Šušnjić, family and marital life are not only important for satisfying biological, social, and religious needs, they have a spiritual dimension.<sup>500</sup> In Christianity, marriage is a sacred mystery (a sacrament); in the Islamic and Jewish traditions, though marriage is very important, it does not have a sacramental dimension but is rather a contract that may be terminated.

The first question in this part of the Questionnaire in Table 10. referred to the opinions of informants about the relations of men and women in marriage. The responses were partly based on the actual situation in their own marriages, and partly on their perception of marital life in our society in general.

499 Swidler Anderson, Arlene. *Marriage among the Religions of the World*, p. 5.

500 Šušnjić, Đuro. *Religija II (Religion II)*, p. 71.

**Table 10. Equality in marriage**

DO YOU THINK THAT IN OUR SOCIETY MEN AND WOMEN ARE EQUAL IN MARRIAGE?	SEX		TOTAL
	male	female	
YES	92	94	186
NO	66	106	172
NO, because the man is the head of the family	48	66	114
Our mentality puts women in second place	1	2	3
YES, but not in every marriage	1	5	6
Depends, I think individuals differ	6	6	12
YES, if women want that	1	1	2
No, but they should be		2	2
Formally and legally – however, a few women are genuinely equal	1	1	2
Women have priority	1		1
YES, but man is the head of family	1		1
They have the opportunity to be equal	1		1
NO, because women want to be in a subordinate position	1		1
No answer	10	16	26
Total	230	299	529

Namely, 32.43% of the women and 40% of the men think that women are equal to men in marriage, meaning that higher percentage of men perceive the existing relations in marriage as equal, as was stated in Table 3 of this Chapter. However, most of them (60% men, 68.56% women) answered in Table 10 that in Bosnian and Herzegovinian society women and men are not equal, which shows that both women and men are aware of the unequal status of women in society. It is hard to determine to what extent that relates to their marital relations, having in mind the difficulty of getting honest answers to such direct questions. Other answers indicate the actual state of the formal and legal equality, guaranteed by the constitutional framework and the positive legislation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the talks after the interviews we discussed in greater detail the reasons why women held this position in our society. Everybody agreed it was important that laws had been passed to regulate this field, but the traditional model of family life can still be widely found and the established models of behavior and situating gender roles are preferred.

The views of the men also testified to this; in principle, they supported women's participation in all spheres of life, even including politics, but the men were not ready to give up the existing order – in which family duties were assigned to women. However, at the very end of the talk, when the atmosphere was completely

relaxed and when they had forgotten the opening questions, the men stated the true causes of the underrepresentation of women in public life and politics:

A woman should be a mother, and should keep the family together, No matter what a woman wants in life – that is her main role. A woman should choose between her family and her career. If she has children – they are her utmost priority. The role of a mother, caretaker, is the most important one. No emancipation can be compared to that. (Catholic male, Livno)

But, if the family will suffer because of her career, then one should ask what kind of marriage and family that is. If a woman wants to pursue a career, let her do it – I have nothing against that, but there are priorities. (Orthodox male, Bijeljina)

What is it to me if my wife is successful in politics when I don't have a wife at home, and my children don't have a mother? You can't win on two fronts. (Muslim male, S. Most)

These and similar attitudes could be heard in all places. No one thought about making a rearrangement of duties or introducing a new model of family relations, in which a woman could be a successful politician and her family would not suffer for that. The men were not ready for such changes. But, it was interesting to note their attempt to show that they knew what was good for women and what made them happy, an example of which can be seen in the following:

It is harder to raise children than to have three ministerial seats. The woman who raises children is more satisfied than the one who is successful in politics. The women who are not satisfied with that are rare, and not normal. What is the benefit to the mother if her son is a drug addict? (Catholic and Muslim males, Livno)

Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. said that Jannah (Heaven) is under the feet of your mother, and if that was not important, he would have said something similar for men too. (Muslim male, Kakanj).

Women also insisted that motherhood and the family are the most important things to which everything else is subordinate. The following statement illustrates that point:

Women can achieve a lot and can be more professional and capable than men, but can they make it all? Both raise children and keep the house and have a career, and even get politically active? (Muslim female, Zenica)

Every function lasts for a certain period of time, but motherhood is a lifelong job. That is my most important identity; everything else comes after that. (Bosnian female, Sarajevo)

These statements sum up much more than an attempt to define the wishes, needs, and essential definition of women. Namely, these statements represent a way of thinking, a mentality and cultural code among a population that, under various pressures, formally declares its support for gender equality, and at the same time essentially changes almost nothing in practice and the way of thinking. Thus, women themselves support the existing setup and male domination by conveying



those values to their children through their upbringing. In an attempt to give an answer to this, Zorica Kuburić says that "mothers have, subconsciously, intuitively, for centuries, raised their sons for male domination."<sup>501</sup> That is true, as most of the mothers admitted that they raised male children differently from daughters, and that it was not acceptable for their sons to forget their place and position as the head of family.

Most men readily expressed their support for the concept of gender equality, both in their answers in the Questionnaire and in the beginning of the open talks. However, at the very end of the talks, they confirmed their above-mentioned statements, that the family is the duty of women and that only those women who can balance their family life and career "have the moral right" to engage in society. Among numerous reasons, believers always referred to religion, which required woman to fulfill the "most honorable" role that God had given her – motherhood. Women had similar attitudes and thought that the family duties they had were solely theirs, and only if it could be squared with those duties could they get involved in politics. Very few women thought differently and were ready to work to change the existing practice.

In the monotheistic heritage of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the motherhood role is particularly stressed; in the Islamic tradition it ensures Paradise for women, while in Christianity it has a special dimension. To return to the concept of gender roles in Christianity, we may note the glorification of motherhood by which, on the one hand, woman reaches the sanctity manifested in the person of the Virgin Mary (*Theotokos*); and on the other hand, motherhood and the family as a social institution are used to keep the life of a woman under control.<sup>502</sup> Ana Marija Grunfelder in her overview of Pope John Paul II's *Mulieris Dignitatem* emphasizes that men and women do not have equal responsibility in society, and that the female identity is exclusively linked to motherhood, and therefore, her social position is also defined in accordance with her nature.<sup>503</sup>

However, the nature of women and men is still understood in the categories of Aristotelian-Thomistic thought, in which a woman is defined as a weak, emotional, submissive and manipulative being.

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501 Kuburić, Zorica. *Muškarac i žena u religiji i realnom životu (Man and Woman in Religion and Real Life)*, p. 165.

502 Grey, Mary. *Europe as a Sexist Myth*, in Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, *The Power of Naming*, p. 245.

503 Grunfelder, Ana Marija. *Mulieris Dignitatem: dokument koji stvara dvojbe (Mulieris Dignitatem: A Document that Creates Doubts)*, *Obnovljeni život/Renewed Life*, XLIV, 1989, No: 3-4, p. 209-228.

To what extent it is still present in the minds of both men and women is best seen in the following statements by informants:

A woman, by nature, should be subtle – and should use that to realize her rights, not through emancipation in politics. She will always be torn between the career and family. In that way she will only burden herself with more obligations. Her role is to manipulate in a certain way. (Catholic male, City of Livno)

A woman should be the neck, and the man a head, and it is up to her how to get what she wants without the man even knowing it. (Muslim female, village Hrustovo, S. Most)

We all know how we get what we want, only when we want it... Let it sleep for a night, and my man will change his opinion and soften up. (Orthodox female, village Novo Goražde, Goražde)

The other opinions confirmed Rousseau's thesis about the "manipulative nature of woman",<sup>504</sup> who uses all her skills to get what she wants. Very few women were ready to declare themselves ready for open and fair play, in which attitudes and arguments are stated, and rights claimed. The reason was that, as they said, they had seen it fail to function in practice, and it was easier to follow the line of least resistance, as was illustrated by one informant:

Do not rock the boat too much, you will either drown or end up in bruises. (Muslim female, Ilijaš)

That, further, speaks about the presence of violence and lack of readiness for dialogue, which leaves women little space for action. And if we take into account the high level of violence against women in BiH, it comes as no surprise that women opt for more subtle methods of exercising their rights. Thus, when we talk about the emancipation of minds, education, and other activities, we should always bear in mind that it is important to encompass men and women equally, as one woman whose awareness has been raised cannot do much with a man who is not ready to hear a different opinion. When we take all this into account, it is absolutely clear that the legal guarantee of equality does not mean equality *per se*, as it is not followed by cultural evolution and change; the culture has not significantly changed its patriarchal attire in this sphere of life, it has only adjusted and transformed it in accordance with new circumstances.<sup>505</sup>

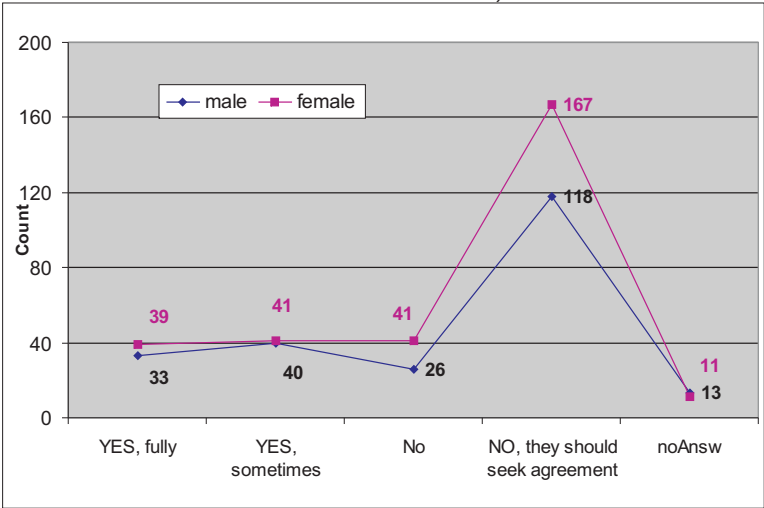
504 J.J. Rousseau. *Emile*, translated by B. Foyle, Dent London, 1911, p. 332.

505 Sklevicky, Lidia. *Konji, žene, ratovi (Horses, Women, Wars)*, p. 80.

7.1.3.2. The concept of obedience

The second question in this part was the start of a range of questions with which I wanted to check how honest the informants really were in their responses. The intention was to check opinions about the obedience of women to men, and not the real situation in their lives, as such a question would yield the desired result. In this case it was easier to ask a question in the third person, as no one is ready to admit that they live in a marriage where obedience presents a model of living.

**Graph 7. Obedience of women to men** (*Do you think a woman should be obedient to a man?*)



In Graph 7, approximately half of the informants answered that the husband and wife should seek agreement (51% of the men, 55% of the women) and that this was the most desirable model, which they supported. However, to a question that specifically asked about obedience – which implies the relation of a superior and a subordinate – a high percentage thought that a wife should be obedient to a husband. The answers of men and women were similar, though one might logically have expected women to be against the concept of obedience. In the responses of men, 14.34% advocated complete obedience; 17.39%, partial obedience; and 5.45% were undecided. In the responses of women, 13% advocated complete obedience; 13.71%, partial obedience; and 3.67% were undecided. The reasons why women had similar attitudes as men about this issue could be detected from later responses, during the open talks.

Namely, older or middle aged women, who had already become mothers-in-law and who spoke from their own experience, stated the following reasons:  
These brides today are unbearable. After they got more rights, now the men are more endangered, they cannot handle them. (Orthodox female, suburbs of Novo Goražde, Ustiprača).

One should be obedient and put up with whatever one gets in life. Keep quiet, hide it, you should not speak out about everything. My mother told me: "There you go, Bosnia on one side, the railroad on the other – do not return to me." And these ladies today, just one wrong look, and they are off to their mother's. (Muslim female, village Kovanići, Zenica)

They (women) should be constrained, as they are way too loose and don't respect the elderly, their husbands, they themselves are the most important ones. (Catholic female, village Ulice, Brčko).

I feel sorry for my child, when I see how he gave himself over to her, and she exploits that he is being good and just to her. These young ones today do not know how to behave when they have equal rights, they abuse them. (Bosnian female, Kakanj).

These four statements partly disclose why many women still thought that a wife should be obedient: because that preserved the order of things in the family, where it was clear who had what right and obligation. Older women were concerned that the younger women today were abusing equal rights, and behaving just like men generally behaved towards women. To avoid this the solution was to respect the accustomed models and order of things. One might conclude from such attitudes that women do not behave responsibly, but that is unacceptable; these are only individual cases, and men do the same things, except that in their case, no questions are raised. In the end, most men and women, both older and younger, stated their support for the traditional form of family and would not be willing to change it for something else, which, again, emphasizes the hierarchical relations and order.

I see today how some of my friends end up, those who gave all the rights to the wife. Their life is in chaos, they have time for nothing, and no one knows their place. I would, however, chose a traditional family, like the one my father and mother had. (Muslim male, Srebrenik)

A traditional family is a guarantee for the survival of a healthy society, and if that order is abolished, we will lose all other battles. (Catholic female, Livno)

These things that are imposed on us by the West, and the unsparing race for money and career, destroys the family. We have not achieved anything if we destroy the traditional family. (Orthodox male, Bijeljina)

Since the majority of the informants expressed their support for the traditional form of the family, with a clear division of roles and duties, it is obvious that obedience is present to a greater extent than what we have seen in the answers in the Questionnaire. However, if someone circles the answer that a man and a woman should seek agreement, and later insists on the traditional form of family, without the will to change anything, then we have two contradictory attitudes. The second one is closer to the truth because it was expressed in the open talks, during which a clearer picture appeared of the relations of sexes in family and society than the one presented in the answers to the Questionnaire, which were in most cases the socially

desirable ones. It is interesting that younger women also admitted that they could not decide for themselves, while men could:

I cannot take the car and go to the city for a coffee with my friends, he can. (Orthodox female, Novo Naselje, Bijeljina)

Saturdays and Sundays I clean the house, and I am lucky if he takes the kids out for a movie or in the park. (Muslim female, Tuzla)

I cannot leave for a business trip or anywhere else if my husband does not allow it. I must put him in a good mood to allow me, as I cannot decide about it on my own. (Catholic female, Mostar).

The issue of agreeing or obeying was best defined by one woman, who was quite honest compared to most of the others who tried to present their family relations in a better light:

We seek agreement about everything – I ask, he either allows or not.

Obedience, then, is present as a model of living, it is clearly known what men can do, and what women can – what is allowed and morally acceptable for him, and what for her. Among the key reasons why women should obey men, 28% of the informants referred to religion, or to religious teachings and messages that they had received through their life-long upbringing, that the man was the head of family. Another 13.8% state exactly the same - that the man is the head of family – which corresponds with the previous answer, because religious teachings mostly talk about the role of a man as head and shepherd of the family. Another 11% of the informants answered that they did not really know the reasons, but that it had always been like that, and they only followed the established models of behavior, while 6% of them answered that it was the consequence of disobedience (Eve and original sin). Other informants gave the reasons for women's obedience to men: preserving marriage and family (7.5%), the financial dependence of women (6.9%), when the husband is right (5%), when the husband is cleverer and more educated (3.1%), because women are the physically weaker sex (3.1%), because of love for one's man (3.1%), out of respect for the husband (4.4%), the personal choice of the woman (2.5%).

Religious reasons are stated as very important, but there are also other reasons – often met with in the classical interpretations of monotheistic religions, according to which a woman owes the man obedience because of his material support (in the Islamic tradition and partly in Judaism), or because of original sin and the consequences of disobedience in Heaven (in Judeo-Christian tradition). Following Augustine's commentaries, this order is based on the creation of the first woman from Adam's rib, and "that it was intended for the husband to rule over his wife, as the

spirit rules over the body."<sup>506</sup> Though much has changed in the theological-legal interpretations in the sphere of gender policy, such models, with the patriarchal positioning of woman as secondary, have subsisted in the traditional forms of religion that we have inherited here in BiH. A few statements by the informants illustrate the connection between the interpretive tradition of monotheistic religions and the customs of patriarchal culture regarding the roles of women and men in marriage. Though it is very rare to hear a religious official openly speak about women's obedience to men, except for the older generations and the new neo-conservatives<sup>507</sup> who agree to such an order, the statements noted by men and women reflect a patriarchal mindset, misogynous attitudes, and a lack of acceptance of women as equal participants in family and society. Most informants said they were believers, as will be seen below in the section about the participation of women in religious life; however, many of them did not go to mosques, churches or synagogues (70.69%), but practiced religion by themselves at home in a traditional or personal way. For that reason a high percentage of the participants, as is shown in the following table, did not answer the question what religious officials say about women and their place in family and society.

**Table 11. Attitudes and messages of religious officials**

WHAT MESSAGES ARE GIVEN BY RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS ABOUT THE PLACE AND ROLE OF WOMEN?	ANSWER	PERCENT %
That they should be good wives and mothers	60	38.70
That they should take care of house and family	39	25.16
That they should be honorable, good and obedient	28	18.06
That they need to be respected because they are an important part of society	19	12.25
That they need to get educated and that they are equal	8	5.16
No answer	374	70.69
Total	529	100.00

The answers of the interviewed men and women in Table 11 undoubtedly show that the key messages addressed to women – whether directly or through men during the special ceremonies like, for example, the obligatory weekly Friday

506 Pejgels, Elejn (Pagels, Elaine). *Adam, Eva i zmija (Adam, Eve and the Serpent)*, translated to Serbian by Zoran Minderović, Rad, Belgrade, 1996, p. 130.

507 Author's comment: Examples of neo-conservative interpretations of the roles of men and women can also be found in the statements of religious officials, who talk to their believers about this topic in the framework of regular rituals and lectures. One example is a young imam, who during the Friday prayer said in his sermon (khutba) that it should be clear who wore the pants in a family, that is, who was the man and the head of the household. In another case, a Catholic priest emphasized in his sermon how important it was that everyone knew who was the master of the house, and who was the shepherd to his flock.

prayer (*jum'a*) for Muslims or a Christian liturgy or holiday service – refer to the three most important things in the life of a woman:

1. to be a good mother and wife
2. to be honorable, good and obedient
3. to care about the house and the family.

That one should be a good mother and wife was the most common message given out by the religious communities, which corresponds with the previously stated perceptions of male-female relations and the preference for the traditional family and for the roles of mother and caretaker as the most honorable roles of women. Other messages about the care and respect that a woman should receive, and the importance of her role in society, only relate to women who meet the above-mentioned criteria. In the Questionnaire, but especially during the talks, the interviewees recalled numerous other messages referring to women's nature, character, mind and duties. No one talked about their rights. The word duty was the one that came up most often in their responses. Taking into account that half of the informants opted for the concept of obedience, both men and women, not counting those who did not respond, it is important to determine where the foundation for this concept comes from. Is it only a product of culture and customs? Or is there an influence from religious interpretations that, once again, have been and are subject to the influence of patriarchal culture, in a mutually supplementing and supporting relation, with the aim of maintaining the existing order?

In the following statements we can clearly see the attitude of religious traditions to the status of women:

If a woman dies, and her husband is satisfied with her, she will enter Jannah.

A woman should be honorable and obedient, because God said that a man will detach himself from his mother and father, and attach himself to a woman.

A woman should take care of her clothing and behavior, and not draw attention to herself.

A woman should be patient, good-natured, and full of love for her family.

A woman should be tidy, faithful and honorable.

She should teach children religion, respect and honor.

She should be merciful, moral and faithful.

She should give birth to children, because they are her ornament, in this and the other world.

She should not meddle in male affairs.

She should not be alone with other men.

She should satisfy her husband's rights (primarily the right to sexual intercourse).

She should know that a man is the head of the house, just like Christ is the head to every man.

She should not embarrass her husband in front of other people, and should not talk much.

She should preserve his good name and reputation when he is away.

She should not spend and waste his property.

She should preserve the husband's authority with their children.

The best wife is the one who is obedient and faithful, who speaks little, makes you happy, suffers and does not complain.

A true wife does nothing without the will of her husband.

The best woman is the one that is the best mother and wife.

Jannah (Heaven) is under mother's feet.<sup>508</sup>

All these messages reemphasize the importance of the role of mother and wife, with additional duties, but not rights. The role of a woman is then exclusively linked to family life; at the question whether they had ever heard any of the religious officials supporting women as leaders in public life, they all smiled, giving a nonverbal signal that they did not know of such examples and did not expect religious officials to promote the participation of women in politics. However, a very few informants did give such examples, coming from the younger generation of religious officials who have in some places introduced a new note in religious life and a different attitude towards the roles of men and women. Their messages reflect a new dimension of gender relations: support for women's participation in the community, an invitation to take an active role in the creation of a progressive, healthy and peaceful society and community. Unfortunately, such examples are very rare and exceptional.

### 7.1.3.3. Male and female tasks and professions

From the views concerning the perception of women's role in the family and equality with men discussed above, we can also discern the attitudes to the division of tasks that exists in our society. First we will present the results of the received answers, and then perform a qualitative analysis.

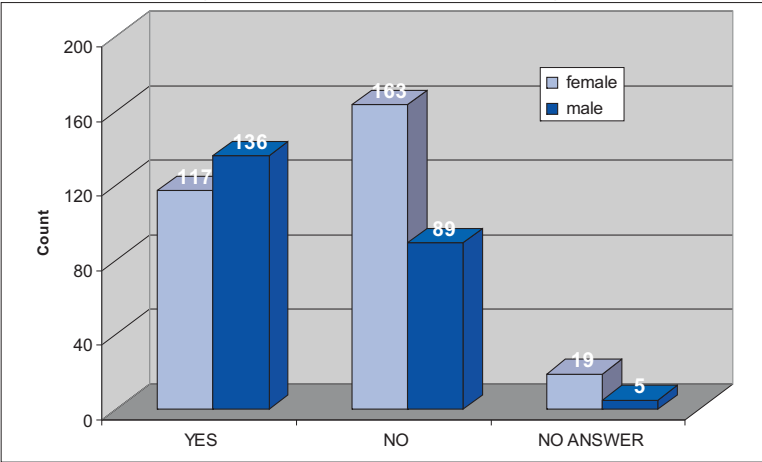
The second question in this part referred to the definition of male and female tasks with the aim of determining whether there was such a division in practice and what the informants thought about it. In Graph 8, most of them answered that there is a division of male and female tasks. The answers of men were: 59% saying there was a division, 30.86% saying it did not exist, and 10.43% undecided. The answers of women in percentages are: 50% saying there was a division, 43.81% saying it did not exist, and 6.68% undecided.

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<sup>508</sup> The statements were collected during the open talks, and some represented the well known aspects of all religious traditions, so references are not provided for each.

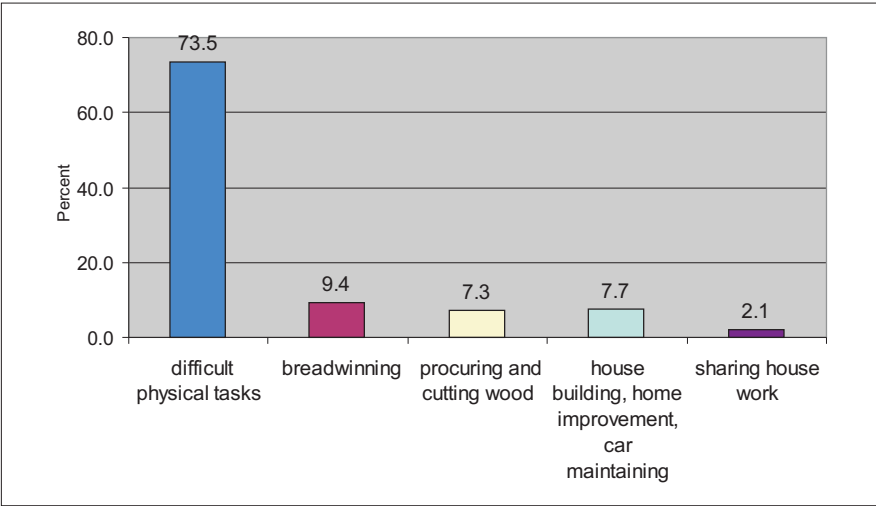


**Graph 8. Male and female tasks**  
(Do male and female tasks exist?)



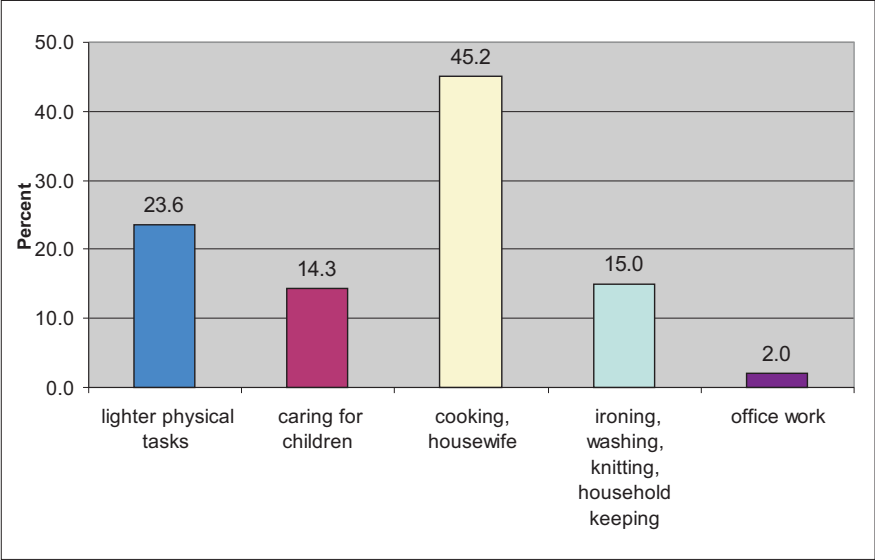
So, the answers to this question were also approximately the same, showing that the perception of both sexes is similar to this regard. More than half of them said that there was a division of male and female tasks, and they expressed that division in the answers represented in the Graphs 9 and 10.

**Graph 9. Male tasks**

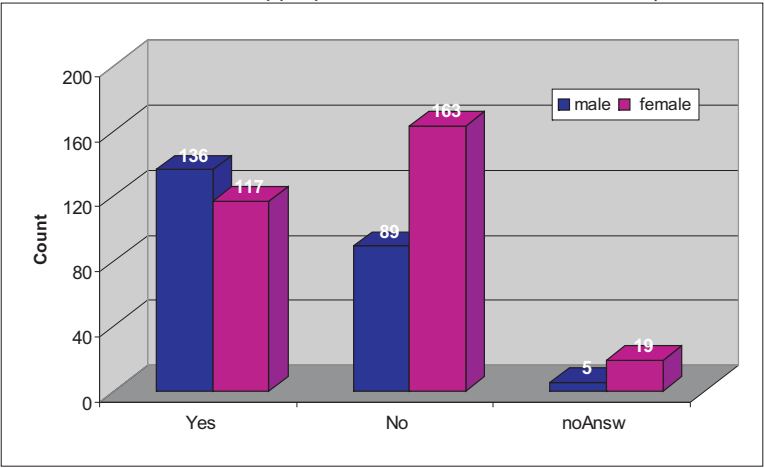


The question of the division of tasks in Graphs 9 and 10 was closely connected with the question what professions are more suited to men or women, which made even clearer their attitudes about the division of tasks that still exists in our society.

Graph 10. Female tasks



Graph 11. Professions of women and men (Are there professions that are more appropriate either for women or men?)



Namely, in their direct answers in Graph 11, 253 informants (47.8%) thought that there were male and female professions, and 252 informants (47.6%) held there was no such division of professions, while 24 (4.5%) were undecided. Believers, those who prayed every day, supported a division of professions, with the an association coefficient of .142 on the .002 significance level, as did those whose mothers have a lower level of education, with a correlation of .153 at the .001 significance level. (Appendix 1). The talks showed that the reason why women, in particular, held that such a division did not exist was that it had turned out that women in fact could and in fact did do all these things – the proof for that was the reality of the war and post-war period.

Common answers about the division of male and female tasks were, for example:

Men perform hard physical tasks, like work in agriculture, in the forest, in the mine, and wood-cutting.

This is a typical response that I received in all 20 places I visited, which is why I have not given details about the informants making it. When I started visiting cities and villages, I noticed that men both in the cities – probably because in most cities there was no central heating after the war – and in the villages, where people generally use wood for heating, responded that hard physical tasks meant "cutting wood." After my comment that one does not cut wood every day but rather in a certain period, most often in autumn, they would start laughing, pushing each other and whispering, because they were not able to come up with other hard physical tasks as a justification for not sharing the household tasks with their wives.

As male professions, the most common responses mentioned heavy industry, mining, and construction, followed by piloting, police, the army, and governing the state. Female professions were mostly those that women most often perform, like those in education, health, catering, social work, the judiciary and administration. From the responses, we obtained not only the attitudes of informants about this issue but also the real picture of the society we live in, as the actual status of women and men in family and society is reflected in their attitudes. If we link this with the answers referring to the education of male and female children, it further confirms that a division of female and male jobs exists in practice. That is, from the responses of informants one may conclude that female children are encouraged to finish high schools and universities in the fields of education, health, social protection and other spheres that are closely related to the tasks that women generally perform at home. Such jobs have always been chosen by women, and still are, because they allow them more space to devote themselves to family and to balance family and professional duties.

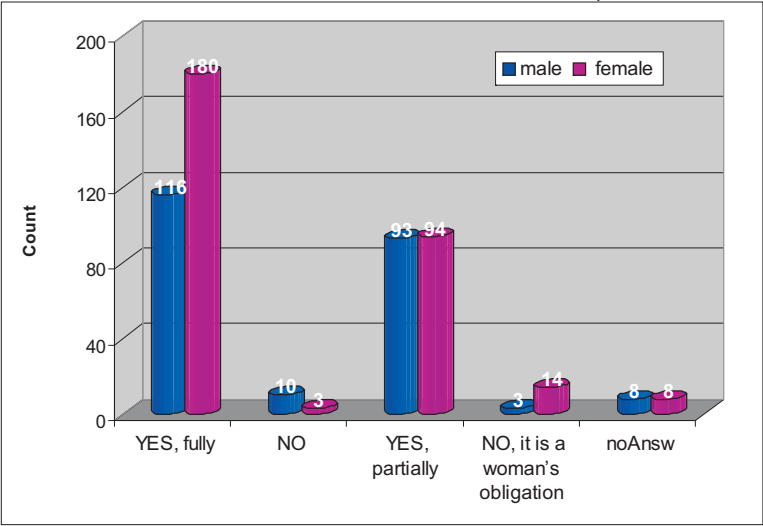
This question was an indirect one, aimed at eliciting attitudes about the extent to which they really support the division of tasks in the household, without which it is hard to speak about any serious participation of women, not only in politics, but generally. Feminists particularly insist upon this, as they have realized that women have only taken on new obligations without relieving themselves of the old ones,<sup>509</sup> which can have an impact not only on women's health but also on the family.

In the responses in Graph 12, half of the men (50.43%) confirmed that it was necessary to divide the tasks in full, and the other half was for a partial division

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509 Pateman, Carole. *Ženski nered (The Disorder of Women)*, p.128.

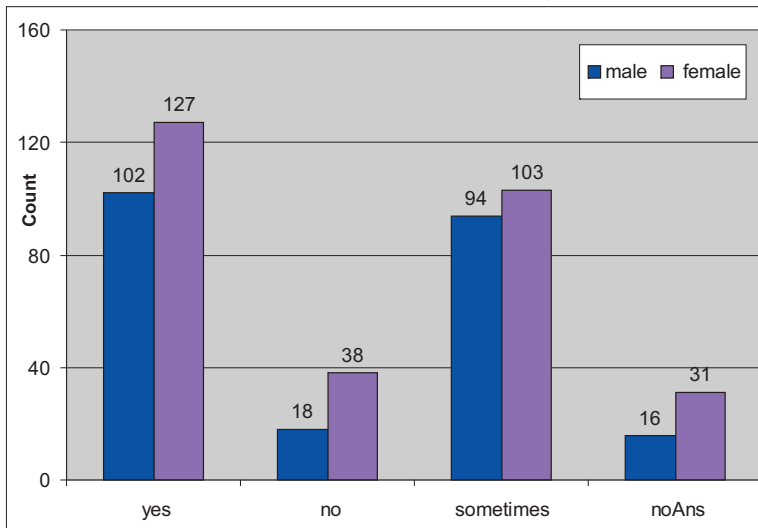
**Graph 12. Division of tasks at home, where the woman is employed, by sex structure** (If a woman is employed should she share household tasks with her husband?)



(40.43%), while 5.65% were against any type of division and 3.47% were undecided. This means that men are more inclined to support the division of tasks with a correlation coefficient of .125 at the .006 significance level (Appendix 1). Among the women 60.2% were for the full division of tasks, only 10 percentage points more than among the men, while regarding the other answer options they were almost equal – which is surprising, because this is about the tasks that they perform and about the relief that they should get. Obviously, what prevailed was personal experience and practice, showing that it is mostly women who perform household tasks and that this is the culturally accepted model of life.

This was one of the test questions that we later verified in the talks, because we wanted to get as clear a picture as possible in this area – a very important one for the participation of women in public life and politics. Graph 13 shows that most men (44.34%) said that they did household tasks together, and 40.86% men said they sometimes did so. Most women (42.47%) also said that they did household tasks together, while 34.44% of women said that it was sometimes done; therefore, their answers differed only slightly from those of men. By linking the variable ‘type of residence’ with the perception of gender roles, it appeared that those who live in villages are more likely to hold that a woman should only be a mother and a housewife, with an association coefficient of -.235. They were also less likely to declare themselves for gender equality (a correlation of -.211 at the .000 significance level), and they supported to a greater extent the division of tasks into male and female ones, with an association coefficient of -.211, at the .000 significance level .000 (Appendix 1).

**Graph 13. Joint performance of household tasks** (Do you share household tasks in your family?)



In the open talks, it became clear what both men and women thought was meant by the division of tasks or the joint performance of tasks. Division of tasks, for most informants, meant that the husband vacuumed the house or apartment, went grocery shopping, took in the coal or wood, or did something in the garden. Partial division of tasks meant that they did all this from time to time, weekly or monthly. All other things – cooking, washing, cleaning, work with children, going to PT meetings, going to the doctor, and so on are the obligations of women; all of them – both women and men – admitted this openly.

I help sometimes, when the wife is sick, or when she is too busy out in the field. I make coffee, buy bread, and well, I might prepare the simplest meal. (Orthodox male, Novo Naselje, Bijeljina)

He helps, I swear to God, whenever there is something I have no time to do – he does the dishes, so that it's not waiting for me when I come home from work. (Muslim female, village Vrapčići, Mostar)

One should help his wife, when possible, it's just that us men, we are very clumsy and do not know how to do something quick and right. I lose three hours on something my wife does in half an hour. We are not used to these things. (Catholic male, Livno)

Let's not lie: all our wives cook, wash, take care of children, and we do something now and then and we think it is enough. We are, to be honest, lazy and irresponsible. (Muslim male, S. Most)

This equality suits me, now I have more time than before. My wife now finishes both male and female tasks. She manages all, to keep the shop, the house, care about the children, and I am responsible for the wood. (Catholic male, village Ulice, Brčko)

A very few positive examples were heard; I will here give examples in order to avoid the impression that there are no such families that share the tasks:

My husband really shares all the tasks with me, he even pushes me to continue with my career, but I am not really interested. (Muslim female, Tuzla)

My husband and son are not embarrassed, and everyone in the city knows that our family does not know of the division into male and female tasks. (Orthodox female, Prijedor)

My husband would no doubt do everything, but I cannot watch him do it and then I do it myself as I have no patience to fix things after him. (Jewish female, Sarajevo)

Regardless of everything, I feel that I have to prepare lunch for my husband, I'll bring a glass of water... (Muslim female, Zenica)

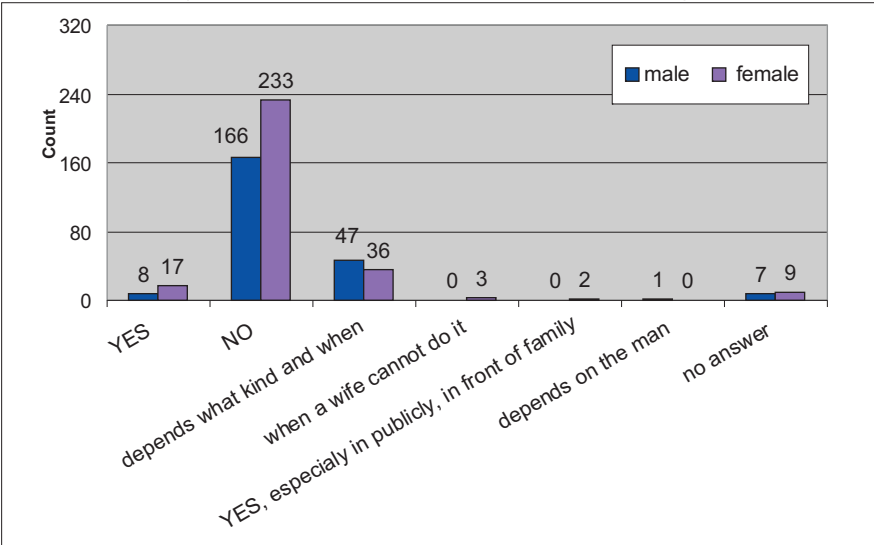
From this last answer we can see the actual reason for the lack of more significant changes in this sphere. Most women admitted that they most often could not stand a man in the kitchen or the way they do certain things. Furthermore, men asked for instructions too often, and most women found it tiresome. It is well known that if we want to make some changes, we need to try and insist upon them; however, many women lack the patience or they think that it will be faster for them to cook or wash something, while the husband can do grocery shopping. The examples that we find in the media also confirm that women cook and perform house tasks. For example, the meat company *Lijanović* from BiH has a famous TV commercial for its *Junita* products, in which the girl wakes up in the morning, takes the *Junita* products from the refrigerator and says:

I wake up first, then my boring baby brother (who takes hotdogs), and then my dad (who takes a sausage). And in the end, all that is cleaned up by my mom (who takes everything back to the refrigerator), and so it goes – several times a day.

Such examples are promoted in commercials, films, even in school textbooks, reflecting the actual socio-cultural image of our society, where there exists a division into male and female tasks. Most people do not react to these commercials and messages at all, as they represent the image of generally accepted relations and values in society.

This question was an occasion for the conversation to take a more relaxed turn and for the informants to answer more honestly. As we can see in Graph 14, most of them said that it was not embarrassing for men to perform house tasks, but in their jokes they mentioned numerous nicknames that these men were given.

**Graph 14. Attitude to men doing housework, by sex**  
(Is it embarrassing for a man to do housework?)



**Table 12. Expressions for men who help women**

POSITIVE		
WHAT IS THE EXPRESSION FOR A MAN WHO HELPS HIS WIFE IN THE HOUSE?	Answers	Percentage
realistic thinker	0	0.0
real man	2	0.4
Tzar	1	0.2
Host	1	0.2
wonderful husband	8	1.7
the best husband	7	1.5

I have selected quite a long list of expressions in Table 13, wanting to illustrate the perception of this issue in our society. The answers to these questions show the mentality and culture of a people whose norms define the status of every person and do not allow anyone to easily get out of the framework of these norms. In the talks, many men admitted that they would have liked to help the women more often, but the problem was that they did not want their neighbors to see them, especially their friends and relatives. Their mothers played a significant role in this regard – not only had they failed to raise their sons to do housework, which would have made it easier for themselves and their daughters-in-law, but they supported the existing division.

**Table 13. Expressions for men who help women**

<b>NEGATIVE</b>		
<b>WHAT IS THE EXPRESSION FOR A MAN WHO HELPS HIS WIFE IN THE HOUSE?</b>	<b>Answers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Henpecked	344	72.1
Redneck	14	2.9
Effeminate man	12	2.5
Housewife	3	0.6
Auntie	5	1.0
Faggot	4	0.8
Slobber	1	0.2
Fairy	3	0.6
Womanizer	1	0.2
Doormat	1	0.2
Slime ball	1	0.2
Hillbilly	3	0.6
Unmanned	11	2.3
Chick	8	1.7
Female	5	1.0
Punk	8	1.7
Geek	6	1.3
Daughter-in-law	1	0.2
Cuckold	2	0.4
Softy	4	0.8
Fool	1	0.2
Homo slipperis	1	0.2
Mule	2	0.4
Aproner	1	0.2
Slave	1	0.2
Pussy	1	0.2
Macho man	1	0.2
Sissy	1	0.2
Maid	1	0.2
Weakling	2	0.4



Very often a mother thought that her son should not be doing housework with his wife; partly because he had not done so in her house, and partly for the sake of maintaining the 'authority' and reputation of the head of the family.

What kind of a host would he be if he cooked lunch and made coffee for the guests and his wife sat and talked? It is known that men and women each have their own part to play. (Muslim female, Tuzla)

He is the male head and it is not proper for him to walk around with the apron, especially not in front of guests. Though my husband helps me, when the guests come I take over those tasks. (Bosnian female, B. Luka)

We would have done things, but our wives themselves do not allow it, and we don't push too hard to take over those tasks. (Jewish male, Sarajevo)

I do a lot of work around the house, but when we need to hang up the clothes to dry or clean the windows, my wife says: "Leave that, I will do it, it's better that neighbors don't see you on the balcony and at the window." (Muslim male, Orašje).

These statements point to the difficulties faced by those who break certain norms of behavior, as the burden of shame and guilt is long-lived and remains as an example for others. To the question where the division into male and female tasks came from, most informants (38.8%) answered that it had always been like that, followed by 22.7% who answered that men imposed it, 9.9% that it was the result of religion, and 5.9% that the division WAS due to the biological differences between the sexes from the very the act of creation. The rest of the informants stated other reasons as well, but we will not list them here, because their basic premises are included in the previous answers.

Very few informants mentioned religion and religious rules as a source of the division of tasks; as has already been mentioned, most informants did not read their holy books, they did not know much about their own religion, nor did they regularly visit mosques, churches or synagogues. However, if we return to the messages of religious officials about the status of women in the family, it becomes clear: if one glorifies the roles of mother and wife, of the honorable, respectful and obedient woman who takes care of the house and children, without having the same message for men, the religious interpretations indirectly support the existing division of tasks into male and female, and men will avoid being seen in public doing these tasks. Taking into account that their understanding of their religious tradition was very scant, it comes as no surprise that the informants did not know that, for example, the Prophet Muhammad himself cooked, mended his clothes, and never asked anyone to serve him if he was able to do it himself.<sup>510</sup> We can find a similar example in the life

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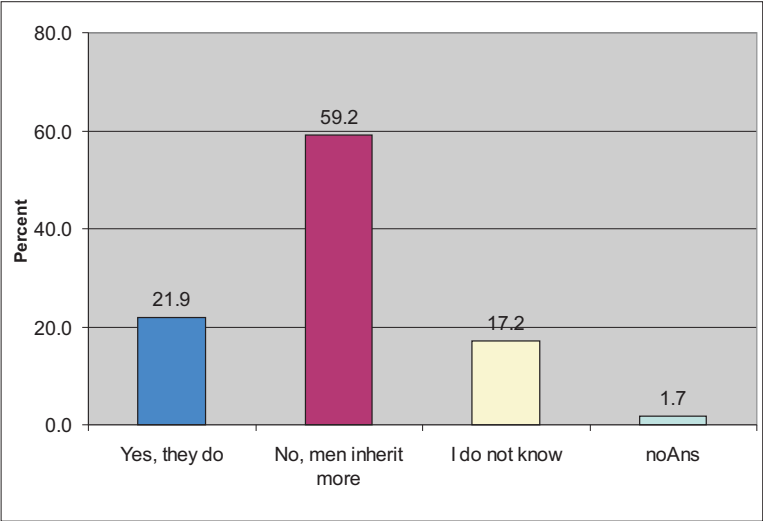
510 Imam Ahmad. *Musned*, No. 6, p. 121.

of Jesus, who personally showed how we need to serve each other in order to serve God (*Luke 6:27-38*). However, the centuries-long interpretations have neglected these and similar examples which did not suit the existing framework of the patriarchal culture, so that believers today are not at all aware of this dimension of the messages and personal examples of Jesus Christ and Muhammad p.b.u.h.

7.1.4. Economic status

Economic status significantly determines the position of a woman in family and society, the influence she can have, and the rights and freedoms she can exercise, but it may not always be taken as a reliable indicator; there are examples of economically independent women who nevertheless stay in violent relationships or bad marriages and suffer various forms of discrimination and oppression.<sup>511</sup> However, as the aim of this work is not to elaborate on such issues, the attention will be on the economic status of the informants and the attitudes regarding property and inheritance rights, particularly with a focus on the inheritance rights of women.

Graph 15. *Inheritance of women and men*  
(Do women and men inherit equally?)

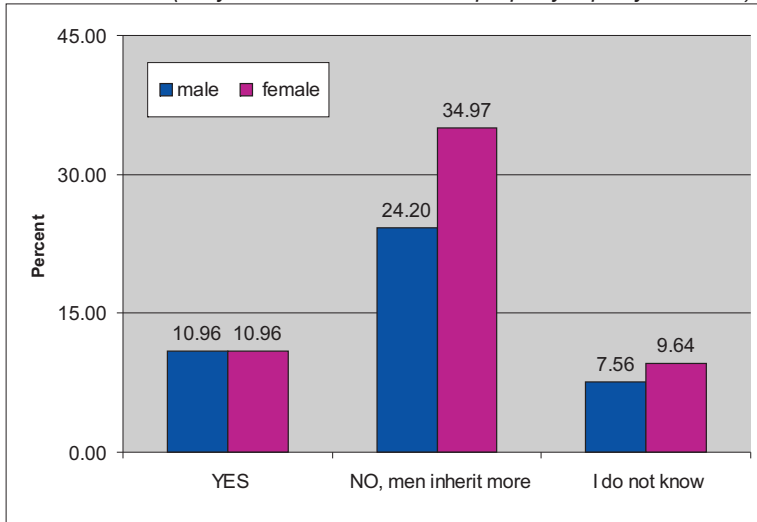


One of the important subjects of this work is the economic status of women, which certainly has a significant effect on the participation of women in political and

511 Dardić, Dragana. *Nasilje u porodici (Domestic Violence)*, in *Studija o nasilju u porodici u BiH (The Study on Domestic Violence in BiH)*, edited by Spahić-Siljak, Z., Jovanović, B., Dardić, D., Helsinški parlament građana/Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, Banja Luka, Žene ženama/Women to Women, Sarajevo, Lara, Bijeljina, 2005, p. 30-38.

public life; an economically dependent person cannot make choices in his/her own life, let alone be in a position to make decisions for other people. The first question from this part of the Questionnaire was a general one about perceptions and opinions about women in BiH and the amount they inherit in relation to men. The aim was to get the informants' opinions and discover the extent of their knowledge about this topic.

**Graph 15.1. Perceptions of the equal inheritance of women by sexstructure** (Do you think women inherit property equally as men?)



The frequencies of answers to this question in Graph 15.1 show that the general economic status of women is very bad, as informants think that 50% of women do not inherit property. Adding the 17% of those who did not know the answer to this question gives us an even a higher percentage. Women and men had very similar views, as both think that women do not inherit the same as men. The reason for the similar answers is the actual situation in the society that differs little from the world average, as women generally have very little property registered in their names. The majority of the world's wealth, and hence its power as well, is in the hands of men. Women make up two thirds of the world's population below poverty line, and earn only 1/10 of the overall world income. Only 1% of the overall world's wealth is owned by women.<sup>512</sup> In feminist literature this is known as the "feminization of poverty"<sup>513</sup> because poverty mostly strikes women, and women are ready to work for lower wages in order to be able to feed their children.

<sup>512</sup> Mršević, Zorica. *Women's Rights in International Law*, Banja Luka, 2000, p. 23.

<sup>513</sup> Yumi, Lee. *Violence against Women: Reflection on the Past and the Strategies for the Future - An NGO Perspective*, Adelaide Law Review, No. 19, 1997, p. 50.

**Table 14. Perceptions of inheritance of property by type of residence**

DO WOMEN AND MEN INHERIT PROPERTY EQUALLY IN BIH?	TYPE OF RESIDENCE			TOT.
	city	suburban area	village	
YES	78	17	18	113
NO, men inherit more	210	45	52	307
I do not know	52	14	23	89
No answer	6	1	2	9
Total	346	77	95	518

However, if you take into account the variable of place of residence, as is presented in Table 14, then it becomes obvious that the city population is more aware of the economic dependence of women (60.69%) than the suburban (58.44%) and rural (54.73%) population. Furthermore, if we look at the higher percentage of those that do not know (17.18%) whether women inherit equally as men, i.e. informants who can be both on the side of those that gave a positive answer, as well as those that gave a negative answer, then it is even more pronounced that women are to a great extent excluded from the right to inherit. During the open talks, the informants confirmed that women and men do not inherit equally, except in some families, depending on the place, status of the family, number of children, property status and other factors; women usually inherit a small piece of land or movable assets, or they get compensation in gold jewelry.

Table 15 shows that 51% of informants from rural areas, upon being asked how property is divided in their own families, answered that they divide the property equally.

**Table 15. Division of inheritance in family by type of residence**

IS INHERITANCE (PROPERTY) IN YOUR FAMILY DIVIDED EQUALLY BETWEEN BROTHERS AND SISTERS?	TYPE OF RESIDENCE			TOTAL
	City	Suburban area	Village	
YES	221	43	46	310
NO, brothers inherit everything	17	12	15	44
YES, because I have no brothers	39	3	5	47
NO, because brothers inherit more	55	16	23	94
No answer	14	3	6	23
Total	346	77	95	518

The reason why we have such a high percentage of positive answers is the perception of the right to inherit:

My daughter inherited property equally with my sons. I tried to provide all of them with a piece of land for the house and so it was. The land and the house were given to my two sons who stayed on the farm. I fought to justly provide for my children, but other people don't. (Muslim male, Hrustovo)

The four of us children divided our parents' property so that I got the money to buy an apartment in the city, and my brothers got the house and the land to cultivate. (Catholic female, Ulice, Brčko)

Our father was the most just man in the whole area, because before he died he called all his daughters and sons to divide the property. Everyone got the part they deserved; of course, my brother who stayed with our parents got the most, then me, then my sister who received the money value of the piece of land that was hers. (Orthodox male, Prijedor)

In our family, that lives in a village, care was taken that we were all included in the inheritance, but of course, my sister cannot get an equal part and take it with her to another family, because it was my father who earned and acquired that. (Catholic female, Livno)

When our parents died, my brother called me and we nicely agreed to justly divide it. He offered that I choose the piece of land I want, but I refused because I respected him as the older one and I waited for his proposal. In the end, he offered me a huge piece of land of eight dunams<sup>514</sup>, and he was left with 120 dunams of family land. I sold that piece and bought a lot of land for a house in the place where I live, so I was able to build a house. (Muslim female, Kovanići, Zenica)

I think that it is not fair to share with my brother the house and land where he remained with our parents. He cares for them and that is his reward. (Catholic female, Livno)

These statements present the reality and perception of the rural population, of those people who grew up in villages, about the division of property. Thus it comes as no surprise that half of the informants answered positively, because for them, a just division is one that is regulated by customary law and tradition, and there is no one who thinks in a different way, and especially not in terms of the civil-law provisions on the equal inheritance of women and men. However, some women were brave enough to speak out about the mistake they made in giving up their parents' property, or in not insisting on getting their part, because life brings unforeseen circumstances and shows that they have to take care of themselves:

Father left everything to my brothers, and they bought me *oprema* (furniture for one room) and that was all. However, I lost everything in the war and had to build

514 A *dunam* is a unit of area used in the Ottoman Empire and still used, in various standardized versions, in many countries formerly part of the Ottoman Empire. It was defined as "forty standard paces in length and breadth" but varied considerably from place to place.

my life from scratch. My brothers started selling our father's land, as it was good for building houses, and I had nothing. They offered to sell me a milač (lot). (Orthodox female, Sarajevo)

I took my part (a small piece of land), approximately one tenth of our parents' total property, but I gave it to my mother to use while she was alive. I thought I would give it to my brothers as a gift, but when I saw how people change, I decided to keep my part after mother died. (Muslim female, Zenica)

These statements additionally confirm the unequal division of property in Bosnian and Herzegovinian families in rural areas, where nothing has significantly changed since 66 years ago, when a study was done on this topic (Vera Erlich).<sup>515</sup> In the cities, the situation is changing in this sphere of family relations. Taking into account that, generally, most often the inheritance consists of apartments and money, in most families the parents' property is divided approximately equally.

If there is nothing to divide, then mostly sons get the apartments if they stay with their parents, and daughters get a compensation in house furnishings or in jewelry. The economic position of a woman is closely linked with the issue of the dowry (*miraz*) that she brings into her marriage and her new family.

Table 16 *Dowry* and Graph 16 show the frequency of answers to the question of formal-legal ownership of the property (dowry) that a woman inherits from her family.

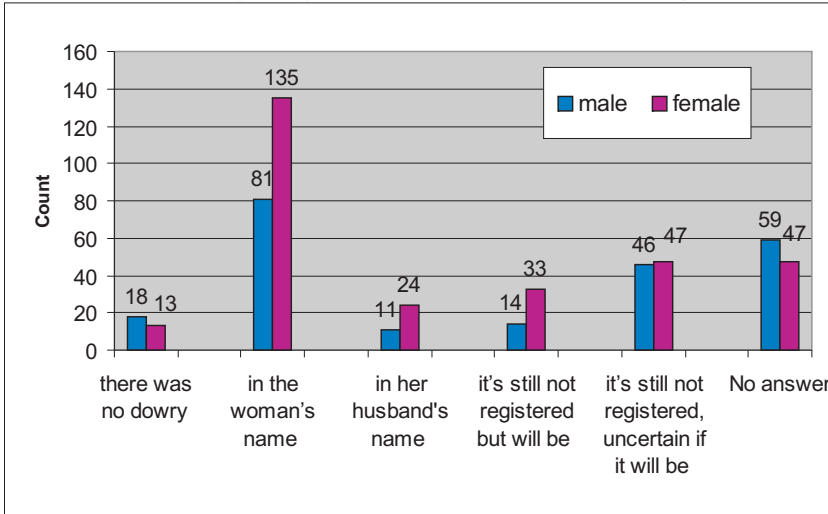
**Table 16. Dowry**

WHEN A WIFE INHERITED PROPERTY (MIRAZ – DOWRY), IN WHOSE NAME WAS IT REGISTERED?	SEX		TOTAL
	male	female	
There was no dowry	18	13	31
In the woman's name	81	135	216
In her husband's name	11	24	35
It's still not registered, but will be	14	33	47
It's still not registered, uncertain if it will be	46	47	93
No answer	59	48	107
Total	229	300	529

The results of the analysis in Graph 16 primarily show that women rarely inherit dowry in their own name, which corresponds with the previous data on how the property is divided in the family and whether women and men inherit equally. The answers of women and men were quite similar, except in the data about dowry

<sup>515</sup> See Erlich, Vera. *Jugoslovenska porodica u transformaciji (Yugoslav Family in Transformation)*, Liber, Zagreb, 1971.

**Graph 16. Ownership of women's property (When a woman inherited property (dowry), in whose name was it registered?)**



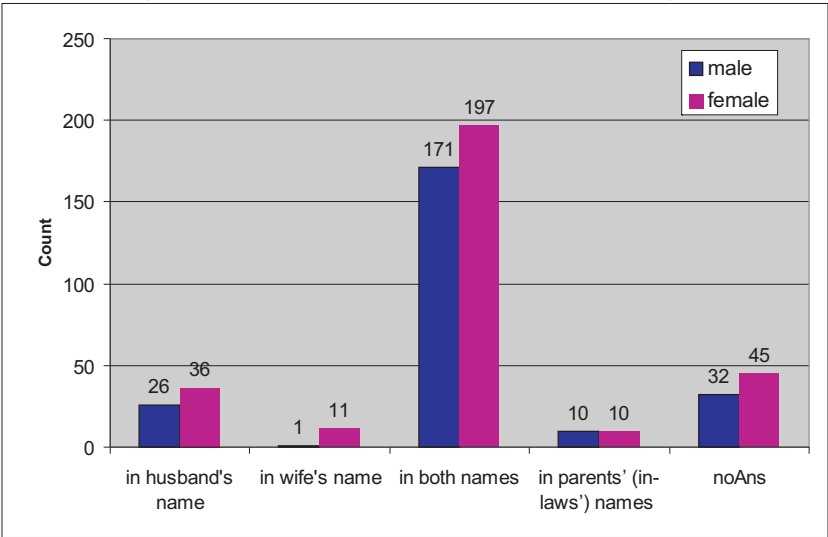
registered in the woman's name. Among male informants, 35.37% confirmed that the dowry was registered in the woman's name, while 45% of women said that the property (that they had brought with them as dowry) was registered in their name. Whether a higher percentage of women gave this answer in order to save face, or whether it was an expression of indecisiveness regarding this issue, is hard to determine. Of the rest, most gave no answer (19.73% of men and 16% of women), followed by those who said that the dowry was not registered and they did not know whether it would be (20.87% of men and 15.66% of women), then by those who claimed that the dowry was not registered, but would be (6.11% of men and 11% of women), and finally, those who said that there was no dowry at all (7.86% of men and 4.33% of women). A higher percentage of women than men answered that the dowry is registered in the woman's name; while a higher percentage of men than women confirmed either that there was no dowry, or that it was going to be registered, or not at all. A high percentage gave no answer, and later, in the talks, they explained that the women either had not inherited dowry, or they had lost everything in the war, or that the dowry was the subject of family disputes (a very frequent case). Bearing such explanations in mind, the information in the following table shows that in rural areas only 20% of dowries are registered in the woman's name, in suburban areas 28.57%, while in the cities that percentage goes up to 50%. Considering that we are talking about women's personal property, the percentages in both urban and rural areas are very low:

Table 17. Registering dowry by type of residence

WHEN THE WOMAN INHERITED PROPERTY (DOWRY), IN WHOSE NAME WAS IT REGISTERED?	TYPE OF RESIDENCE			TOTAL
	City	Suburban area	Village	
There was no dowry	12	4	15	31
In the woman's name	173	22	19	214
In her husband's name	25	3	7	35
It's still not registered, but will be	22	10	11	43
It's still not registered, uncertain if it will be	77	31	32	140
No answer	37	7	11	55
Total	346	77	95	518

Having presented the situation regarding the dowry and personal property that a woman brings into marriage, it is important to examine attitudes to the property jointly acquired in marriage and to see whether there are significant differences in comparison to the previous answers.

Graph 17. Ownership of acquired property  
(Property acquired in marriage is registered on ... )



Most informants (59,16%) in Graph 17 answered that the joint property was registered in both names; this mainly referred to the purchase of apartments they had held based on social ownership in the socialist system of self-management. Men and women had very similar responses to this question; therefore, the responses are not shown by sex. Quite a number of women in urban areas decided to register the ownership of half an apartment, but still there was a significant number of families



where the husbands were still owners of joint property (40.84%). Things were different in rural areas because most families lived on their parents' farms – which were inherited by the husbands, so that even when a new house was built, in most cases (75.78%) it was in the husband's name because he was the owner of the land. In the end, women in villages reflected less on these matters and were less informed about the inheritance rights they are guaranteed by the *Civil Law of BiH*. Furthermore, it was still socially unacceptable to register the joint property in both names, with the consequence that women were left completely deprived of their rights in the hardest years of their old age. Some women put it this way:

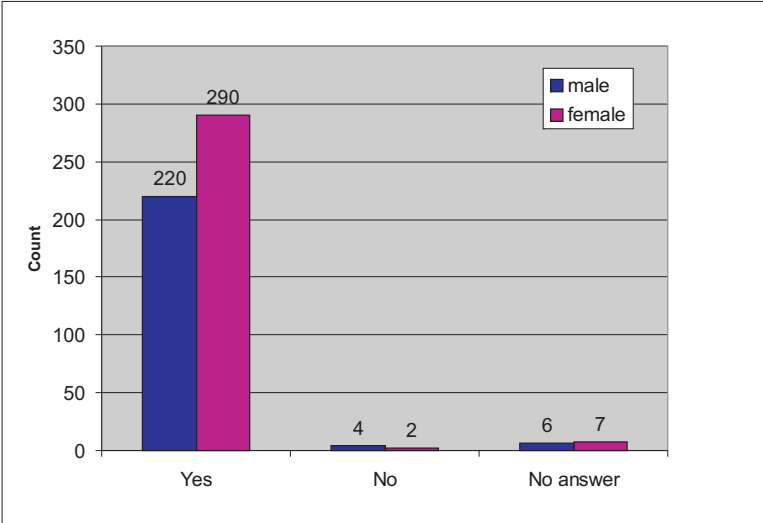
Let me say how it is: Women don't even ask for the property to be registered in both names because none of them think that they could get divorced, so for them, it is not important in whose name the property is registered. (Muslim female, Tuzla)

Usually, when the will is made, the father leaves everything to the children, thinking that the children will care for the mother. However, I know of women who were left without anything after 50 years of marriage and at the mercy of daughters-in-law, though they had earned all of it by their own hands. (Orthodox female, Prijedor)

I could not believe that you might have to prove that something was yours, something you had worked for all your life. My son wanted to sell the house and go to the city, and I could do nothing because my husband had left everything to him. (Catholic female, Mostar).

At the end we placed one general and one concrete question regarding decision-making about the joint property, to see, regardless of the actual situation, whether the informants' thinking about it had changed after the numerous negative

**Graph 18. Participation of women in decision-making.**  
*Should the wife participate in decision-making about joint property?*



experiences that they had had in their lives or witnessed in other peoples’ lives that could led them to change their attitudes.

Most thought that a woman should take part in decisions about joint property, though in practice the situation was completely different. The data from Table 18 are encouraging, because at first sight they show that women participate to a great extent in decision-making about joint property:

**Table 18. Managing property by sex structure**

WHO IN YOUR FAMILY MANAGES AND DECIDES ABOUT PROPERTY?	Sex		Total	Perc.%
	male	female		
The husband	26	36	62	11.72
The wife	1	11	12	2.26
Both jointly	171	197	368	69.56
The father and mother-in-law		10	10	1.89
No answer	32	45	77	14.44
Total	230	299	529	100

When we compare the data from Graph 18 and Table 18, we can see that the graph shows that most informants (96.4%) answered that the wife should co-decide about the joint property; in the table the percentage of families where this actually happens is significantly lower at 69.6%, whereas 14.4 % did not answer. Later, during the group talks, we discovered that those who gave no answer to this question did so mostly because they were ashamed to, or because they did not consider it to be an important question.

Connecting the variable of the place of residence and decision-making about the joint property, we notice that a greater proportion of urban informants than rural informants considered that women should participate in decision-making about the joint property, with a correlation of .159 at the .000 significance level (Appendix 1). This was also linked to education and different inheritance practices, because in the cities women did inherit more than women in villages, as was shown by their answers above (Table 9). Also, those who considered men and women equal in marriage also held that the woman should participate in decision-making about the joint property, with a correlation of .245 at the .000 significance level. (Appendix 1). However, the answers about joint decision-making are questionable, because this is understood in different ways. For most women in rural areas deciding meant that their husband consulted them, and that he made the final decision by himself – that, in their opinion, was his legitimate right as the head of the household:

We do everything together, it is all ours, but he decides more because he knows better than me, and I do not have time to deal with it. (Orthodox female, Novo Goražde)

Everything is ours, but he can sell a piece of land and a cow if he wants to, and I cannot because I am not the owner. (Catholic female, Ulice, Brčko)

We decide about everything together, we agree, but he can do whatever he thinks is right. He is the head of the family. (Muslim female, Srebrenik)

He sells the car, does not ask me, buys another, does not ask me, but we agree when we buy things for the house, because I know better when it comes to that. (Orthodox female, Modriča)

Those women who did not want to openly ask for their right to participate in decision-making on joint property used the aforementioned approach of manipulation – according to the principle *woman/neck, man/head* – in order to be included and achieve their goals:

My husband did not agree to sell the apartment and buy a house, but I "prepared the field" so in the end he talked about wanting to buy the house, and I only confirmed that as his wish and decision. In the end, I got it my way, and it is always like that, provided that he is not aware of it. (Muslim female, Mostar)

The most important thing is to make him think that he is the one who made the decision and that he is the one that is asked, what is behind it does not matter. The final result is important. (Orthodox female, Bijeljina)

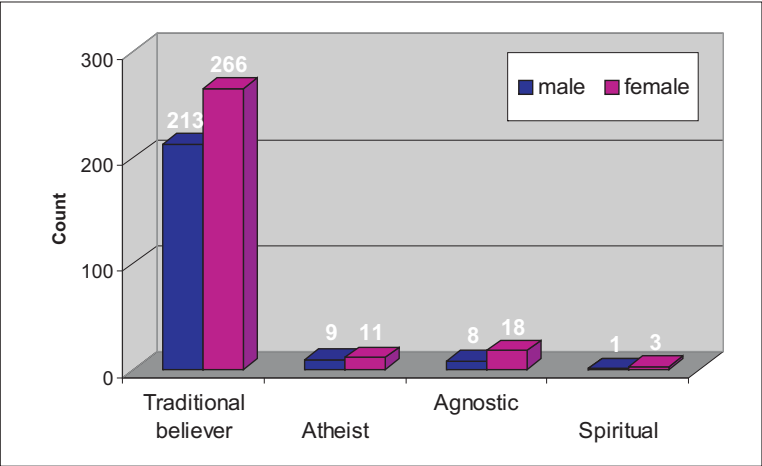
Thus, few women participate in decision-making on joint property, or they find oblique ways to be included; but when they find themselves in a divorce, it is very hard for them to prove that the property is also theirs. Taking into account that it is important for women's political participation that they are economically well-situated and independent, these are good indicators that women in BiH lack the basic preconditions for political participation.

### **7.1.5. Participation in the religious life of the community**

Though the target group were not exclusively members of religious communities, for this study it was important to ask about the religious identity of the interviewed women and men, in order to get an idea of how religion figures in the lives of people in these areas, how important it is to them, how and with what intensity they practice it, to what extent people are generally informed about religious teachings, what attitudes they have on the issues of the status of women in religion and their participation in the work of religious communities and in political life, and how that is reflected in other issues in private and public life. Although the interviews were not organized exclusively in cooperation with religious communities, the number of

believers among the informants far exceeds the number of those who identified themselves as atheist and agnostics.

**Graph 19. Religious identity (Are you religious?)**



**Table 19. Religiousness by sex structure**

ARE YOU RELIGIOUS?	SEX		TOTAL
	Male	Female	
Muslim	109	155	264
Orthodox	74	82	156
Catholic	19	26	45
Jew	9	6	15
Protestant	1	1	2
Atheist	9	11	20
Agnostic (does not ignore the existence of God)	9	18	27
Total	230	299	529

According to the data in Table 19, most were Muslims (49.90%), followed by Orthodox (29.48%), Catholics (8.50%), Jews (2.83%), atheists (3.78%) and agnostics (5.10%). The intention was to encompass members of the three constitutive peoples of BiH (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) and others in numbers roughly proportional to their share of the BiH population, but not to do so at any cost.

For the author of this work it was unacceptable to ask the organizers in the field to contact a certain number of Catholics, Orthodox, Muslims, atheists and agnostics, because the organizations that provided logistical support for the research do not work that way, and in the end, the aim was not to research this matter based on such a division, especially because of the overall social and political situation in BiH.

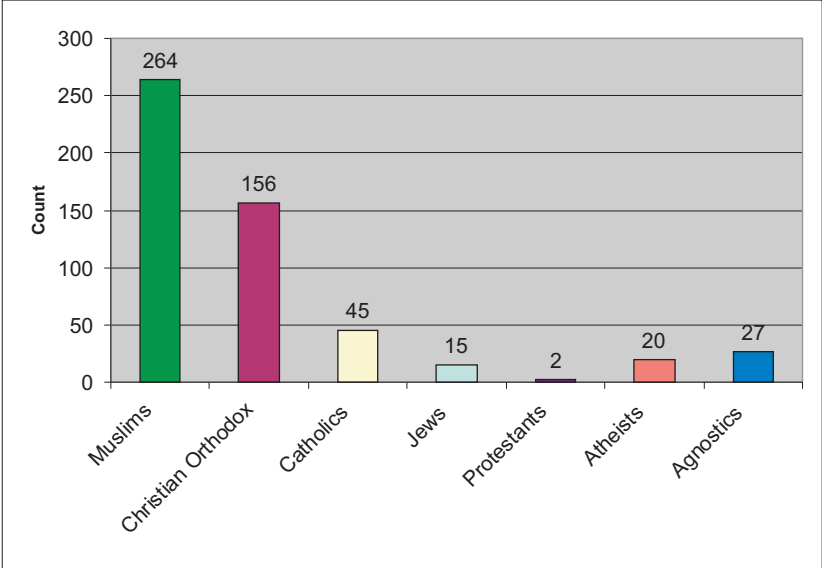
As the focus was not exclusively on the religious population, it was interesting to analyze the connection between the religious identification and the educational level of the informants, i.e. to see whether a higher level of education influences atheism and agnosticism. The following table shows what educational level prevailed among the atheists and agnostics.

According to the data in Table 20, out of the total number of informants that identified themselves as atheists, 50% were college or university graduates or MAs; 45% had completed secondary schools, and 5% primary school only. With agnostics the situation was somewhat different: 73.91% of them were college or university graduates or MAs; 17.39% had completed secondary school, and 8.69% primary school only. Compared to the educational level of traditional believers, atheists and agnostics are more educated. This may partly be a legacy of socialism, which promoted the atheisation of society. Ideologically appropriate personnel were systematically produced, the so called "honorable intelligentsia" (*poštena inteligencija*) tailored to suit the ruling political system that, though it did not forbid religion, attempted to suppress the believers to the margins of social and political life. For the purposes of this work, the far more important fact is that many informants identified themselves as believers (91.11%), as it is the best indicator of how religion has become an important factor of identification among the Bosnian and Herzegovinian population.

**Table 20. Educational status and religious identity**

YOUR EDUCATION	ARE YOU RELIGIOUS?				TOTAL
	trad. believer	spiritual but not religious	atheist	agnostic	
Illiterate	7				7
Primary school (less than 8 grades)	28			1	29
Primary school (8 grades)	55		1	1	57
Secondary school	216	1	9	4	230
Two-year college	55		3	7	65
University	109	1	6	9	125
Masters	5		1	1	7
PhD	1				1
Total	476	2	20	23	521

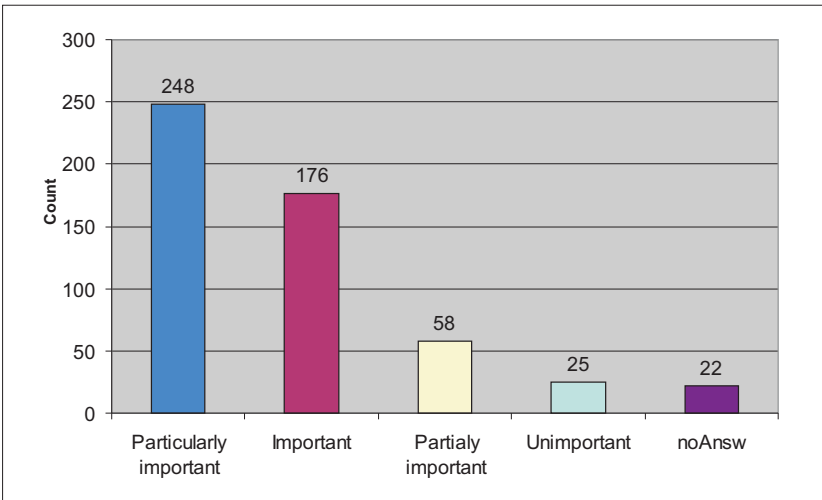
**Graph 20. Belonging to a religious tradition**



**Table 21. Importance of religion by sex structure**

TO ME BELIEF IN GOD IS:	SEX		TOTAL
Very important	100	148	248
Important	85	91	176
Partly important	27	31	58
Unimportant	14	11	25
No answer	6	16	22
Total	230	299	529

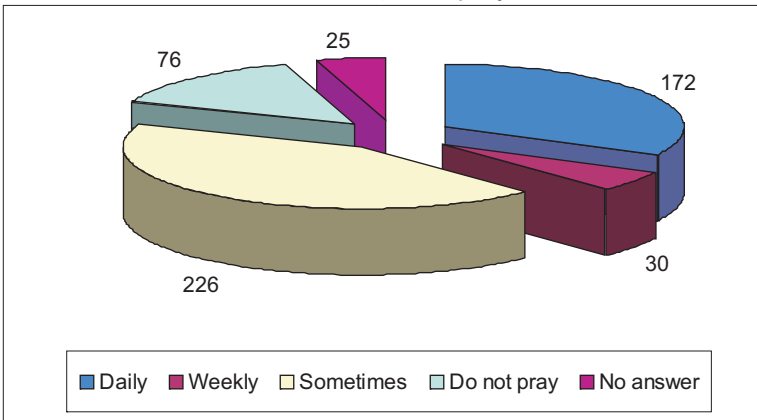
**Graph 21. Importance of belief in God**



In Graph 21, 46.88% of the declared believers stated that religion was particularly important to them, and 33.27% said that religion was important. Thus approximately two thirds of the believers considered religion important or particularly important in their lives. There is no significant distinction between men and women, as is obvious from Table 21. Namely, 43.47% of the men and 49.49% of the women considered religion particularly important – differing by only 6 percentage points. This is not much if we take into account the general climate in society and the fact that women are those who have generally preserved religion in times of crisis, devotedly conveying it to new generations. The coefficient of association of their mother's educational level and the influence of religion in the lives of the informants is  $-.234$  at the .000 significance level, showing that the mothers of informants who emphasized the importance of religion in their lives were less educated (Appendix 1). The higher the level of education of the mother, the lesser is the influence of religion.

Generally speaking, this is a very high percentage, based on which we can say that religion is figures prominently in people's lives; but it still does not confirm whether and to what extent religion influences the creation of the system of values in society and inter-gender relations. However, if such a high percentage of people say that religion is important to them, it is an indication that such an important dimension of their identity also influences other spheres of their lives. In order to further verify this, we took into account additional variables that relate to the expressed religiousness, such as: religious practice, membership in a religious community, active participation in the work of the community, the way they acquired their knowledge about religion, and whether they educated their children in religion.

**Graph 22. Prayers: I pray...**



Religious practice is the first indicator that additionally confirms the devotion to religious values and its importance in everyday life. We can see in Table 22 that the highest percentage is that of believers who practice religion from time to time (42.72%), followed by those who do so daily (32.51%) or weekly (5.61%). Weekly

prayer should not be understood the same way in different religious traditions; in Christian churches, regular attendance at Sunday mass is a sign that someone is a devoted practicing believer, whereas the Islamic Friday prayer (*jum'a*) is obligatory, but the daily rituals and prayers are much more important. Again, there is a difference between men and women in daily praying practices, but it is not very significant. Thus, for example, 28.26% of men and 35.78% of women pray every day – another proof that women, generally, stick more to ritual as a reflection of their personal belief.

**Table 22. Praying by sex structure**

I PRAY:	SEX		TOTAL
	Male	Female	
Daily	65	107	172
Weekly	20	10	30
From time to time	106	120	226
nowidctparl do not pray	33	43	76
No answer	6	19	25
Total	230	299	529

Table 23 shows to what extent the educational level of informants is linked with the observance and intensity of prayer.

**Table 23. Educational level of practicing believers**

EDUCATION:	I PRAY:					
	Daily	Weekly	From time to time	I do not pray	No answer	Total
Illiterate	4	1	2			7
Primary school (less than 8 grades)	13		13	1	2	29
Primary school (8 grades)	21	3	30	1	3	58
Secondary school	71	13	107	30	12	233
Two year college	16	6	24	18	2	66
University	40	7	48	28	4	127
Masters	5			1	1	7
PhD	1					1
Total	171	30	224	79	24	528



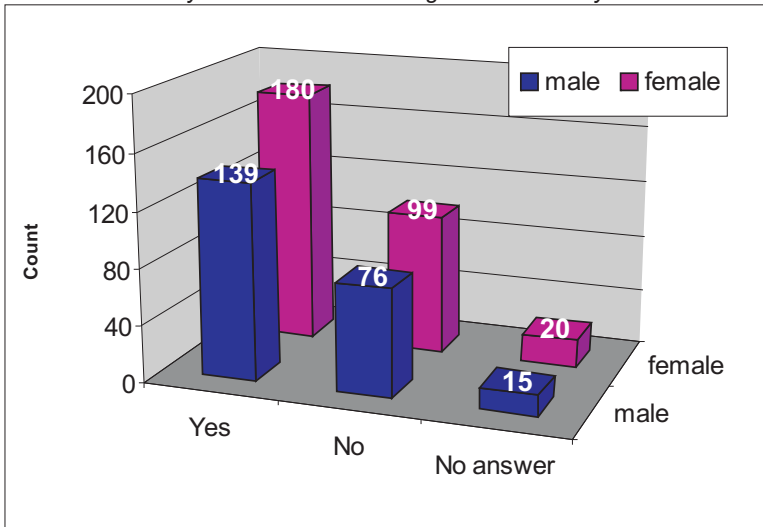
This overview shows that among the informants who do not practice religion, 61.84% have higher education, and among those who do pray, the highest percentage have secondary school: from time to time (47.76%), weekly (43.33%), and daily (41.52%). For the purpose of this work, it is not crucial to go into details of practice; therefore we will limit ourselves to the fact that many women and men practice religion and that the largest group among occasional practitioners, by education level, are those with secondary school. We will later use this information as a variable in the measurement of attitudes regarding the participation of women in politics.

The next question, in Table 24, is about membership in religious communities. The aim is to show whether the informants are formally linked to the communities, which would suggest that they have respect for their communities and express this respect not only by going to houses of worship but also by being ready to financially support the work and preservation of the communities.

**Table 24. Membership in religious community**

MY MEMBERSHIP IS:	SEX		TOTAL
	Male	Female	
Passive (I pay a membership fee)	94	151	245
Active (I participate in the work of the community)	58	42	100
I do not pay any membership fee	3		3
No answer	77	106	183
Total	230	299	529

**Graph 23. Membership in religious community**  
*Are you a member of a religious community?*



Membership in a religious community is the second variable we have taken into account, but it is not necessarily significant, as some people are members of the community because it is a social obligation of sorts and it is expected of them. The nature of membership in religious communities is not the same for Catholics and Orthodox, Muslims and Jews, but the bottom line is the same: one either gives donations or pays the membership fee, showing one's determination to support the work and development of the community and one's expectations that the community will provide certain services and assistance.

Membership in the Islamic Community functions as a system of a predetermined monthly or annual fee (*vazif*); in the Jewish Community and in the Christian communities, voluntary donations are collected during weekly services or other liturgical rituals. However, a significant number of women and men gave no answer. They later explained that they went to church, mosque or synagogue from time to time, but they did not consider themselves regular members, or they did not attend prayers at all but prayed in their own specific way according to their own understanding of their relationship with God. Thus, the 34.59% of informants who did not answer the question about their community membership, did not link their religious identity exclusively to the formal participation in a community as reflected in voluntary donations or payment of fees. Though they are heirs to the values promoted by their religious tradition, their common religious identity is a matter of personal private choice that does not require formal legitimacy and the confirmation of the community.

In order to find out how informants acquired their knowledge of religion, we offered many options in the Questionnaire. The answers in Table 25 show that 33.44% of women acquired religious knowledge at home with their parents, while 23.47% of men and 16.38% of women acquired that knowledge on their own from reference books. This shows a difference in the religious education of men and women. Even though mothers contributed the most to the religious upbringing of children, according to the statements of the informants, the female children to a larger extent learned at home with their parents and in religious classes, whereas males more often acquired the knowledge individually from books. This is linked to the general educational climate because, as we have seen, most female informants had completed only primary or secondary school although two thirds of them were from cities. In this sphere of life, too, it is important to take into account not only the educational level of informants, but also that of their parents, especially their mothers, as the latter are in charge of transmitting religious and other values during primary socialization in the family.

**Table 25. Manner of acquiring religious education by sex structure**

HOW DID YOU ACQUIRE YOUR RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE?	SEX		TOTAL
	Male	Female	
School religious classes	24	36	60
At home with parents	59	100	159
At home and in religious class	78	92	170
Independently from reference books	54	49	103
With the help of peers	5	9	14
No answer	10	13	23
Total	230	299	529

Bearing in mind that the knowledge of religion was mostly conveyed orally, as there were not many reference books and the general social climate was such that very few people individually studied religion, the level of education of mothers or grandmothers is very important. Though 41.80% of informants had finished secondary schools, only 26.3% of informants' mothers had done so. Under communism, when there was simply no opportunity for religious education to develop, knowledge of religion (moral values and rituals) was conveyed from women to their children through oral tradition or with the help of simple manuals. Maybe we should look for the causes of the very low awareness of certain religious issues, and of the ignorance and fear of informants when it came to expressing their views on certain issues, in the low level of education of their parents, especially their mothers. Most informants (82%) answered that they did not read their holy book, that they had only very little and superficial knowledge about other holy books, and that they had prejudices and stereotyped opinions. A few Muslim informants who said they read the holy books were referring to reading the Qur'an in Arabic and not understanding what they were reading, as they rarely consulted the translation.<sup>516</sup> One of the reasons is that many believers understand little of the translation and are not motivated enough to study it in depth.

Catholics and Orthodox pray in their mother tongue; but still, except for the excerpts used as prayers, very few believers actually read the Bible and built a personal relationship with the holy text. The situation of Jews is even more complex, because among the few believers in BiH there are none who understand the Hebrew or Aramaic language of prayer, except for the parts that are said daily or weekly. The

<sup>516</sup> Reading the Qur'an in the Islamic tradition is highly ranked among the deeds of the believers that are pleasing to God and for which great rewards are promised. Muslims are thus devoted to that ritual practice, and they tend to preserve it in the original Arabic, as it is deemed that the language possesses a particular magic, rhythm and style that is very hard to reflect in translation.

Torah is rarely read individually, in translation, as it is a Jewish practice to read the scrolls of Torah in the congregation on the Sabbath.

**Table 26. Educating children in religion by sex structure**

IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN, DO THEY ATTEND OR HAVE THEY ATTENDED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?	SEX		TOTAL
	Male	Female	
YES	101	162	263
NO	35	37	72
SOMETIMES	11	20	31
No answer	83	80	163
Total	230	299	529

Table 26 gives answers to the question about the education of children, where 54.18% of women and 43.91% of men said that their children attend religious education in school. Many did not answer at all (36% of men and 26.75% of women, a significant number, especially if we take into account that only 8.69% of men and 9% of women said that religion is not important, or gave no answer). During the talks, the informants stated as a reason the unacceptable form of the religious education provided in schools, and the divisions they were creating in the already divided and segregated society of post-war BiH. Thus they preferred education at home with reference books, and some left the choice to the children – when they came of age to decide. Such attitudes were found especially among families with mixed marriages, or younger families wanting a different and more modern approach to religious education.

However, the introduction of religious education has contributed to the stronger inclusion of youth into religious communities in general, and to the reaffirmation of religion in their families, that most often keep to observing the traditional forms of religious life. It is possible that the influence of religious education in schools has contributed to conservative attitudes of young people about the women's position society. The analysis of textbooks of Islamic religious education showed that the role that featured most often was that of the mother, and that the mother is represented as a model of moral life, as an ethical model, as the mother of believers and similar, and that obedience, mildness, compassion, patience, humbleness, morality, and honor dominate the psycho-social characteristics of women.<sup>517</sup> The situation is similar with regard to the textbooks of other confessions, as was recently confirmed in a

<sup>517</sup> Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka. *Analysis on the Image of Woman in the School: Religious Textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Project Kotor Network, 2005, p. 13.-20.

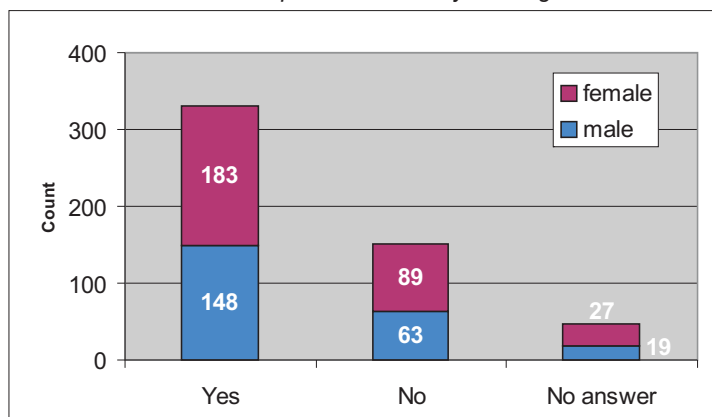
study by the Open Society Fund BiH.<sup>518</sup> If young people are educated in religion on such foundations, then it comes as no surprise that they have stereotyped perceptions of the role of women and sometimes even have more conservative attitudes than the older informants, who have not undergone such education.

### 7.1.6. Participation of Women in the Structures of Religious Communities

The subject of this work is to examine to what extent the interpretive traditions of monotheistic religions influence the status of women in public life and politics; as the participation in the work of religious communities too is a type of public engagement, it was important to determine what the interviewees think of this matter. We have seen that religious education is mostly restricted to knowing the ritual practices, prayers and certain principles of religion, which are sometimes so obscured by tradition and customs that it is very hard to distinguish what really is a religious principle and what not. We began this part of the interview with a general question about the position of women in religious practice.

The data in Graph 24 show that 64.34% of men and 61.20% of women think that women have equal rights in their religious traditions, a significantly high percentage if we take into account the actual practice. This question was something of a trick question for informants, because most of their answers were influenced by their emotions as they were trying to present the status of women as positively as possible, partly because they knew that this research was comparative. However,

**Graph 24. Equality of women in religious tradition, by sex**  
*Are women equal with men in your religion?*



518 Trbić, Dženana. ed. *Obrazovanje u BiH: Čemu učimo djecu? Analiza sadržaja udžbenika nacionalne grupe predmeta* (Education in BiH: What do We Teach our Children? The Analysis of Textbooks for the National Subjects Group), Fond otvoreno društvo BiH/Open Society Fund BiH, Sarajevo, 2007.

when during the talks they were asked what equal status meant in their religious tradition, most of them answered that it meant keeping the established order that requires everyone to accept the place that God has given them. The following statements illustrate it best:

- In our religion we are all equal before God, created in His image, and the fact that we have different roles is another issue. (Catholic female, Sarajevo)
- We are all equal before God from creation, but us women are mothers, and we are not called to perform certain functions, which does not mean that we are unequal. (Orthodox female, Prijedor)
- God created us all equal, but gave us different tasks and we should not mess with that. Everyone knows their task. Men cannot bear children, and for me, that is the most important role. (Muslim female, Tuzla)
- We are equal in rights, but not in duties, as Jewish women are freed from following the positive regulations (*mitzvot*). (Jewish male, Sarajevo)
- We are not equal, and should not be; we were created as men and women, and it is wrong to try to impose equal rights for women and men. We all have our rights and duties, because our roles are different. (Muslim male, Zenica)

During the talks we soon began to understand what perception of equality in religion the informants had; for them, equality meant keeping their apportioned roles, which were a given and should not be changed for the new "foreign" concepts of gender equality imposed from the West. The given roles in religious traditions very clearly situated women in the private sphere of action that was discussed in the previous chapter. For them, the Law on Gender Equality did not apply in this domain of life, and related only, to a certain extent, to life outside the religious community. The informants who gave a negative answer stated numerous reasons why women were not equal in their own religious tradition, or in other religious traditions; but we will leave those for later, when we talk about the participation of women at certain positions in religious communities.

Table 27. Views on spiritual achievements of women, by sex

CAN A WOMAN ACHIEVE PERFECTION IN RELIGION LIKE A MAN CAN (CAN SHE BECOME A SAINT, DOBRA ŽENA OR SIMILAR)?	SEX		TOTAL
	Male	Female	
YES	176	246	422
NO	10	10	20
I DO NOT KNOW	40	31	71
No answer	4	12	16
Total	230	299	529

The question in Table 27 is aimed at seeing what status women have in religion, in the spiritual sphere of life, in the sense of devotion to faith in God, spiritual equality

before God, and equal opportunities in achieving the status of a saint in the Christian tradition or a *dobra žena* or *evlija* in the Islamic tradition (see below). The majority, 76.54% of men and 82.27% of women, thought that it was possible for a woman to achieve the same spiritual level in the faith, and that they had the same opportunities as well as rewards before God for religious devotion. They told us interesting stories from the past, in which the main characters were devoted female believers who had subjected themselves and their lives to faith and service. However, the issue of service is treated differently in the Christian, Jewish and Islamic traditions. In the Christian tradition, because of the church order and the possibility of becoming a religious sister or nun, the issue of devotion is understood within the frameworks of church life and prayer which some women opt for, especially widows, who had a special status in the early Christian churches.<sup>519</sup>

Women can become saints, and there were examples in history, but there is less of that today, as there are fewer women ready to serve the church and God. (Catholic male, Sarajevo)

There were always female saints, especially in the first centuries of Christianity, Mary Mother of God is the first of them, and the most sacred woman that ever existed. (Orthodox female, Višegrad)

There is no better example than Mother Theresa, who devoted her life to helping the poor and those deprived of their rights. At first they did not accept her in the Church, but she was persistent, more than any man. (Catholic female, Mostar)

In the Islamic tradition, generally, there are no holy people, as only God is considered holy. There are people called *awliya'*, "friends of God", known in Bosnian as *evlije* or "*dobri*" ("good"). These can be men and women equally, but in history there have been more examples of men. One of the rare such women was Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya, a famous Sufi woman from Basra who lived in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. But such examples are little known among Muslims in BiH. However, in the stories and life experience of informants, there were numerous examples of women who, through their sufferings, patience and persistence, had earned a higher level of closeness to God. This manifested itself particularly in their having a certain kind of knowledge or visions that they used to help people to heal or to solve some of their problems in life.

There was this woman, she had such a cruel husband, a drunkard, everyone was amazed how she put up with him. But after 40 years of suffering and patience, with constant prayers, Allah gave her the gift of seeing what others could not and helping other people. (Muslim female, village Kovanići, Zenica)

My father told me that in the surroundings of Visoko there lived a woman who so much prayed to God and helped the poor, while she did not have enough even for herself, that many people judged her and thought that she was strange. But

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519 MacHaffie, J. Barbara. *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, p. 17-18.

one year they saw her circling the Kaaba on the Hajj pilgrimage, and they knew she had not gone on Hajj. When they came back, they told her about seeing her there; she only smiled and said that there are numerous ways one can go on Hajj: 'I was given Hajj through serving others.' (Muslim male, Sarajevo)

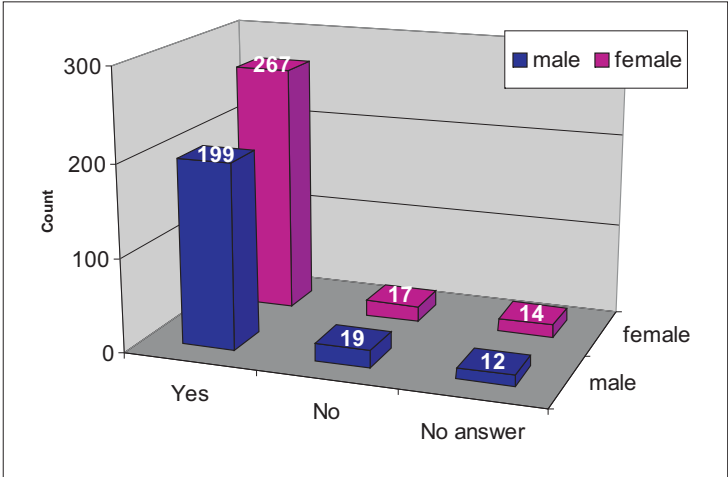
It is known that a woman can acquire *darajah* (a spiritual level with God) with her husband in 40 days, and he cannot do so with her even in 40 years. (Muslim female, Tuzla)

Thus, achieving spiritual levels in the Muslim tradition is linked to devotion to God through prayers and good deeds. Special emphasis is placed on suffering difficulties and to obedience to the husband, which can result in God's mercy. Though in the Islamic tradition divorce is allowed, and marriage does not have a sacramental character as it does in Christianity, in the tradition of Bosnian and Herzegovinian Muslims there has prevailed a practice of suffering any type of marriage in order to avoid divorce. Women were raised this way, so nothing else was left for them except patient suffering, and in the folklore traditions this came to earn a special reward with God, specifically for women. The same rules do not apply to men, and there are no stories about a man becoming an *evlija* in that way, nor are there any recommendations that men should put up with a mean woman in return for spiritual achievement. That, of course, is not a guarantee that both women and men do not suffer in life, depending on what choices they make and what they are willing to face.

The following two questions in Graphs 25 and 26 had a similar purpose as the previous one: to determine to what extent women are called to interpret the holy books (Torah, Bible and Qur'an), how willing the informants are to accept such interpretations, and whether they can accept a woman as a spiritual authority.

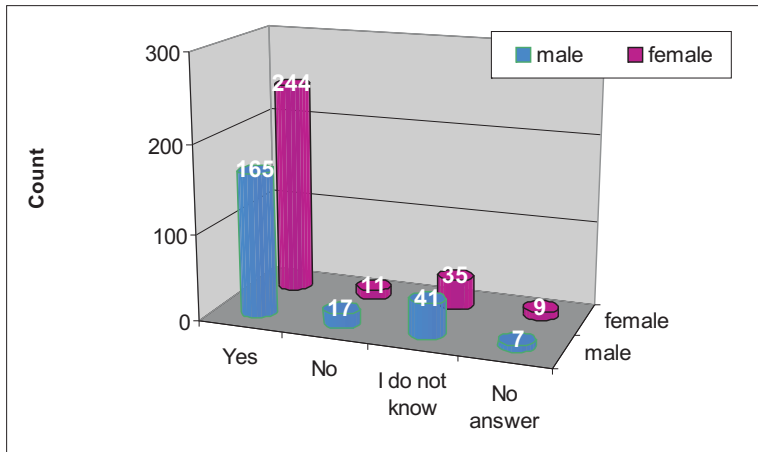
The data from graphs 25 and 26 are encouraging, as most informants (71.73% of men and 81.60% of women) thought that a woman was capable of interpreting

**Graph 25. Ability of women to interpret holy books, by sex**





**Graph 26. Acceptance of female interpretations, by sex**  
*Would you accept woman as an interpreter of the Holy books?*

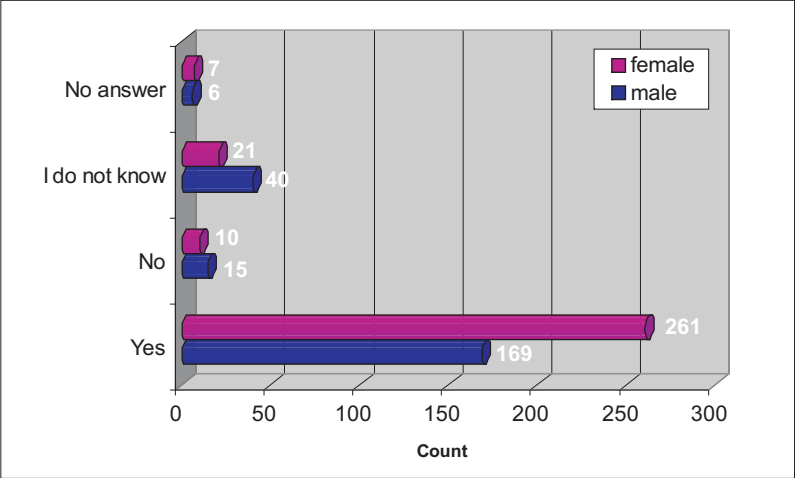


religion and religious rules, on the condition that she was educated. In this sphere, a very important variable was the education of the informants' parents, especially their mothers, which was in close correlation with their views on the role and place of women in the religious community. The more educated the informants' mothers, the more willing they were to accept a more equal role for women in religious communities. Informants whose mothers had a lower level of education were less ready to accept that a woman interpreted religion and religious rules, with a coefficient of association of  $-.029$  at the  $.524$  significance level. (Appendix 1). In the talks, they stated as the reason that more women were studying at theological faculties, divinity schools and madrasahs, enabling them to legitimately deal with these issues. Even though, as was mentioned in chapters two through four of this work, with rare exceptions women in earlier times did not deal with the interpretation of holy books and rules and there were no female commentaries on the Qur'an, Bible and Torah up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the informants showed their willingness to accept the interpretations of women. But, as they had not yet had the chance to see any such interpretation, there was the open question of how they would actually react if they found themselves in a situation to decide whether to accept the interpretation of a woman, or if they had to choose between an interpretation provided by a man and one provided by a woman – would sexual identity have a say in their decision? We will definitely have to wait for such a case for a long time, as none of the religious communities in BiH has yet opened the door for women to deal with official interpretations of holy books or to be in commissions or councils that have such authority. Such a practice has existed for more than a century in reformed traditions of Judaism and Christianity, and in the last two decades, also in some Muslim communities.

After questions about the spiritual and educational sphere followed questions about the participation of women in the structures of religious communities. Taking

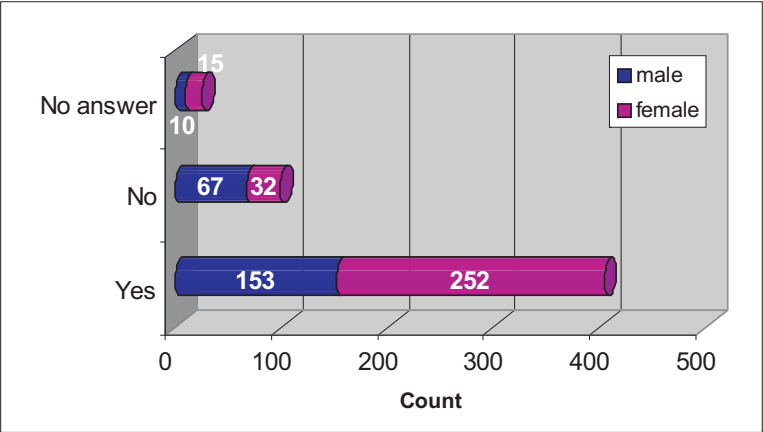
into account that women were little represented in the official bodies of religious communities, and that there were no women in the hierarchical structures, it is interesting that the informants greatly supported the election of women to the bodies of religious communities.

**Graph 27. Election of women to the bodies of religious communities, by sex**



Data from Graphs 27 and 28 show that 73.47% of men and 87.29% of women would support the election of a woman into the bodies of religious communities, and 66.52% of men and 84.28% of women would support a woman as a chairperson of a religious community. The differences are visible among the informants who identified themselves as traditional believers, with an association coefficient of  $-.114$  at the  $.011$  significance level, the informants who stated that they prayed regularly every day, with an association coefficient of  $-.123$  at the  $.007$  significance level, and those who said that religion was particularly important, with an association coefficient of  $-.167$  at the  $.000$  significance level, which suggests that the higher the associ-

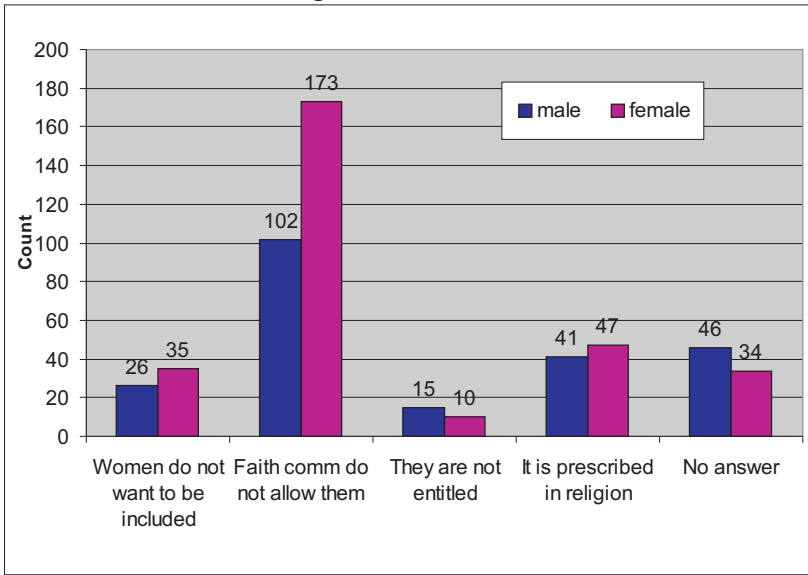
**Graph 28. A woman as a chairperson of a religious community**



ation with traditional religious practice, the lesser the support for the participation of women in the community, especially in high positions (Appendix 1).

Thus, a woman could – in their view – be appointed to sit on the official bodies of religious communities, as well as to head the community as a chairperson. The nature of the function of a chairperson of a religious community was not in question, as the informants perceived this function as similar to any other social function and engagement. However, a somewhat lower number of them supported a woman in this position, not because of the function itself or the abilities of women, but because of the real obstacles that existed in religious communities. Generally speaking, the informants were not very aware of the structure and organization of religious communities, but they knew that women could perform any function in the religious community except for the leading spiritual ones that required laying on of hands, ordination or appointment by the highest bodies of the community. The reasons for the almost complete exclusion of women from the bodies of religious communities are stated in Graph 29.

**Graph 29. Causes of exclusion of women from the bodies of religious communities**

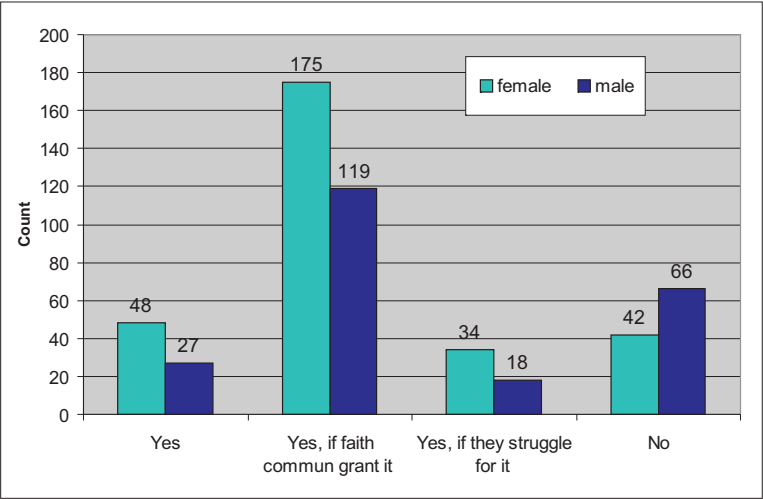


As the most important reason for the exclusion of women from the bodies of religious communities, 57.85% of women and 44.34% of men stated the opposition of the religious communities. In the second place, 15.71% of women and 17.82% of men identified religious rules as an obstacle; and only in the third place, 11.70% of women and 11.30% of men stated that women were not interested in participation in religious communities. Those who provided no answers later explained that they did not quite know how the religious communities were structured, but also that they were not sure which of the reasons was more applicable, whether it was the

opposition of the religious communities themselves, or that women and men were not interested and informed about the issues. Then they pointed out that the work of the religious communities was not transparent enough and that the members of the communities-not only women but men as well- were not informed about the working methods, elections and possibilities for participation. In such circumstances, the elections in the community were accessible only to a certain number of members. In BiH, it is exceptional for women to appear in the position of chairperson of a religious community; however, a slight percentage of women do work on the various commissions and boards that deal with issues of education, humanitarian aid, medical treatment, and shelter for the vulnerable categories of the population. Women are mostly represented in education, as teachers of religion in schools; however, within the communities there is not a single woman at the head of the religious commissions for education.

The issue of the ordination of women or the appointment of women as imams or rabbis was not included in the Questionnaire, due to the turbulent reactions that occurred during the verification of the Questionnaire. In order to avoid strong and emotional reactions, it was decided to leave this question for the open talks. Most informants rejected the possibility of women being priests, imams or rabbis, because in their religious traditions, rules and canons, only men had a legitimate claim to such positions. However, when I offered a few answer options, the majority (51.73% of men and 58.52% of women) accepted the possibility of women being priests, imams or rabbis, on the condition that the religious communities approved it, as is stated in Graph 30.

**Graph 30. Women as priests, rabbis and imams**



That meant that religious communities had the sole authority to amend the rules and canons, and that people were willing to support the inclusion of women in

those positions as well – if the issue was solved within the religious communities. The individual engagement of members of religious communities was not taken into account, as we have already said that people somewhat fear entering into the sphere of the religious, mostly because they do not have enough knowledge or information, as well as because they are also not particularly interested in dealing with these or other issues in their community. It seems that the majority follow the line of least resistance and avoid conflicts, agreeing to follow the established norms or their amendments, on the condition that they come from the religious authorities. Women are equally indifferent, because they do not think that they can make any changes. Also, it is still socially unacceptable to have women in leading positions in the religious environment, and, in the end, women are anyway too busy with the housework, which, as discussed earlier, they only rarely share with their husband and children. Those who rejected any possibility that women might participate in those positions there made up 28.69% of the men and 14% of the women. They were explicitly against change and would not accept it even if initiated by the religious communities themselves.

The following statements reflect their attitudes and opinions:

A woman cannot be a priest, she can only be the priest's wife. What would a man be if a woman were the priest? (Orthodox female, Sarajevo)

Women cannot be priests, as the canons have regulated for two thousand years. It cannot be changed. If we were to change that, it would be heresy. (Orthodox male, Bijeljina)

Women can work in the church, but cannot be priests, as those functions can never be their calling. (Catholic female, Livno)

If women were to be priests, then they would have been apostles, and we know that there were no women among the twelve apostles. (Catholic male, Orašje)

A woman cannot be an imam, because if that were possible the Prophet would have given them that possibility, and it is known that there were no female imams in his time. (Muslim female, Sanski Most)

I have never heard of such a thing, and it is not really appropriate for a woman to stand before men in *salat* (prayer). (Muslim male, Tuzla)

I know that women are ordained as rabbis in America in reformed communities, but that does not exist among traditional Jews. One cannot change the rules given five thousand years ago. (Jewish male, Mostar)

These attitudes show a perception of the established religious rules and canons as unchangeable and not subject to new interpretations. New things are considered heresy, deviation and the creation of a new religion. Though the informants did not know the rules or the history and ways the laws and canons were passed, there was a very high level of awareness about preserving of the inherited religious tradition. It is obvious that there was a certain fear of “messing” as common believers with spiritual

matters that fell under the competence of the religious authorities exclusively called to interpret them.

The discussion about this matter raised the question of the feasibility of such a practice, on the condition that the religious communities inaugurated it. The Orthodox wondered how it would look, and how the woman's husband would feel if the woman were to stand there as a priest and a line of men approached her after the service and kissed her hand? Catholics wondered whether female priests would respect the rule of celibacy, and how people would receive them, taking into account that priests enjoy the trust and authority of a father, an uncle, or someone very close. The concern of the informants was whether women could also gain such trust. Muslims were mostly worried what would happen to their prayers (*salat*) if they were to look at a woman in front of them in the *mihrab* (niche). Most of the arguments against the imamhood of a woman referred to the sexual excitement and the shift of attention to her appearance that they would not be able to resist and that was (in their opinion) the key reason why women could not be imams. Similar arguments were heard from Jews, as those were the reasons why women were excluded from the synagogue and were not counted in the quorum (*minyan*). Women additionally stated the issue of ritual purity for women, who usually did not pray during the time of menstruation. Those who did support women as priests, imams and rabbis thought that people would get used to it; as the saying went, it would be a "nine days' wonder". However, based on the attitudes of informants, we can conclude that such an engagement of women is possible only with the approval of the religious communities and amendments to the established canons and rules.

We will present more detailed information about the position of women in religious communities later, in the analysis of the contents of religious magazines – the results of which best show in which roles women are most present, and which model of woman is promoted and advocated in the media of the religious communities.

### **7.1.7. Participation of Women in Public Life and Politics**

In this part we come to the fifth group of questions from the Questionnaire and the talks, which concerned political participation. These were important for the study as a whole because the informants showed inconsistency in their attitudes, seeking to show how ready they were to accept women as equal partners in political life and in managerial positions and that, in the end, they supported women, voted for them and that they would in the future vote for female candidates with good programs even though the reality is the opposite. In reality, after the last elections in October 2006 women hold 17% of political positions, and men hold 83%, a situation similar to the results of the previous elections.

I did not fully know the answers to the questions in this part of the Questionnaire until I received the statistically processed data, but I had fairly good insight into their attitudes as I had heard them during the open talks. When I received the processed data, and saw that most informants stated that they voted for women and supported women in politics, I was confused, as it absolutely did not match the results of the recorded talks – which clearly showed that few informants voted for women and that they did not support them enough for them to get into managerial positions.

In the overall socio-cultural and political atmosphere, one should take into account the factors that have influenced and continue to influence some people's mindset and the public expression of their views. This country does not have a long tradition of democratic ways of thinking or of freedom of speech and expression, so people mostly behave the way they are expected to behave, i.e. the socially acceptable way. Authority – whether political or spiritual – is greatly respected; civic awareness is at a very low level; there is no civil courage to pose certain questions or to deal seriously with them as individuals or groups. The authority of the political establishment and the representatives of religious communities has a strong influence on the people of BiH, something that can partially be viewed as a remnant of the former political order, where people were taught to be submissive to the authorities and not to express their views publicly. The situation today is not much better; the civil sector is very weak, and in the wartime and post-war period, requirements of moral and political 'suitability' have again been established – only on different grounds than in the former political system – so that people have again learned how to act and appear in order to stay within the limits of the system of authority, whether political or spiritual. Taking into account the fact that the political awareness is undeveloped, that people do not appear as individuals but rather collectively, and that they do not want to take personal responsibility, I expected these answers, which do not reflect the actual state of the society, but rather the pretensions of the informants to support the existing social developments and the trends of democratization.

Before they filled out the Questionnaire, the informants were asked to speak their minds and to circle those answers that matched their own views; the results showed that most of them gave 'socially desirable' answers. Though the Questionnaire was anonymous, their self-restraint and desire to present themselves in a better light obviously prevailed – as the informants circled those answers that would present them as people favoring the equality of sexes and fighting against discrimination, and above all as citizens loyal to the existing order and the demands of democratic society. And the existing order, with its constitutional and legal solutions, offers quite a good framework for the realization of human rights and free-

doms, including the right to participate in political life and get appointed to decision-making positions.

Recently, more precisely since the adoption of the *Law on Gender Equality of BiH* in 2003, the non-governmental organizations have lead large campaigns for the equal opportunities and rights of women in all spheres of life – influencing to a certain extent the people's ways of thinking and leading them to correct their attitudes, but insufficiently so to make them manifest their support for a society of equality between women and men through their own example. This means that they are not ready to publicly, through advocacy, or secretly, by casting their vote, support the more equal inclusion of women in political life.

We shall analyze every question from part 5 of the Questionnaire, and also attach the results of the analysis of open talks. First, we shall deal with the question about voting in elections, in order to determine what is the level of political culture and responsibility of male and female citizens, respectively, as more men are included in political life and it is mostly men that make up the management of political parties and are represented in the government as the political representatives of parties that nominate them as candidates for elections.

**Table 28. Voting, by sex**

I VOTE:	SEX		TOTAL
	male	female	
Regularly	134	177	311
Sometimes	45	65	110
I do not vote at all	38	47	85
No answer	13	10	23
Total	230	299	529

**Table 29. Voting, by type of residence**

I VOTE:	TYPE OF RESIDENCE			TOTAL
	city	suburban area	village	
Regularly	207	40	58	305
Sometimes	68	22	19	109
I do not vote at all	58	12	13	83
No answer	13	3	5	21
Total	346	77	95	518

In Table 29 the intention was to show whether there was a difference regarding voting between the cities, suburbs and villages. Among informants from urban areas, 59.72% voted regularly; so did 51.94% of those from suburban areas, and 61%



of those from rural areas. This shows that the rural population turned out to vote in a higher percentage than those from cities or suburban areas. The question is what the reason is: is the level of civil awareness higher, or is there a stronger collective mentality expecting from individuals to act as the majority of their community does? Cities had the largest percentage of people who did not vote at all (16.76%), followed by suburban (15.58%) and rural areas (13.68%).

Table 30 provides an overview of voting, by education level of informants, leaving out the seven illiterate ones. The data show that the most regular voters were those who had less than eight grades of primary school (68.96% voted regularly), followed by those with higher education (66.16%), and only then those who had secondary school qualifications (55.31%), with the lowest percentage of regular voters among those who had completed primary schools (55.17%). When we compare these data with the data from the previous table, we can conclude that less educated people from rural areas vote the most, followed by those with higher education from suburban areas, and only then those from cities.

**Table 30. Voting, by education**

I VOTE:	EDUCATION OF INFORMANT				TOT.
	PS less than 8 grades	PS 8 grades	Secondary school	College, university and MA	
<b>Regularly</b>	20	32	130	131	313
<b>Sometimes</b>	6	15	56	43	120
<b>I don't vote at all</b>	3	11	47	24	85
<b>Total</b>	29	58	233	198	518

Education is very important, but according to these results, the environment where one lives, and the stronger influence of the community on the individual, result in rural areas having the greatest election turnouts. This is in principle true, for the pre-election campaigns of the political parties devote special attention to rural areas, as they bring the most votes: people vote to a greater extent, and mainly in the manner the majority in the local community considers appropriate; or as suggested by the head of the household, an older child, or any other authority in the family or religious community. The following statements of informants illustrate this:

When elections come, the whole family goes to vote. That is an important day and we do not miss it, as it is important that we give our vote and support those who will represent the interest of our people. (Catholic female, village Ulice, Brčko)

Most of us go to vote, because we want to support our parties. But today there are numerous parties, so we agree whom our area will vote for. (Othodox female, Novo Goražde)

We go and vote regularly, and always for our own, because we won't have someone else speak on our behalf. But sometimes it is hard to choose as there are many candidates, then we ask those in the village who know better who they are going to vote for. You cannot go against the crowd. (Muslim female, village Kovanići, Zenica)

Voting is complicated and I do not know what to circle, so it is easier for me to ask either my husband or my children. Sometimes, those who follow politics more than others say who it is best to vote for. (Bosnian female, village Vrapčići, Mostar)

Only the statements of women were selected here, as they are less informed about political events, especially women in villages. This can be seen in the number of women who are not members of any political party (78.59%), compared with 68.26% of men, 10 percentage points less than women.

Those who did not vote at all, or only did so occasionally, stated the reasons why they did not participate in elections. The Questionnaire offered numerous options that were to be graded from 1 to 5, according to the importance of the reason why the informants do not vote. The following table gives an overview of the answers, based on which we shall see which of the offered reasons is the most important cause of abstinence from voting.

**Table 31. Causes of failing to vote**

<b>I DO NOT VOTE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:</b>	<b>number</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>average</b>
<b>corrupt politicians and personal interests</b>	115	1	5	2.23
<b>politics is a dirty game</b>	113	1	5	2.96
<b>there are no honest and capable politicians</b>	112	1	5	2.87
<b>disappointment with the party I belong to</b>	97	1	5	4.08
<b>none of the parties protect the interests of citizens</b>	113	1	5	2.47

The results of the analysis of the answers in Table 31 show that the informants considered the corruptness of politicians and their fight for their personal interests the most important reasons why they did not vote; other stated reasons follow: politics was a dirty game, none of the parties protected the interests of citizens, there were no honest and capable politicians, and last, they were disappointed with the party they belonged to. This reason may be understood as the disappointment not only with the party that the informants belonged to, as only a small percentage said

that they were members of a political party, but also with the party they sympathized with and that they felt as theirs. This is because political life in BiH still functions based on ethno-national divisions that correspond with religious identity; so people mainly think in categories of 'ours' and 'yours'.

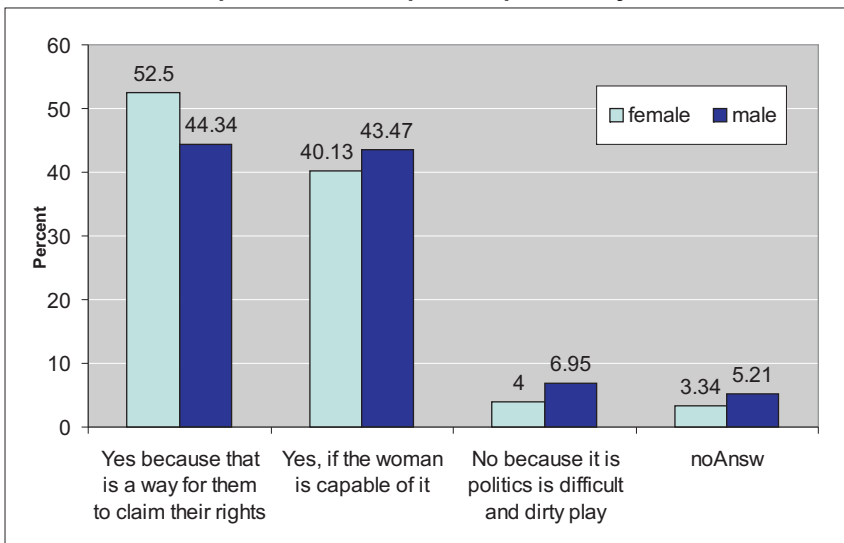
Thus, people are generally not interested in politics because of the tendency to corruption among the majority of politicians. The following views illustrate this:

Just when I thought: this man we elected now will not steal and take from the people, after a few months in an armchair he turned to corruption, making sure only that his family and 'friends' are taken care of. That is why I trust no one anymore. (Muslim male, Kakanj)

I cannot recognize a face on the political scene that seems trustworthy and fair and ready to fight crime and corruption, so I do not want to vote anymore and support these people. (Orthodox female, Višegrad)

These are the typical answers of disappointed people who cannot exercise their basic rights to existence, while the majority of elected politicians behave irresponsibly and do not care about the needs of ordinary people. In such circumstances the issue of women's participation is not so important, as there is a general loss of trust in politicians.

**Graph 31. Women's place in politics, by sex**



The answers to the question whether women have a place in politics in Graph 31 were mainly positive, so that one could get the impression that Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizens, both women and men, as well as informants from villages, suburban areas and cities, were completely open to the participation of women in politics. The highest percentages of women (52.5%) and men (43.34%) thought that women should be in politics because that was a way for them to fight for their rights,

and as a second reason 40.13% of women and 43.75% of men stated "if they are capable, let them be represented," as in that way they could contribute to the general well-being of their community. More women than men considered that it was a way for women to fight for their rights, while more men than women stated the woman's capability as a condition. When we compare the data with the results of the *Star-Pilot* study, according to which 83.41% of women expressed their readiness to support women in the highest political positions<sup>520</sup>, it is clear that there is a great declarative support for women in politics, even in the highest offices, but that it is not accompanied by actual support for women in elections. The results of the 2006 general elections best confirm this, as women only have a small share in government (17%).

**Table 32. Women's place in politics, by type of residence**

IS POLITICS A PLACE FOR WOMEN?	TYPE OF RESIDENCE			TOTAL
	City	Suburban area	Village	
<b>YES, as it is a way for them to fight for their rights</b>	174	32	44	250
<b>YES, if the woman is capable</b>	152	34	33	219
<b>NO, as it is a tough and dirty game</b>	11	7	10	28
<b>No answer</b>	9	4	8	21
<b>Total</b>	346	77	95	518

When we look at the answers in Table 32, classified by place of residence, it is obvious that it is among the city population that the greatest percentage considers that active participation in politics is a way for women to fight for their rights (50.28%), while the percentages of this answer among the suburban and rural population are somewhat lower. We find the same result in responses classified by educational level (Table 33.). Among informants with secondary school qualifications and with college and university level of education, too, the highest percentage (46.78% and 53.03% respectively) think that women have their place in politics as that is a way for them to fight for their rights. In the second place, the issue of capability of women is raised by 41.59% of informants with secondary school qualifications and 41.91% of informants with college and university level of education.

520 Bakšić-Muftić, Jasna et al. *Socio-economic Status of Women in BiH*, p. 17.

**Table 33. Women's place in politics, by education**

IS POLITICS A PLACE FOR WOMEN?	EDUCATION OF INFORMANTS		TOTAL
	Secondary school	College, university, MA	
<b>YES, as it is a way for them to fight for their rights</b>	153	105	258
<b>YES, if the woman is capable</b>	136	83	219
<b>NO, as it is a tough and dirty game</b>	18	8	26
<b>No answer</b>	20	2	22
<b>Total</b>	327	198	525

Table 34 presents the answers about the place of women in politics by informants' religious or non-religious identification. The results show that the only difference in opinion between traditional believers, atheists and agnostics was that atheists fully supported the participation of women in politics, while 3.77% of agnostics were against it, as was a low percentage of traditional believers, except for the Jews, who were greatly against it (6.06% of Muslims, 4.44% of Catholics, 3.20% of Orthodox, 42.85% of Jews).

**Table 34. Women's place in politics by religious identity**

IS POLITICS A PLACE FOR WOMEN?	BELIEVER						tot.
	Muslim	Catholic	Orthodox	Jew	Atheist	Agnostic	
<b>YES, as it is a way for them to fight for their rights</b>	118	23	81	7	12	14	255
<b>YES, if the woman is capable</b>	117	16	67	5	8	11	224
<b>NO, as it is a tough and dirty game</b>	16	4	5	3			28
<b>No answer</b>	12	2	2			2	18
<b>Total</b>	263	45	155	15	20	27	525

If we take into account those who did not respond, but who explained during the talks that they were not sure how good it was for a woman in these gloomy Bosnian and Herzegovinian conditions, the percentage is even higher. Jews to the greatest extent held that politics was a tough and dirty game, and that it was better for a woman to be protected and to engage in other fields that did not burden the woman and the family to the same extent as political engagement. According to the data, the highest number is of those who do not think that it is a woman's place to be

in politics: Muslims (49.90%), Orthodox (29.48%), Catholics (8.50%), Jews (2.83%), atheists (3.78%), agnostics (5.10%).

During the talks, most interviewees confirmed their views that women should be in politics if they wanted to fight for their rights. Unfortunately, the society and even the informants themselves still did not accept women in positions of power and did not lend them their trust at elections. Generally, the attitude prevailed that women should be in politics, but that there was a series of obstacles that restrained women from participation. In these statements the informants usually had in mind some other women, not their own daughters and wives. Thus, the intention behind these questions was to make them say whether they would support their own wife, and the response was usually followed by laughter and jokes – with the explanations we have listed before: that the family was in the first place, so if a woman could harmonize these two duties, then she could be supported, but not in all positions, as there was a difference between ordinary political work in lower positions and doing high-level politics. We will discuss this in connection with the next question, which referred to the capability of women for managerial positions.

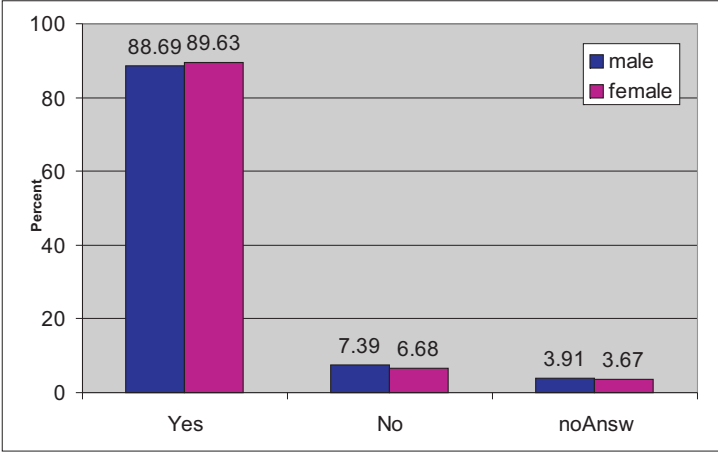
Men emphasized that they would support the participation of capable women in politics, because they mentioned, among numerous politicians, the names of capable women, like Svetlana Cenić (the then Minister of Finance in the Government of Republika Srpska) and Azra Hadžiahmetović (former Minister of Foreign Trade in the Council of Ministers of BiH). A capable lady politician displayed decisiveness, was not afraid of threats, demanded that the laws be respected and did not back down before anyone, not even her party colleagues. Thus, people recognized the model of a successful and capable lady politician in BiH within the existing categories of a good politician, who was brave, decisive, persistent and able to "bang her fist on the table" when needed. These are all features assigned to men, and represent the well-established stereotype of the characteristics of a good leader.<sup>521</sup> If a woman fits into that image of a masculine politician, then she might be acceptable, under the condition that she succeeded in overcoming all the other barriers she encountered in the structures and rules of the political parties, as well as in the family and the wider social environment.

The question of women's capability as successful managers was a general one, with the aim of preparing the informant for the following, much more substantial questions. During the talks they explained that they answered because they thought that there were women who could be successful managers, giving positive

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521 Bakšić-Muftić Jasna. *Politička prava kao ženska prava – otvorena pitanja i izazovi* (Political Rights as Women's Rights – Open Questions and Challenges), in Forum Bosnae Magazine, Izazovi feminizma/Challenges of Feminism, Međunarodni forum Bosna/International Forum Bosnia, Sarajevo, 2004, p. 32.

**Graph 32. Views on women managers, by sex**



examples from companies and organizations they worked in, or examples from public life, but this did not mean general support for the proposition that women could be successful managers, and not in all positions.

**Table 35. Views on women managers, by type of residence**

DO YOU THINK THAT WOMEN CAN BE SUCCESSFUL MANAGERS?	TYPE OF RESIDENCE			TOTAL
	City	Suburban area	Village	
YES	321	60	82	463
NO	9	7	4	20
No answer	16	10	9	35
Total	346	77	95	518

However, there were differences in the support for women in managerial positions, as traditional believers provided less support for women in such positions, with a coefficient of association of -.123 at the .006 significance level (Appendix 1). Successful management, for the majority, meant head posts in schools, companies, and possibly lower political positions, as some of the informants clearly defined it.

I am not saying that there are no capable women in managerial positions, but I am not for them managing the country, that is a man's job. (Catholic female, Orašje)

Some women might be good managers, but I doubt they can survive at high positions, it is a tough fight that women are not prepared for, nor are they emotionally able to take those low blows. (Muslim male, Tuzla)

It is easier for a woman to be a school director or a manager in a smaller company, because that leaves more time for the family. (Bosnian female, Sarajevo)

So, we come back to the arguments that we have heard earlier, and that refer to the duties of women in the family. There is a possibility for women to be in managerial positions, at the lower levels of government, as that is a smaller burden than women have in higher and more responsible positions that require a stronger commitment, responsibility, and above all more exposure to public criticism and more political pressure. A great number of both women and men confirmed that women themselves did not want get into positions where they would be so exposed to the judgment of the public, as the political games were dangerous and dirty, and no holds were barred. If a woman did not consent to certain concessions required from her by political lobbies, she would face the usual attempts to discredit her politically and morally. Some informants explained it as follows:

Women take the attacks on their personality, the gossiping and dirty games differently because they are mothers. The children and family perceive these situations differently depending on whether they come from the father, or the mother. (Bosnian female, Prijedor)

We are already used to stories that some politician or other defrauded money, evaded taxes or had love affairs; a mother would have a hard time dealing with that. (Catholic male, Kakanj)

As a husband, I could not stand my wife being publicly defamed and humiliated by lies; that is why I think that most of us do not really support our wives holding such functions. Maybe subconsciously those are the reasons that we do not vote for women. (Muslim male, Zenica)

The stated reasons can be interpreted in two ways: as aiming to protect the woman and family, which is probably what a great number of women and men think; and as aiming to place moral dilemmas before women who want to become active, in terms of whether they are ready to take on the burden and the moral responsibility for the reputation of the family. If we take into account that double moral standards apply to women and men in our society, that something is acceptable for one and not for the other, and that this is ascribed to women as a deficiency – then the resistance of both women and men to the engagement of women in managerial and especially high-ranking positions comes as no surprise. The participation of women in politics is always linked to the morality of woman and family, as politics is perceived as dirty, immoral and corrupting sphere of activities. In her research in BiH, Elissa Helms characterized this as a negative feminization of politics, in terms of politics as an immoral woman (she – politics).<sup>522</sup> That is the main reason why men could not imagine their wives in politics, as it was socially unacceptable for a married woman to be away from home for days, to come home late from party meetings and

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522 Helms, Elissa. *Gendered Visions of the Bosnian Future: Women's Activism and Representation in Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina*, University of Pittsburgh, 2003, p. 204-207.



to travel on business with other men. Generally, a business trip had the connotation of immoral activities and provoked strong reactions from the environment, which was not kindly disposed to such a practice.<sup>523</sup> The majority would agree that it was perfectly all right for a man to come home late from a business trip, for him to be away from family for days, to be seen in various company and places, while for a woman such things were mostly unacceptable. The following statements best illustrate these attitudes:

A man who has an affair, and who is capable of evading taxes and cheating the state is considered a 'successful' man, while a woman in a similar situation would at least be considered immoral, and mothers cannot be that way. (Agnostic male, B. Luka)

People always turned a blind eye on the man and forgave him easily for his mistakes, while the woman carried that stain her whole life, and what is worst, it has a bad effect on children – especially daughters, whose personality is judged also by the moral life of their mothers. (Muslim female, Tuzla)

We, women, we mostly judge and talk about other women, and we take delight in stories of an immoral act. We do not even check it, we are ready to believe it to be true and talk about it on and on, because subconsciously we have a problem with successful women. (Orthodox female, Višegrad)

The shame of a man can be washed away with a bucket of water, and the shame of a woman cannot even be washed away by a river. (a saying)

Beside these reasons that came up during the talks, the informants who thought that such places were not for women stated other reasons as well, presented in the Table 36. The few informants (17.95%) who said that a woman could not be a successful manager, in Table 36 stated the usual reasons, referring to female nature, sensitiveness and indecisiveness. Out of that number, 32.20% of women and 25.71% of men thought that women were too sensitive, 33.8% of women and 20% of men thought that women lacked the necessary decisiveness for management. The talks with the informants confirmed that more of them took into consideration emotionality and sensitivity than is stated in the table, as many women, particularly the younger ones with jobs, stated specific reasons why women were more sensitive than men.

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523 Author's comment: the idea of women travelling on business in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian cultural context denotes the opportunity to do 'immoral' things. That is why husbands do not like it when their wives travel on business, partly because they lack self-confidence and trust in their wives, and partly because of the pressure of society on men who 'allow' their wives to travel on business alone.

**Table 36. Reasons for excluding women from politics**

IF YOU THINK THEY CANNOT, WHY IS THAT?	SEX		TOTAL
	Male	Female	
A woman is too sensitive	9	19	28
She is too emotional	10	10	20
She lacks decisiveness	7	20	27
It is not natural for a woman to rule	8	6	14
Male chauvinism		1	1
I think that women as personalities are stronger than men		2	2
They are over-burdened		1	1
There aren't any	1		1
There are not enough votes at elections		1	1
No answer	195	239	434
Total	230	299	529

One of the reasons was the menstrual cycle which caused both physical pain and psychological disturbances to women – which was reflected in increased nervousness, irritability, and even the inability to perform their job for a day or two:

My case is such that my concentration weakens and I am not capable of doing some things the way I usually do, and that is a huge handicap for many women. I work with half my energy. I cannot think straight, I type the bill three times in the shop and check it again. I feel somehow distracted. (Orthodox female, Modriča)

The problem is that many of us, even those who feel no difficulties, use that to be spared some duties and work. (Muslim female, Srebrenik)

Maybe we are not even aware of the consequences of such behavior because men then have an argument to say we are incapable of working at full capacity, so we should not be in positions that require huge responsibility. (Catholic female, Mostar)

This argument appears often in the religious sphere, when women are denied the possibility of performing certain spiritual functions, and as a consequence, the secular ones too; this is still an issue in the orthodox Jewish communities, as well as Islamic communities in general. Beside the ritual uncleanness that is taken into account, the reasons particularly stressed are psychological weakness, lack of concentration and over-sensitivity, because of which women should be spared hard and stressful jobs.

In our culture such arguments have survived most probably because of the centuries-long influence of religious interpretations regarding the nature of women and the deficiencies caused by the menstrual cycle and motherhood. Namely, in monotheistic religious traditions a woman could not perform rituals, or visit syna-

gogues and mosques during menstruation, and in that period she was considered mentally incapable of certain tasks. In the churches, the notion of ritual incapacity caused by menstruation was abandoned a long time ago, and today it is still found only in traditional faith.

The Jewish orthodox orientation is particularly strict concerning women with menstruation, as the rule of sexual uncleanness is precisely stated in the Bible. "When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean (...) when anyone touches it, he will be unclean till evening." (Leviticus 15:19-25). This is the reason why even today in the bedrooms of Jewish families one can find two beds, as not only sleeping together is forbidden but also kissing, holding hands, touching and any type of physical contact<sup>524</sup> – as is explained by the well-known Jewish theologian Blu Greenberg.<sup>525</sup> These rules, generally, also apply to other bodily secretions, after which it is necessary to perform the ritual bath (*mikvah*).

The Christian tradition also had a negative attitude towards the menstrual cycle, linking it to Eve's curse. She was punished by God with menstruation because of the sin that she committed. In the church practice these views of "Eve's curse" (*Genesis*, 3:13) were generalized to encompass all women.<sup>526</sup> Such an understanding of menstruation had serious consequences, but the rules on menstruation have been greatly transformed today when it comes to rituals. However, in society there is still a tendency to block and hide the natural dimension of the menstrual process, so that this phenomenon is still taken as something dirty, shameful and embarrassing to mention in front of men and in public. This cultural construction, a reflection of religious interpretations, results in the silent suffering of women, as their menstruation and sexuality are taboo; it is something that exists, but is not socially acceptable.

In the Islamic tradition menstruation is not understood as something shameful, dirty, or as a consequence of Hawwa's (Eve's) sin, but as a bodily secretion that, like other secretions, causes ritual uncleanness, after which the ritual bath (*ghusl*) is compulsory. However, in the cultures of Muslim peoples menstruation also became a taboo, something to hide, a state in which a woman should stay away from certain tasks as she might cause unwanted consequences. In the religious textbooks there are interpretations based on which women, during menstruation, are forbidden not only to perform the ritual, but also to enter a mosque and to touch or read the *Qur'an*,

524 See more, Da-Don, Kotel. *Židovstvo: život, teologija i filozofija* (Judaism: Life, Theology and Philosophy), Profil, Zagreb, 2004, p. 276-285.

525 Blu, Greenberg. *How to Run a Jewish Household*, p. 123-124.

526 Kathleen O'Grady. *A Discussion of Menstruation and Religion*, <http://www.mum.org/>

and they are not even allowed to recite (in prayer) what they know by heart from the Qur'an.<sup>527</sup> There are a number of sayings (*hadiths*) where the Prophet speaks about exemptions, but not about prohibiting women from performing *salat* (prayer) and fasting.<sup>528</sup> "Namely, exclusion from obligatory rituals during menstruation is a sign of the mercy and providence of God, as it would be an additional burden for women"<sup>529</sup> taking into account the manner and frequency of praying in Islam. Unfortunately, in practice, it turned into a prohibition due to the implications of an unclean state. These interpretations are intertwined with the cultural practices of peoples who have accepted the religious heritage of the monotheistic traditions, so that even today this phenomenon is viewed as taboo, as an inconvenience and as the cause of physical weakness and mental instability, regardless of how well the religious heritage is known and understood. Women use it to avoid performing certain tasks and to rest, and men as an argument that women are mentally incapable of jobs that require concentration, self-possession and decisiveness.

#### 7.1.7.1. Voting for women in elections

This part will focus on concrete questions about informants' voting practice, whether they were willing to give their vote to a woman, and under which conditions. According to the answers of the informants, 55.45% of men and 47.76% of women had voted for women in elections - a higher percentage of men had voted for women. If we go back to data given earlier - that the percentage of women who vote (59.19%) is higher than that of men (56.60%) we can conclude that their support for female politicians was even smaller. Most women (24.45%) said that they voted because they thought that there should be a higher percentage of women in government, while most men (23.63%) voted for a woman because she was the best candidate. This response could be linked with the responses to the question whether politics is a place for women, where men emphasized women's capabilities more than women did, supporting such statements with examples of capable female politicians that had strong, male attitudes and did not succumb to pressures.

Table 37 clearly shows the differences in perception between men and women regarding women in political life, which is also confirmed in the responses to the question whether they had voted for a woman. 35.45% of the men and 31.61% of the women had not voted for a woman. However, 9.09% of the men and 17.46% of the

527 Seid Serdarević, Muhamed. *Fikh-ul-Ibadat: Propisi o osnovnim islamskim dužnostima (Fikh-ul-Ibadat)*, Sarajevo, 1968, p. 32.

528 Abu Dawud. *Sunen*, Nos. 271-287., and *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol.1., No. 327

529 Spahić-Šiljak Zilka. *Menstruacija (hajdh) i obredno kupanje (ghusl) u islamskoj tradiciji (Menstruation (hajdh) and the Ritual Bath (ghusl) in the Islamic Tradition)*, IF Bosna/International Forum Bosnia, Sarajevo, Međunarodna ljetna škola/International Summer School, IF Bosnia, 2003, p. 6.

women did not respond to this question, explaining that they did not vote, whether for women or for men.

**Table 37. Voting for women, by sex**

HAVE YOU VOTED FOR A WOMAN IN ELECTIONS?	SEX		TOTAL
	male	female	
YES, because she was the best candidate	56	51	107
YES, because she was from the political party I belong to	14	17	31
YES, because I think there should be more women in government	52	71	123
NO, because there were no good female candidates	45	49	94
NO, because there were no women from my political party	11	25	36
78935 NO, because I would never vote for a woman	22	18	40
No answer	20	60	80
Total	220	291	511

**Table 38. Voting for women, by type of residence**

HAVE YOU VOTED FOR A WOMAN IN ELECTIONS?	TYPE OF RESIDENCE			TOTAL
	city	suburban area	village	
YES, because she was the best candidate	81	10	14	105
YES, because she was from the political party I belong to	16	8	6	30
YES, because I think there should be more women in government	92	11	18	121
NO, because there were no good female candidates	55	19	19	93
NO, because there were no women from my political party	22	5	9	36
NO, because I would never vote for a woman	7	4	9	20
No answer	73	20	20	113
Total	346	77	95	518

Table 38 classifies the answers by place of residence in order to see whether there are significant differences in the electoral support for women. No answer was provided by 28.90% of the urban population, 25.97% of the suburban population and 21.05% of the rural population, which corresponds with the respective election

turnouts. Among the informants who had voted for women, 18.94% of the rural population, 26.58% of the urban population and 14.28% of people living in suburban areas stated as the most important reason “to have more women in politics”, followed by the answer that the woman was the best candidate, and in the third place, that the woman was from the political party that the informant belonged to. We may take this to be correct, because even though party affiliation ranked third among the reasons given, it did not necessarily do so in reality, because one still makes sure to vote for women that belong to one’s preferred political party.

This is confirmed by the fact that for years, in BiH elections have been won by national political parties that get votes on an ethno-religious basis; thus it is hard to accept that someone would vote for a woman from some other political party. Further, doing so is made more difficult by the electoral system and the law<sup>530</sup> the propositions and voting rules of which, in accordance with the *Dayton Peace Accords*, do not allow citizens to vote for individuals from different political options. Accordingly, voting for women because they are the best candidates or because people think that there should be more women in politics, should be understood within the framework of electoral rules, meaning that people vote for women from the political option they decide to vote for on the different levels of government.

Linked to this question, Tables 39 and 40 analyze the responses of informants by their religious identity and practice, with the aim of determining whether there are differences in attitudes between atheists and agnostics and believers of monotheistic religions, and also between those who practice religion on a daily basis, weekly, from time to time, or do not practice it at all.

The highest percentage voting for women in elections are found among atheists (75%), followed by agnostics (62.96%), Catholics (44.44%), Orthodox (44.23%), Muslims (40.53%) and, with the lowest percentage, Jews (33.33%). Believers voted least for women (which is evident from the association coefficient of  $-.155$  at the  $.002$  significance level), followed by those who said that religion was very important to them ( $.117$  at the  $.120$  significance level). (Index Table 8.) It is also interesting to note that only agnostics and atheists did not circle the answers related to voting for women from their own political parties, while the believers of monotheistic religions did circle those options. The result is that 7.95% of Muslims, 6.66% of Catholics, 6.66% of Jews and 3.84% of Orthodox did not vote for women because there were no women from their political parties. These results show that it is important that the candidates are from the political parties the informants support. However, the most important fact here is that many believers did not vote for women at all, and that

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530 Voting rules in BiH, Election Commission of BiH, <http://www.izbori.ba/>

there were no significant differences between the believers of monotheistic religions, except for Jews, who showed the least support for women in this case. It is hard to discern the reasons why we found such attitudes among Jews, but if we take into account that the age of Jews who participated in these interviews was over 40, the causes might be sought in the value system and upbringing that used to be stricter and more conservative about gender issues.

**Table 39. Voting for women, by religious identity**

HAVE YOU VOTED FOR A WOMAN IN ELECTIONS?	BELIEVER						TOT.
	Muslim	Catholic	Orthodox	Jewish	Atheist	Agnostic	
YES, because she was the best candidate	43	12	41	2	5	5	98
YES, because she was from the political party I belong to	21	3	6	1			31
YES, because I think there should be more women in government	64	8	28	3	10	12	103
NO, because there were no good female candidates	45	6	31	7	2	4	89
NO, because there were no women from my political party	27	3	6				36
NO, because I would never vote for a woman	10	3	6	1			20
No answer	54	10	38	1	3	6	105
Total	264	45	156	15	20	27	482

Table 40 presents responses to the same question linked with religious practice, in order to determine whether practicing believers had different attitudes from those who did not practice religion at all or did so only occasionally. It is obvious from the table that most informants occasionally practiced their religion, while those who provided no response to the religious identification were mostly atheists and partly agnostics. Regarding the question posed, 31.39% of the believers who practiced religion every day had not voted for women, and 21.51% of them gave no answer. Furthermore, 30.97% of the believers who practiced religion from time to time had not voted for women, while 23% of them gave no answer. Finally, 21.05% of those who did not practice religion had not voted for women, while 22.36% of them gave no answer. A high percentage did not respond to the question whether they had

voted for women or not, and these were the informants that either generally did not vote, or who did vote sometimes, but who did not then vote for women.

**Table 40. Voting for women in elections, by religious practice**

HAVE YOU VOTED FOR A WOMAN IN ELECTIONS?	I PRAY					tot.
	Daily	Weekly	Some times	Never	No answer	
YES, because she was the best candidate	30	10	47	15	5	107
YES, because she was from the political party I belong to	16	1	11	3		31
YES, because I think there should be more women in government	35	10	46	25	7	123
NO, because there were no good female candidates	26	6	47	13	2	94
NO, because there were no women from my political party	16		15	3	2	36
NO, because I would never vote for a woman	12		8			20
No answer	37	3	52	17	9	118
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>529</b>

Among the practicing believers there were no significant differences, but there is an obvious difference between them and the non-practicing. Of course, a few more of them voted for women, but not significantly more – which indicates the strong influence of the patriarchal tradition also on those people who did not practice religion, but had been taught during their primary socialization and by the education system the stereotypical behavior models and the dichotomized picture of inter-gender relations. The *Star-Pilot* survey also confirmed the strong influence of the patriarchal tradition, as 71.21% of female informants responded that the patriarchal tradition was to blame for the disadvantageous position of women in society.<sup>531</sup> The present study seeks to answer the question to what extent this was due to the interpretive heritage of monotheistic religions, linked to the patriarchal culture that advocates a dichotomized picture of gender relations.

531 Bakšić-Muftić, Jasna et al. *Socio-economic Status of Women in BiH*, p. 53.



Tables 41 and 42 present the responses of informants to the question whether they would vote for women in the future and under what conditions. The responses are classified by sex and place of residence.

**Table 41. Voting for women in the future, by sex**

IF YOU HAVE NOT VOTED FOR A WOMAN SO FAR, WILL YOU DO SO IN THE FUTURE?	SEX		Total
	male	female	
YES	48	85	133
NO	10	9	19
YES, if she has a good program	77	91	168
YES, if she is from the political party I belong to	9	25	34
NO, because I think a woman cannot be a good politician	7	2	9
No answer	79	87	166
Total	230	299	529

20.86% of men and 28.42% of women would give women unconditional support through their election votes. Furthermore, 33.47% of men and 30.43% of women would support a woman if she had a good program. A high percentage of informants (31.37%) did not answer, and this might refer to those who did not vote in general, and those who were not sure or would not vote for women at all. When we compare this with the number of informants who confirmed that they did not vote at all (16.06%) and those who did not answer (4.34%) the question whether they had voted for women or not, then these percentages could be applied also to the question of voting for women in future. That means that out of the total number (31.37%) of those that gave no answer, 7.37% of voters would most probably not vote for women, beside the 5.29% informants that clearly stated that they would not vote for a woman and that a woman cannot be a good politician.

**Table 42. Voting for women in the future, by type of residence**

IF YOU HAVE NOT VOTED FOR A WOMAN SO FAR, WILL YOU DO SO IN THE FUTURE?	TYPE OF RESIDENCE			TOT.
	City	Suburban area	Village	
YES	95	15	20	130
NO	9	5	5	19
YES, if she has a good program	112	26	27	165
YES, if she is from the political party I belong to	13	9	12	34
NO, because I think a woman cannot be a good politician	2	3	4	9
No answer	117	20	29	166
Total	348	78	97	523

There are visible differences in the results in Table 24 according to place of residence in Table 42, because 27.2% of the informants from urban areas, 19.2% of those from suburban areas and 20.6% of those from rural areas were willing to unconditionally support women. Furthermore, 32.18% of the informants from cities, 33.33% of those from suburbs and 27.83% of those from rural areas would vote for a woman under the condition that she had a good program. The greatest share of those who gave no answer was among informants from urban areas (33.62%), who were according to the results of this research less active voters than people from rural areas. This means that voters from rural areas are more collective-oriented. If the community recognized and decided that it was important to vote for women, most people would accept that more easily than if it were to be an individual act.

Table 43 represents the results of responses to this question by informants' education level, to determine whether there were significant differences in their attitudes regarding the support for women in the future.

**Table 43. Voting for women in the future, by level of education**

IF YOU HAVE NOT VOTED FOR A WOMAN SO FAR, WILL YOU DO SO IN THE FUTURE?	YOUR EDUCATION						Tot.
	Illiterate	Primary less than 8 grades	Primary 8 grades	Secondary	2-year College	Univer. MA PhD	
YES	1	5	14	66	17	30	133
NO		1	4	10	1	2	18
YES, if she has a good program	2	9	16	71	18	51	167
YES, if she is from the political party I belong to	3	2	9	14	2	2	32
NO, because I think a woman cannot be a good politician		1	1	2	1	4	9
No answer	1	11	14	70	26	44	166
Total	7	29	58	233	65	133	525

Four informants provided no answer about their education, so the results encompass 525 persons who did answer this question. The highest percentages giving their unconditional support for women in politics were found among informants with secondary education (28.32%), then among those with 2-year college (26.15%), eight grades of primary education (24.13%), and university (22.55%), while the lowest percentages were among those with less than eight grades of primary education (17.24%) and the illiterate (14.28%). The highest share of those who would vote for women with good programs was among the most educated

(38.34%), followed by those with less than eight grades of primary school (31.03%), those with secondary education (30.47%), the illiterate (28.57)%, and finally, in almost the same percentage, those with 2-year college degrees and those with primary education (27.69%) and (27.58%). So, the most educated people required a woman to have a good program, to be professional and capable. But this result is questionable, because this group of informants also included a high percentage of those who gave no answer. The greatest share of those who did not respond was among the informants with 2-year college degree (40%), then those with less than eight grades of primary education (37.39%), masters and PhD (37.5%), university degree (32.8%), secondary education (30.04%), and eight grades of primary education (24.13%).

We also wanted to check whether there were differences in responses to this question among the informants that identified themselves as believers, atheists and agnostics. The results are presented in Table 44.

**Table 44. Voting for women in the future, by religious identity**

IF YOU HAVE NOT VOTED FOR A WOMAN SO FAR, WILL YOU DO SO IN THE FUTURE?	BELIEVER						Tot.
	Muslim	Catholic	Orthodox	Jew	Atheist	Agnostic	
YES	65	14	41	2	5	7	134
NO	13	2	3		1		19
YES, if she has a good program	71	15	59	8	9	10	172
YES, if she is from the political party I belong to	25		7				32
NO, because I think a woman cannot be a good politician	5	2	1	1			9
No answer	85	12	45	4	5	8	159
Total	264	45	156	15	20	25	525

The highest percentage of those who would give unconditional support to women in an election was found among Catholics (31.11%), followed by agnostics (28%), Orthodox (26.28%), atheists (25%), Muslims (24.62%) and Jews (13.33%). However, Jews did express the strongest support for women if they had the best program (53.33%), followed by atheists (45%), agnostics (40%), Orthodox (37.82), Catholics (33.33%), and Muslims (26.89%). It is interesting, in comparison to the previous question – whether they had voted for women – that Muslims, Orthodox, and

Catholics stated that they had voted for a woman because she was from their political party; while only Muslims (9.46%), and Orthodox (4.48%) said that they would vote for a woman from their political party in the future. If we take into account the overall support that they would give to women, atheists were in the first place (70%), followed by agnostics (68%), Jews (66.66%), Catholics (64.44%), Orthodox (64.1%) and Muslims (51.51%).

Muslims are less ready to support women in comparison to others, and the percentage of Muslims that gave no answer was also the highest (32.19%). As explained above, out of the total number of those who gave no response to this and to the previous question, half did not vote at all, and the remaining half said during the interviews that they were not sure what they would do in the next elections, and none of the proposed options was appropriate for them. In any case, they were more inclined towards not voting for women, otherwise they would have chosen one of the offered answers. There were, then, differences between believers, but also differences between believers, atheists, and agnostics, as the latter were more ready to support the participation of women in politics. This confirms the first part of the hypothesis of this work - about the influence of religion on the support for women in political life. However, if we consider the percentage of responses of atheists and agnostics, even among them there is a noticeable influence of patriarchal values and models of behavior, according to which a woman simply cannot perform certain tasks, especially those that men claim as theirs.<sup>532</sup>

Table 45 provides a further overview of the responses of believers, classified by the intensity of religious practice, with the aim of determining whether there were significant discrepancies in the responses of informants.

The answers are very similar to those of the previous question, as the greatest electoral support for women would be given by believers who practiced religion from time to time (66.37%), followed by those who prayed daily (62.20%), those who prayed weekly (63.33%), and in the end, those who did not practice religion (61.84%). There are no significant discrepancies, but the strongest support was still provided by those believers who prayed from time to time, and that was the category of informants who mostly had high school or higher educational levels (Table 15).

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532 We find such examples every day in the media, so I have included one example that refers to sports, but the message of which can apply to any sphere of action where a woman has a leading function. Namely, in the New Year's show *'Day of Your Dreams'* at the independent OBN television from Sarajevo (January 7th 2007), the journalist asked his guest Dino Konaković to comment on the fact that sports news on OBN TV were presented by a lady journalist, not a male one. Mr. Konaković said that he liked it, mentioning a basketball game in Slovenia that was refereed by a woman who was in his opinion a very good referee. The journalist added: *Well, but imagine us, me, you, Muzur* (and he listed some other names from the sports federation of BiH), *would we really watch the game or... her?* (laughter...)

**Table 45. Voting for women in the future, by religious practice**

IF YOU HAVE NOT VOTED FOR A WOMAN SO FAR, WILL YOU DO SO IN THE FUTURE?	I PRAY					Tot.
	Every day	Weekly	Sometimes	I do not	No answer	
<b>YES</b>	43	9	57	19	5	133
<b>NO</b>	9	1	8	1		19
<b>YES, if she has a good program</b>	48	10	79	26	5	168
<b>YES, if she is from my political party</b>	16		14	2	2	34
<b>NO, because I think a woman cannot be a good politician</b>	4		4	1		9
<b>No answer</b>	52	10	64	27	13	166
<b>Total</b>	172	30	226	76	25	529

Taking into account that those most devoted to religion were those who knew most about it, the informants with university and higher levels of education, and those who knew least about it, we see that these groups of informants hold the most conservative attitudes about women in political life, and offer the least support for them in this respect. During open interviews the more educated informants, particularly younger ones, showed that they knew certain things from their own religious tradition, because they emphasized that they had „reverted“ to faith during or after the war in BiH, as it helped them overcome the daily frustrations and problems they faced. This group of informants testifies to the revival of religion and the re-traditionalization of Bosnian and Herzegovinian society, as their attitudes were deeply stereotypical, conservative, even rigid:

I am a graduate of one of the universities in Tuzla. I am a Muslim, but I have learned a lot about religion in last few years; I try to respect Islamic principles and I would like the principles to be respected in other places too. Here, for example, one assistant at the faculty comes to work dressed in such a provocative manner, that it is hard for me as a believer to follow the lectures. That is why, in my opinion, women who want to be in politics should respect certain moral principles; and it would be good if a system was created in which women would not have to sit with men in the same office, nor drive or travel alone with men. In such a system, for me, it would be acceptable to have women in politics. (Muslim male, Tuzla)

I graduated recently, returned to Modriča and now I have a job. I am a believer and I am glad that I have had the opportunity to learn about my faith, compared to my parents who as communists preserved very little of our tradition at home. I regularly go to church, and I think it is not all right for women to come to church provocatively dressed. It is hard to concentrate when you have beautiful women walking around like in a fashion show. And regarding the participation of women

in politics, I know of no man who finds it appropriate for his wife to go on business trips with other men, and to be absent from home for a long time. The obligations she has towards her children and husband should be the priority. (Orthodox male, Modriča)

Young people who had reverted to faith accepted the heritage of their own religious tradition in an uncritical manner, without any attempt to view the universal messages of their religion according to the context and circumstances they live in. Another group, who emphasized that they had been religious during the hardest times (the communist period), mostly consisted of informants with a lower level of education, who thought that they had preserved their faith by maintaining tradition and particular rituals. Most informants with secondary education had more moderate attitudes, and they did not emphasize the role of faith as much as that of cultural tradition, which places every individual person in a given frame and does not allow any deviation, thus making it harder for women to establish themselves on the political scene of Bosnian and Herzegovinian society. Though the analysis of most of the answers showed that the patriarchal tradition influenced the value system and attitudes to gender in society equally, it still had a stronger influence upon those who were more devoted to faith and religious rituals.

One of the questions in the Questionnaire asked the informants to state the names of male and female politicians. Based on this one could see to what extent they kept up with politics, knew the rules of political activity, and understood who the politicians were and what they did. A total of 66 female politicians' names were listed, some of which were repeated several times; no answer was provided by 297 informants, and nine stated that they were not into politics.

The responses to this question point to two facts:

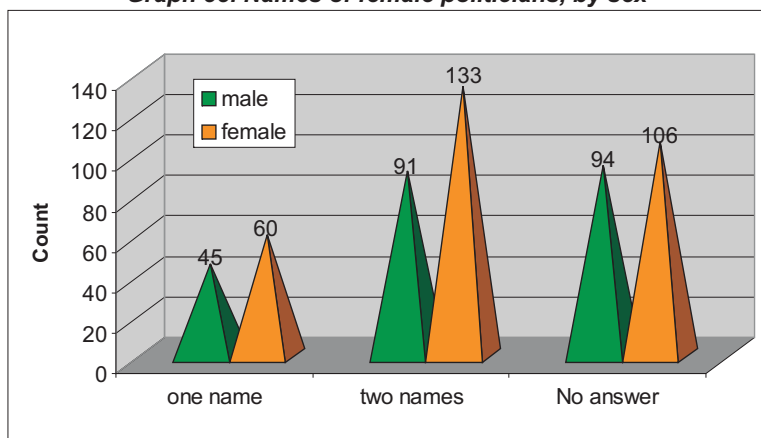
- that women and men recognized women on the political scene to a small extent, as 56.1% of the informants did not respond, and 1.7% wrote that they were not into politics;
- that women were generally insufficiently represented in political life, and that the few women in politics were not sufficiently represented in the media.

Furthermore, the names of politicians listed in the Questionnaire were an excellent indicator of lack of knowledge about the political scene in BiH. Among the 66 names mentioned, 15.15% (as far the author of this work knows) refers to women who are not politicians at all. Some of the names were incorrectly stated, like the name of the former high-ranking politician of the Party for Democratic Action (SDA) Suada Palavrić, who was twice cited as Suada Pavrička and Suada Paravlić. As she often appeared in the media, she was a noted personality, but the fact that the informants did not even know her name showed that they were not informed about what she did, either. The names of well-known lawyers were also listed, Senka Nožica

and Nada Dalipagić, as well as the Tuzla library director Enisa Žunić, neither of them a politician. The reason is probably that these women appear in the media, not as politicians, but within their respective domains. It would take a lot of time to determine whether all the listed names refer to politicians or not, because the informants stated the names of their local politicians, who are less known to the wider BiH public or to the author of this work.

We then checked how women and men responded to these questions, and whether there was a difference in responses depending on the education level, age or place of residence.

**Graph 33. Names of female politicians, by sex**

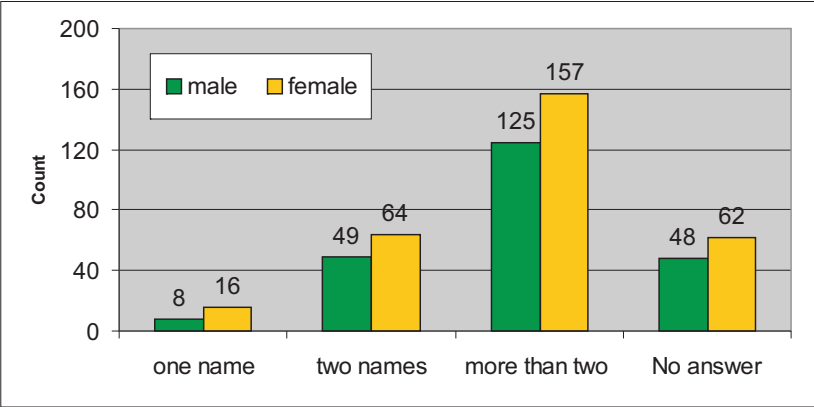


The data in Graph 33 show that women and men were almost equally informed about the political participation of women in BiH. This question required naming at least two female politicians. It should be kept in mind that the percentage of women in politics is four times lower than that of men, and that women on the political stage rarely appear in the media or behind the parliamentary pulpit.

Thus, 19.56% of men and 20.06% of women named one female politician; 39.56% of men and 44.48% of women named two; while 40.86% of men and 35.45% of women gave no answer - quite a high percentage. This further tells us that many BiH citizens are not well informed about political events and show no interest in politics. During the interviews, they said that they were fed up with politics and its abuses, which made people retreat into an apolitical stance. It is interesting to note that there were fewer women who gave no answer, and that there were more women who named two female politicians in comparison to men. That is a proof that women at least know more about the participation of women. We shall see in Graph 34 a similar situation when it comes to men in politics.

This question gave informants more space to answer, because men dominate the political scene and the media. The expectation was that they would be able to list

**Graph 34. Names of male politicians, by sex**



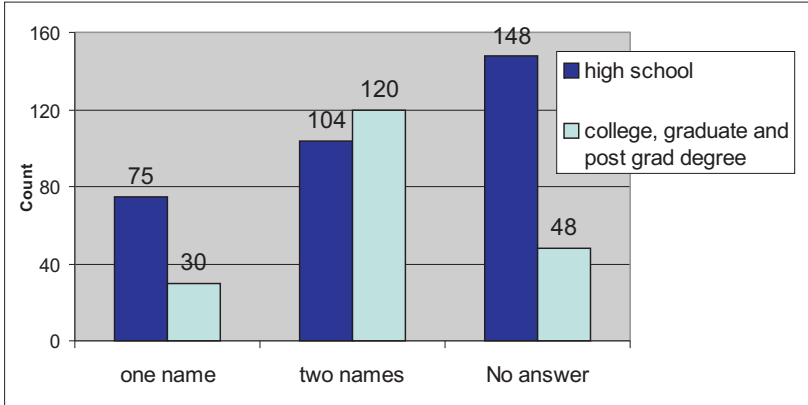
more names, which proved true in the responses. The results show that 3.47% of men and 5.35% of women listed one politician; 21.30% of men and 21.40% of women listed two; 54.34% of men and 52.50% of women listed more than two; and finally, 20.86% of men and 20.73% of women gave no answer. When we compare this answer with the previous one, we can see a significant difference, since men were twice as likely to give no answer when the question was about female politicians, a somewhat lower percentage of women than men gave no answer to that question, whereas the same percentage of male and female respondents gave no answer to the question about male politicians. Also, the percentage of women and men who named only one female politician was much higher than for male politicians, as most of them listed two or more names of male politicians.

This was expected, as the highest positions in the government – the Presidency, the Council of Ministers, and the entity and cantonal governments – are held by men, who appear in the media every day, so that even those who are not at all informed about politics remember at least the name of the president, the entity prime minister or cantonal prime minister. Also, due to the frequency of elections at the state and local levels, the public is oversaturated with political campaigns dominated in the media by male politicians, so that the informants remember them, whether they like it or not, and find them easier to recognize. The majority of informants cannot explain what political positions those politicians represent, what they fight for, or what policies they implement, because they only superficially follow political events.

Grouped by educational level, the informants in Graph 35 answered as follows: 32.18% of the informants with secondary education listed only one female politician, as did 15.15% of the informants with higher education (two-year college or university). Two names were given by 44.63% of the informants with secondary education and 60.60% of the informants with higher education. No answer was given by 63.51% of those with secondary education, and 24.24% of those with higher educa-



**Graph 35. Names of female politicians, by education**



tion. This is an indicator that the education level influences the understanding of the political scene in BiH, and that the more educated layer of the population pays more attention to the media, especially the political topics; they read the newspapers and are more informed about events. However, generally the more diligent voters are the less educated citizens and those who live in rural areas.

**Table 46. Names of female politicians, by type of residence**

NAME TWO FEMALE POLITICIANS	TYPE OF RESIDENCE			TOT.
	City	Suburban area	Village	
One name	69	15	18	102
Two names	173	23	26	222
More than two names	104	39	51	194
No answer	346	77	95	518

In the analysis of responses in Table 46, classified by place of residence, the percentage of informants who named one politician was almost the same for all environments: 18.94% in rural areas, 19.48% in suburban and 19.94% in urban areas. However, a higher percentage of informants from urban areas named two female politicians (50%), compared with informants from suburban areas (29.87%) and rural areas (27.36%). This result may be linked with the level of education and generally wider knowledge of the city population.

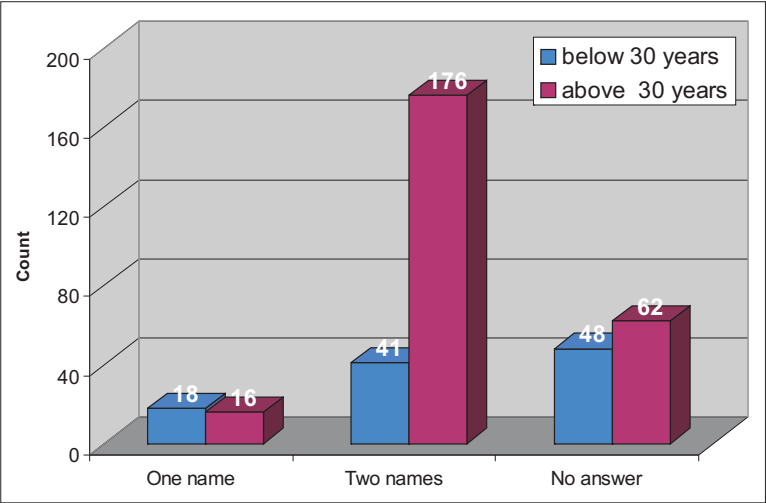
When it comes to the names of male politicians, stated by both men and women, Table 47 provides results classified by place of residence. The difference in answers is again obvious, as 60.69% of informants from urban areas, 42.85% from suburban areas and 37.89% from rural areas listed more than two politicians. This once again shows that the city population is better informed and pays more attention to political events and trends, which is also confirmed by the much lower

number of informants in cities who provided no response to this question (15.31%), compared with suburban (24.67%) and rural areas (32.63%).

**Table 47. Names of male politicians, by type of residence**

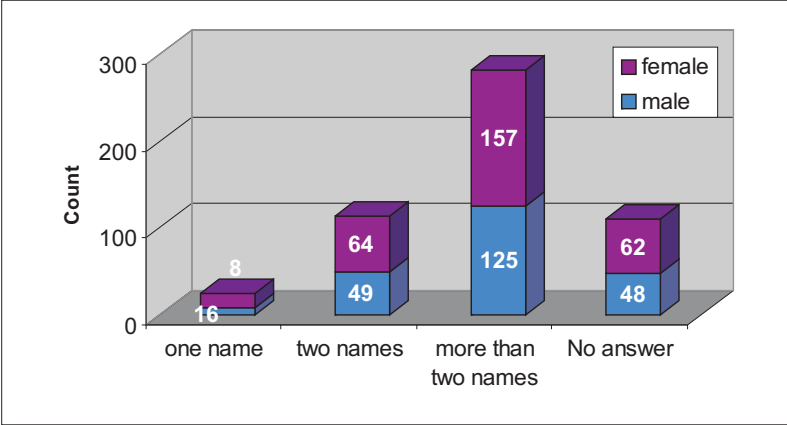
NAME A FEW MALE POLITICIANS	TYPE OF RESIDENCE			Tot.
	City	Suburban area	Village	
One name	16	5	3	24
Two names	67	20	25	112
More than two names	210	33	36	279
No answer	53	19	31	103
Total	346	77	95	518

**Graph 36. Names of female politicians, by age**



The results presented in Graph 36 aim at showing whether and to what extent there was a difference in the level of information and interest of the younger and older population regarding the political participation of women and politics in general. Older informants, obviously, kept better track of political events, including women’s participation in the political sphere. Only one female politician was named by 16.07% of informants younger than 30, and by 20.39% of those older than 30, whereas two names were mentioned by 36.60% of the younger and 43.78% of the older; 47.32% of the younger and 35.82% of the older gave no answer. This is not surprising, as young people generally care less about political events, vote less, and are rarely active in political parties, which are the regular mechanisms for initiating change in the state and society.

**Graph 37. Names of politicians, by age**



For the sake of comparison with the previous answers, Graph 37 presents the age classification of answers to the question about male politicians, in order to see whether younger people were better informed about them. Only one name was given by 2.67% of the younger informants and 4.97% of the older ones. Two names were listed by 26.78% of the younger informants, and 19.90% of the older ones. More than two names were given by 49.10% of the younger and 54.47% of the older, a much higher percentage compared to previous answers that relate to politicians. Even though the young were less interested in the political scene in BiH, it was easier for them to name a few male politicians than female politicians, and the percentage of those who did not respond to the previous question was much higher (47.32% of the younger and 35.82% of the older) compared to the number of informants that did not respond to this question (21.42% of the younger and 20.64% of the older).

Table 48 gives an overview of answers to this question by informants' religion, to determine whether there were differences in awareness of the political scene between believers with different religious identities and generally between believers, atheists and agnostics.

**Table 48. Names of politicians, by religious identity**

NAME TWO FEMALE POLITICIANS	BELIEVER						tot.
	Muslim	Catholic	Orthodox	Jew	Athe ist	Agn ostic	
One name	56	8	29	4	1	10	108
Two names	114	18	67	5	12	9	225
No answer	94	19	60	6	7	8	194
Total	264	45	156	15	20	27	527

The results of the comparison of answers, classified by religion, do not show any significant differences between the responses of believers, as 43.18% of the Muslims, 40% of the Catholics, 42.94% of the Orthodox and 33.33% of the Jews were able to name two female politicians. Thus, only the Jewish population, which is small, significantly differs from Christian and Muslim believers with responses indicating that they pay less attention to political affairs and to the participation of women in politics. The highest percentage of those who listed two names was found among atheists, but if we take into account the number of those who provided no answer (35% of atheists, in comparison to 35.60% of Muslims, 42.22% of Catholics, 38.46% of Orthodox and 40% of Jews), we can conclude that percentage-wise, the number of those who did not take an interest in the participation of women in politics was approximately the same in all groups.

### 7.1.7.2. Mistrust of Society in the Ability of Women to Govern

A high number of informants responded positively to the previous questions regarding voting and support for female politicians, based on which one could conclude that the situation is very advantageous for women and that there are equal opportunities for both sexes in the political arena. However, as we have seen from the analysis of the interviews with informants, their responses were not sincere, as in practice women did not enjoy such support, they did not have equal opportunities for participation in politics because they were overburdened in the private sphere, and there was no actual support from citizens and political parties. The following question refers to the social reality of BiH and the reasons for the very low representation of women in politics; multiple-choice answers were provided and were to be graded from 1 (the most important cause) to 6 (least important).

**Table 49. Causes of the low number of women in politics**

CAUSES OF THE LOW NUMBER OF WOMEN IN POLITICS	number	max. importance	min. importance	average
a) the difficult economic situation	322	1	6	4.43
b) being overburdened by other obligations	343	1	6	3.43
c) unequal opportunities for women and men	340	1	6	2.80
d) a value system in which women's place is in the home	336	1	6	3.09
e) religious rules and interpretations about women in society	329	1	6	4.35
f) society's lack of trust in the ability of women to govern the state	350	1	6	2.42

From the responses in Table 49 we can determine which reason for the under-representation of women in political life is perceived as most important.

Let us then, list the causes in order of importance, starting from the most important one:

**f) society's lack of trust in the ability of women to govern the state**

- c) unequal opportunities for women and men
- d) a value system that places women in the home
- b) being overburdened by other obligations
- e) religious rules and interpretations about woman's position in society
- a) the difficult economic situation

Most informants recognized the sixth answer offered as the most important one, that is, **society's lack of trust that a woman is capable of holding decision-making positions**. If we compare this answer to one of the previous questions, then we will notice a huge discrepancy in attitudes. Namely, asked whether there was a place for women in politics, 88.65% of informants answered in the affirmative; and asked whether women can be successful managers, 89.63% of women and 88.69% of men answered that they did trust women to be successful managers and to govern. Thus, most informants declaratively supported women in the sphere of political life in decision-making positions, but then they immediately stated the reasons why it was not so in practice.

Taking into account that practice said one thing, and the attitudes of informants another, we must ask whether and to what extent the informants provided sincere answers, or the answers that were socially desirable. Having in mind the answers to the 53<sup>rd</sup> question, as well as the clearly detected causes of the under-representation of women in politics, society's lack of trust in the ability of women to govern, it must be concluded that if they themselves thought and acted in such a manner, the actual state would have been significantly different and closer to their prior answers that they supported women in such positions.

Society's lack of trust in the ability of women to govern means that the socio-cultural and political environment is such that a woman is not trusted to perform highly responsible functions. This answer indicates the strong influence of the patriarchal values of our society and the dichotomy of private/public, based on which woman gets situated in the private sphere of action. Her role is reduced to motherhood and child rearing, while the public sphere is reserved for men. Furthermore, from the analysis in previous chapters, about the status of women in the monotheistic religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it is also obvious that the status of woman is to the greatest extent determined by the patriarchal culture. When the informants detect a patriarchal value system or, generally, society's lack of trust in the ability of woman to govern, as is the case in the present

research, it is necessary to analyze other answers from the Questionnaire to get valid information about the contribution of religion to all of this.

Stating the reasons why there were so few women in politics, the informants ranked in the fifth place (second to last) the influence of religious rules and interpretations about woman's place in society. In that context it is important to mention the messages of religious authorities about the place of women in family and society that the informants stated in Table 4. Most of these messages referred to the obligation of woman to be a good mother, caretaker, and housekeeper, obedient to her husband, devoted to her family, dedicated and full of love for others. Therefore, to society's lack of trust in the ability of women to govern and decide, we may add the perception of the role of woman in society, her psychosocial characteristics, her nature, and the way all her obligations are conditioned by motherhood, which is, on the one hand, a gift and blessing, and on the other the exclusive task of women. In further analysis of the society's lack of trust in the ability of women to govern the state, we shall link it with the nature of woman mentioned earlier. The nature of woman has still not been unburdened of original sin and of Eve, the cause of man's fall from Heaven, of the curse, the suffering and the temptation of man. Though religious communities have formally taken a step forward in defining the rights of women and men, exchanging the second rate status of woman for the concept of gender complementarity, in practice, women are still perceived as an unstable personality, sensitive, emotional and easily influenced, just as Eve was influenced by the serpent or the Shaytan/devil. In support of these claims, we may cite some of the statements of the informants that refer to the differences between female and male natures:

Boys are different from girls by nature, so the mothers unconsciously treat boys differently. Boys are less immune when babies, more sensitive, ill more often. They are physically more active, and differ from girls. (Orthodox female, Modriča)

Women have learned to react emotionally, because they bear children and are linked to the family, so it is normal that their emotional side is more developed, and men express it differently, through aggression. (Bosnian male, Bijeljina)

It all comes from the fact that woman is physically weaker. It is not natural for a woman to govern and lead the state. If she is smart, she might be an advisor. Take the example of Slobodan and Mira [Milošević] – where a woman was ruling – look what happened. (Orthodox male, Novo naselje, Bijeljina)

A woman is different from a man. A brother would not have killed his brother unless a woman talked him into it, it comes all the way from Eve, women talking men into things. (Orthodox male, Prijedor)

There are differences between women and men, even in the cerebral cortex. Emotions develop differently in men and women. (Muslim female, Mostar)

I have read an American study that confirms the differences in the brain of women and men. Men, for example, have a much larger sex centre than women. (Catholic female, Kakanj)

Women surely are more merciful; they forgive more easily, they suffer more, they are more patient, but they also, we must admit, are more reckless. (Muslim female, S. Most)

The patriarchal tradition, intertwined with the religious image of woman, her nature and her place in society, does not accept women in decision-making places and in political life. The reasons are always founded on the unstable nature of woman; she has her roots in the nature of the first woman, Eve, who in the Biblical narrative succumbed to temptation and was punished for her disobedience with subordination to her husband. These are the attitudes of the practicing believers, but also of others who practice their faith in God in their own specific ways. How present this image is in the religious traditions can best be seen among the young who have "reverted" to the roots of their religion, or have met with religion during or after the war. Thus, the young who came of age in the period from the 1990s up until today, under the influence of the revival of religious traditions in symbiosis with national or nationalistic ideologies, have more conservative attitudes about the role of women in society. I will give some examples to illustrate that fact. Some young men, who identified themselves as practicing Muslims educated in the faith, when asked about differences in psychosocial characteristics of men and women, gave expression to most of the stereotypes about the nature of women, though they in principle supported equality and the participation of women in political life:

From my own experience I can say that women are emotional and weak, wavering and unstable. It is hard for me to trust a woman, as she changes her mind every five minutes. I cannot rely on her. It was not for nothing that the elders said that a woman easily changes her mind. (Muslim male, Mostar)

Such statements were further explained by the sayings (*hadiths*) attributed to Prophet Muhammad that woman was created from a crooked rib and that she is sensitive by nature, and that is why women are to be treated gently and with care.

Another example are some young men who identified themselves as practicing Orthodox, well acquainted with the teachings of their own tradition. In defining women's nature, they had attitudes more similar to those of the early and medieval Christian fathers than to the interpretations of today, also in the Orthodox tradition, that advocate the concept of complementarity of women and men:

It is hard to entrust women with decision-making and governing, as they are easily influenced, just like their mother Eve. Secondly, they fall in love too quickly and they ruin both their honor and their office. (Orthodox male, Modriča)

The third example, concerning young Catholic men, is similar to the previous ones, except that their arguments were not as explicit as the arguments of the previous two:

Women can do almost everything, except for those jobs that require male muscles. They are intellectually as capable as men, but are emotionally weaker and gentler. It comes from the gift of motherhood, which is what conditions woman's nature the most. The mother gives birth and raises children, she has more love and mercy; and that doesn't work in politics, what works there is decisiveness and a certain dose of positive aggression. (Catholic male, Mostar)

If we take into account these examples and thoughts about the nature of woman, it becomes quite clear why the Bosnian and Herzegovinian society lacks trust in women as administrators and decision-makers. A smaller number of informants, who identified themselves as atheists and agnostics, did not make such distinctions between the female and male natures, but cited various modern surveys, psychoanalyses, Freud's interpretations of female nature, and their own experiences. As they live in a patriarchal culture, and they were raised in families where religion was practiced and religious values lived, their attitudes are not entirely free of the dichotomized image of society and positioning of women in the private sphere that is advocated and promoted by religious traditions:

I am not a believer, but I think that there are certain psycho-social differences between men and women that have been scientifically confirmed. The female and male brains do not function in the same way; women are more inclined to one type of tasks, and men to the other, though there are exceptions, so some women can perform any job as well as men, and vice versa. (Jewish male, Sarajevo)

I do not believe in religious interpretations of original sin and the guilt carried by women as a result, but I think that differences do exist. From my own experience I know that women back down, they are not combative and are too emotional to make difficult decisions. (Bosnian female, Banja Luka)

I have had both women and men for bosses, and I think that the latter are more stable, they do not lose their common sense like some women who get influenced by power. I think that men are more decisive in that sphere of life, and women are more decisive in some other situations, especially when it comes to family. (Muslim female, Tuzla)

A very low percentage of informants thought that these were all stereotypes and that it was an individual matter whether a woman or a man was more capable of performing certain tasks. A great number of those who at first declared themselves supporters of the participation of women in politics admitted in the end that women were different, had better intuition, and that maybe politics would be of higher quality if we introduced different rules of the game and if in the current political environ-



ment emotionality and intuition were valued as much as courage, decisiveness, rationality and aggressiveness. In the grading of answers, informants ranked religion and religious interpretations as a less important reason, which does not correspond at all with their answers to other questions in the Questionnaire, where they ranked religion as very important. We can see from other questions that there were no women in religious communities, especially in leading positions; there were no women interpreting religion and religious rules; and, finally, the views of the status of women in the family and society promoted by religious authorities and officials mostly placed women in the sphere of family, child-rearing, obedience, caring for others, serving and similar.

Taking into account that most informants defined themselves as believers, these answers could be understood as an attempt to protect the reputation of their religious traditions, as was the case with the question whether women are equal to men in religious traditions. A high number responded that they were, but that equality meant the division of roles and tasks, and that excluding women from certain positions in their opinion was not discrimination. In this case the same logic could be applied as the one used by informants, because if religious officials do not explicitly talk about women being prohibited from getting involved in politics, or do not mention them at all, which is the most common case, most of them do not interpret it as an obstacle *per se*. However, in this case as well it is very clear that the messages of religious authorities focus on three important roles of women: 1) to be a good mother and wife; 2) to be honorable, good and obedient; 3) to care for the house and the family.

The second answer by importance is answer **c) unequal opportunities for women and men**, followed by **d) a value system that places the woman in the house** and **b) being overburdened by other obligations**. These answers reflect the essential influence of the patriarchal tradition, and its part in the religious sphere, and they place it as the most important reason why there are few women in politics. Namely, the stated answers with their relatively high percentages cumulatively confirm the importance of religious rules and interpretations about the place of woman in society in connection with political participation.

## **7.2. Views of Religious Communities on the Role of Women in the Family and BiH Society**

The previous chapters have presented the theoretical framework of the status of woman in religious traditions and the attitudes of informants about the relation of religious communities towards the participation of women in the religious and civil spheres. Based on their replies, we have concluded that women are insufficiently represented in religious communities, and that there are no women in high-ranking positions in the hierarchies of the communities. The participation of women is mostly related to education, humanitarian activities, caring for others, and, possibly, the cultural activities of the community. There are no women in those leading positions in the communities that are not subject to the religious laws on ordination, laying on of hands or appointment. The following two sections present the attitudes of religious communities that I have gathered in interviews with religious officials active in the field, and by analysis of the religious magazines.

### **7.2.1. Interviews with Religious Officials**

The interviews were anonymous as they were about – as some of them put it – “sensitive” subjects that are rarely addressed. The interviews with religious officials (priests, Catholic and Orthodox, imams and rabbis) were conducted with a prepared framework Questionnaire. The informants were three imams, two Catholic and two Orthodox priests and one rabbi. The general impressions are very similar to those with all interview participants, as only a few of them were willing to agree to an interview. The reasons they gave were that they did not know enough about the subject, and that I needed to look for a professor of theology. However my intention was not to research the attitudes of the theoreticians of religious sciences, but rather those of the officials actively working with people every day. It was important to hear what they thought about the status of woman in public life and politics.

All informants gave wide spectrum of answers, with much digression, so it was necessary to keep coming back to the question and insist on getting an answer. For them, it was a way of avoiding direct answers, which was another indicator that they did not feel comfortable talking about these topics, but that they also wanted to avoid too much public exposure. Some of them reserved themselves with the often repeated statement that the rules and regulations had been established a long time ago, and they did not need to think about or explain something they had no right to change. Others, however, very openly talked about different cultural influences and customs that have been imposed by the patriarchal order, hierarchical relations and

women's subordination. The results of the conversations with religious officials shall be briefly presented here under a few different headings.

### **7.2.1.1. Position of Women in the Holy Books (creation, intellectual and spiritual levels)**

#### **Islamic perspective**

*– The Qur'an clearly says that we have been created from one man and one woman, and divided into tribes in order to get to know each other. There is no characteristic that is special to man and not to woman. We are equal by creation and are responsible before God.*

*– Allah created man and woman at the same time, but our roles are different. Biological differences determine the advantages of one or the other.*

*– If God had wanted it, he would have created woman before man, and he would not have taken her out of Adam's rib. There probably exists a reason for that, but I do not know it.*

*– There are specific male and female natures, though there are some people who go beyond those frames.*

*– Men are more inclined towards the rational, pragmatic, women more towards instinct, they change their opinions faster, forgive sooner and express their feelings more.*

*– A woman is a bit more nervous and sensitive due to menstruation, and Sharia takes that as an important circumstance in some cases. Accidents happen at work due to that, and other similar things. That is why the Islamic tradition insists on two women for a witness, so that they can remind each other.*

*– My life experience tells me that I would rather have a woman as a witness than a man, because she is more responsible. But our tradition is such and I would not dwell on whether it needs to be changed.*

*– Men are sensitive, but women much more so, that is their characteristic, maybe because of motherhood.*

*– Intellectual strength and potential is an individual characteristic of every person and has nothing to do with sex, it is just that in the culture and life-style, men have been more in a position to use that capacity than women.*

*– Woman was created with the same rights and obligations as man. There are certain limitations in physical terms, as women cannot bear hard physical burdens like men can.*

*– A woman can achieve the same spiritual levels as a man, and even higher, due to the position she often finds herself in, unprotected and exposed to violence. A woman has no choice, so she turns to God, and that is how she can*

*feel a higher degree of faith than a man. However, that is not so widely known in public, due to the culture in which it is shameful to talk about one's suffering.*

### **Orthodox perspective**

- The first woman was created out of Adam's rib, a bone from a bone, which can be understood as fairly equal. There are no differences between men and women, except in their physical constitution. Christianity does not clearly define what the sex God created in the beginning was like.*
- There are interpretations that we are all three fourths of one sex and one fourth of the other, and that we are all looking for that part to become complete, and that we all carry in ourselves both the male and the female sex.*
- In theology there is no difference, but in tradition there is, in what is called patriarchal relations, in interpretations and relations that are often very egoistic.*
- Christ was born a man, because no one would have listened to a woman. It all depended upon the social order. But the Mother of God elevated humankind, she is the new Eve. Both men and women are equally guilty for having sinned.*
- A woman is more sensitive by nature because of her motherhood role, and the man is the one who is stronger and who can protect his family by force, while the woman keeps it together with her care.*
- A woman is intellectually as capable as a man, it was just that it was not acceptable in the patriarchal culture for her to express that potential properly.*
- Spiritually, both women and men can equally achieve glory before God; there are many women who reached that level either through their martyrdom or through their devoted work and faith. The highest level was achieved by the Mother of God, who rose above all.*

### **Catholic perspective**

- The position of women in the Bible is not easy to explain, as we are talking about the huge and rich heritage of Christianity, where women were always present.*
- Women are, according to the Bible, equal in dignity with men, as we have all been created in the image of God, but different in function; that is why their roles are complementary.*
- Women are equal to men on the intellectual level, and can perform all the tasks they have been called on to perform, i.e. those tasks that are appropriate to their femininity.*

- *A woman's calling is motherhood, and that is the most honorable role; the best role model is Mary Mother of God who elevated motherhood to the highest level.*
- *Women followed Jesus and were invited to listen to the word of God, but were not called on to be apostles.*
- *Women can become saints; there are many examples, like St. Clare of Assisi, St. Macrina, and more recently Mother Theresa, as well as many others who devoted their lives to serving God and the Church.*
- *The spiritual levels of women differ, to some extent, from the spiritual levels of men, as men have been called to perform some roles that women have not, thus they cannot achieve spiritual attainments in those domains to which they have not been called.*

### **Jewish perspective**

- *The first woman and man were created in the image of God, as is described in the Bible.*
- *The man was created first, then the woman, and that is why she is his other half, his helper without whom he is incomplete.*
- *There are differences, not only biological ones, but also differences in the psychological setup of men and women.*
- *Women are more emotional, weaker and more sensitive, and for those reasons they have been excluded from many duties men have.*
- *Intellectually, woman is as capable as man, though in the past some rabbinic interpretations presented this differently and forbade women to study the Torah and other holy books.*
- *The situation today is completely different. Women, just like men, work and take action, but their respective roles must not be forgotten.*
- *One need not sacrifice what God has given and what is important, for the sake of some passing talk that we are all equal and we can all do everything. Well, we can't.*
- *Women can attain spiritual levels; there were women prophets like Miriam, and other famous heroines of the Jewish past... However, there are limitations. In the end, God revealed Himself to Moses, and chose men as his missionaries, not women.*

### 7.2.1.2. Gender Relations in Religious Tradition (relation of woman and men, hierarchical relation, complementarity or equality)

#### Islamic perspective

- *Men and women are partners in marriage, they mutually agree and act for the benefit of the family. There is no blind obedience, nor hierarchy, but communication – that's what we all have too little of today and that's why many marriages fall apart.*
- *Prophet Muhammad took advice from his wives, for example, from Umm Salama, whose advice helped him avoid conflict when Muslims from Medina tried to perform Hajj for the first time.*
- *Islam does not allow male supremacy, for which there is no foundation, nor any type of discrimination, because the Qur'an says: "...they are your garments and ye are their garments".*
- *The man has the obligation to take care of his wife, he has more responsibilities than his wife, and the wife can manage her own property - a thing rarely mentioned. In BiH, if a woman tries to take her due inheritance, she is rejected and criticized. This is ignorance and a bad custom.*
- *However, men are stronger and more stable, and more inclined to act in accordance with reason.*
- *Men are shepherds in their house and are responsible for it, and if someone is responsible, then he must make sure that his family lives in accordance with Islam.*
- *A woman has equal rights: she has the same rights and obligations before God and people, but some tasks, like the imamhood are not her calling.*
- *It is not discriminatory that a woman cannot be an imam, or that she inherits less, or that two [female] witnesses are needed in court, because the aim is to protect the woman from unnecessary exposure to difficult situations.*
- *We have equal rights where Allah has so decided, and we cannot ask ourselves why it is so, there is no need. If Allah determined that women should inherit less, or that they cannot be imams, it should be accepted; I do not need any special explanations.*
- *Decisions in marriage should be made jointly, and I would personally leave some decisions to women, because I think they can do a better job.*

## Orthodox perspective

- *Christ is love, and the essence of existence is love. It is in such a relationship of love that man and woman should comport themselves. He is not literally superior, but is closer to Christ in his duties.*
- *Man has been called into community with God to love; that is why a man and a woman supplement each other and form a perfect whole only together.*
- *Marriage is the church writ small, and man and woman are priest and priestess. As much as Christ is the head of the church, so is he the head of that small community.*
- *The husband is the head of the family, as Christ is the head of man; and the way he needs to love his body, he needs to behave towards his wife. The head of the family needs to act with love, and not to be proud and to abuse his role. Unfortunately, in practice egoism prevails.*
- *In every society, the one who is superior, both in brains and strength, will have the chief say. If the woman is the stronger one, she will have the final say.*
- *The obligation of woman in marriage is special, as she holds three corners of the house. What a mother can do is the highest a woman can reach.*
- *Woman is equal in rights in Christianity, but she is not the same as a man, nor should she be. She does not need to be a feminist and to demand this and that to get fulfillment, because in Christianity we get fulfillment in the community.*
- *The fact that a woman cannot stand behind the altar, or perform the duties of a priest, does not mean she is not equal. If you ask women, most of them will tell you that they do not feel unequal as believers just because they cannot perform certain functions.*

## Catholic perspective

- *A wife and a husband should be one in Christ, as St. Paul defined it, and should guard the holy sacrament of marriage, as Jesus Christ taught us.*
  - *We do not need to regard the relations between women and men as hierarchic, though it used to be so. The Catholic Church has changed a lot of things since the Second Vatican Council, even the attitudes about the relations between men and women, who are understood as complementary.*
  - *People I know mostly complement each other. But men do not go around in public bragging about doing household tasks, though they are ready to do everything for the family; and younger ones are even readier to help their wives. The needs and wellbeing of the family should be in the first place.*
- Any work that serves the family is positive. However, the first years of motherhood, when woman needs to stay at home with the child, are not appropriate for the woman to work and place her career first. If the mother must work in*

*the first years of motherhood then there should be the possibility of working part time and ensuring benefits for mothers.*

*– It is important for the mother to be with her child because she gives everything to the child; she gives the joy of life to the child and her family. The child inherits the mother's characteristics more than the father's. Mothers convey emotions to their children. The role of the father needs to be changed nowadays, because his role used to be a strict one. Today's parental roles should be complementary, so that they can exchange roles when one of them is absent. The absence of one of the parents during the upbringing results in the child feeling insecure.*

*– Women should not strive to become men - that's the fault of emancipation. Equality should not be understood in terms of contemporary categories and the concept of equality, because we are not and cannot be equal. Woman should develop within the gifts she has and as she is. To become a man would mean to take over male functions, hard physical activities and the like.*

*– A woman who needs to go to the construction site or into the mine is not equal; she is subjugated and should not fight for such emancipation.*

### **Jewish perspective**

*– Men and women get married by their own will, they sign a contract (ketubah) and oblige themselves to lead their lives in accordance with the law and tradition.*

*– The man takes care of his wife and family, and the woman takes care of the children, their upbringing, and ensures that the dietary rules and other duties are respected.*

*– The relation used to be hierarchical, but that has changed, especially in the reformed branches of Judaism; here [in BiH], women are more often asked for their opinion than men.*

*– A man has more duties than a woman - in the synagogue and during the rituals. Women have no such duties, so men are more present in public.*

*– Women are equal to men in the Jewish tradition from the perspective of God's law that defines a place for everyone, but not from the perspective of today's promotion of equal rights.*

*– Women, as well as some men in the Jewish tradition were not satisfied with this order, so they created new, reformed forms neglecting the law that has existed for more than five thousand years.*

*– We are talking about the division of roles and the complementarity of woman and man. A woman has her roles, the most important being the one in the family, and man has his.*



### 7.2.1.3. Messages Conveyed to Women and how often Women are the Topic

#### Islamic perspective

- *I often speak about issues concerning women, but always in connection with other relations in the family, marriage, and community.*
- *A woman in the Islamic tradition is primarily a mother. But not only that; she has other roles: she is a wife, caretaker, adviser, partner in marriage, friend and helper, as well as a public personality in public life.*
- *Women in our community can listen to all lectures, and to Jumm'a prayer on the radio or the public address over the speakers - they are informed.*
- *I pay the most attention to the fact that women are mothers and caretakers and that they try hard to fulfill that role - the rest is less important.*
- *It would be best if women could talk with other women about certain topics. We do that sometimes during the Ramadan when we have muallimas as our guests (female religious teachers).*

#### Orthodox perspective

- *In the church, you always address the believers, men and women, standing before you. The Mother of God is always mentioned, as she is the best example. She is particularly mentioned on Mother's Day which is devoted to women.*
- *I cannot divide the community, for me the two of them (the man and woman) make one. When they are not together, it is a problem, as the Church as an institution is a community where all form a single body.*
- *Besides in church, we can talk about specific issues during special sermons or confessions. In such cases, women most often come because of their children.*
- *I address everyone as "brothers and sisters"; the messages are for the whole community. Today the biggest worry is the birthrate - as the birthrate is lower than the mortality rate.*
- *Preserving the family is an important aspect of the sermon. Those who can have no more children should guard what they have because children can suffer due to bad upbringing.*

## Catholic perspective

- *We do not very often talk about subjects that only concern women, we talk about the family, which includes both women and men.*
- *There are topics that women perhaps find easier to discuss with other women - we are not trained for all the problems we encounter; however, what is important is good will.*
- *Even when we talk about women, the messages most often refer to their roles as mothers, wives, and child bearers. Women have been honored by this calling and should serve it honorably.*
- *The most important thing is that a woman is a good mother, as many other things in the family and society depend upon that. If she fails that test, everything else is bad, because the mother is the most important teacher who can build a stable psychological personality, but also an unstable personality who will fail to fit into society.*
- *The mother transfers the love of God to her children, in the best and most natural way - that is a priceless value. Therefore, my messages emphasize child rearing as the primary and most important duty of women.*
- *I never say that a woman needs to be obedient to her husband, but that they need to be obedient to each other (followed by laughter). However, sometimes it is good for a woman to listen to what the husband has to say and not react emotionally like most women do.*

## Jewish perspective

- *My messages refer to everything. There are so few Jews here that we do not select particular topics. We are lucky if there are enough people for a prayer..*
- *Generally, my messages to women speak about the preservation of the family, as the foundation for everything else; the importance of upbringing. A woman who raises her children, performs a miracle greater than any business undertaking.*
- *I also speak about the need for women to get married. There are many unmarried women without families but with careers. What use is the career when she grows old? The career won't come and visit and take care of her, not to mention her dues to the community to leave decent offspring behind her.*
- *Messages are conveyed to women when they come of age, at the first menstruation. Nowadays it's mostly mothers that do it, but also rabbis or someone else, in order to make the girl understand that she is now an adult and has responsibilities. That is the turning point, when a young person is taught to live in accordance with the rules.*

### **7.2.1.4. Participation of Women in the Religious Community and the Possibility of Performing the Functions of Priests, Rabbis and Imams**

#### **Islamic perspective**

- *The basic Islamic duties have been prescribed for women and men equally, the difference is that women can perform those rituals at home, which is more practical because of the children, but they can also come to the mosque.*
- *A woman prays, fasts, gives zakat, goes on the Hajj, does everything men do, except in cases when there is a justified prohibition against doing so.*
- *Women are not worth less in the saff (row in prayer/salat), they need to respect the rules on the order in the mosques - that women and men should not mix.*
- *Women do not lead the rituals even though they can lead a jama'at for women and other rituals,*
- *Women do not attend funerals, visit on Eid holidays or participate in Jumm'a prayers, except in rare places. That's how it is here, in some other Muslim countries the practice is different. In the time of the Prophet, women visited on Eid holidays, but our custom in BiH is that they do not, and that is how it has remained.*
- *Women ask more question, are braver than men when it comes to publicly reciting the Qur'an; they more often attend, are more interested and are easier to influence.*
- *I support the idea of women working in the Islamic Community because they are more educated now.*
- *There are very few women employed in the bodies of the Islamic Community, in the regional boards (medžlis), local boards and commissions, with a few exceptions. Such is the tradition, and women have not insisted. We would accept them in the community if they insisted. That would help our work with women.*
- *Women mostly work in education, they teach religion, are professors in madrasas and faculties.*
- *I would suggest and support that women be appointed to boards, even as chairpersons of local and regional (medžlis) boards.*
- *Women can even do better than us men, but we are not giving them the space. One example is the chairperson of the Tešanj Board, she brought about a revival. I would support capable women who are willing to work.*
- *Women are members of community assemblies like men; they have a right to vote, but they are not aware of it, and local imams never propose women.*

- *It is hard for men to allow their wives to be candidates. She would need to attend meetings - a married woman. They all say: the single ones can do it, but married ones cannot.*
- *I absolutely do not support the imamhood of women because our religion does not foresee it. She cannot be an imam to men; I do not support such a thing because it would breach the rules and regulations.*
- *It was not so in the time of Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. If that is how it should be, he would have introduced the practice. I do not know why it is so but I have no problems accepting it and I do not wish to question the reasons. Allah said so - that is reason enough.*
- *Men do not accept a woman in front of them. It is a different experience because a woman is a greater temptation to a man than vice versa. The reason might be the fact that women must cover more body parts than men, or maybe the ritual uncleanness during menstruation when women do not pray or enter the mosque.*
- *In BiH, we pay a lot of attention to the form, so an imam who is handsome, good looking and has a nice (soft) voice can get a job and a good position much easier than others; it is similar in this case: form is in the first place, and the essence of standing before God is in the second place.*

## **Orthodox perspective**

- *Women are equal participants in the ritual. They are active and they are a part of the community just like men.*
- *There are no rules about the attire and order on the church premises - though there used to be in our tradition. Women used to wear headscarves, which is found today in some places, and mainly functions to avoid drawing attention to oneself. Those who dress in a provocative manner want to draw attention to themselves. Those are people who come to the Church, and one needs to work with them; once they start living in accordance with God, they will realize that they need to dress appropriately.*
- *There are no rules on entering and exiting the Church. All those who come are equal before God.*
- *Women can perform all functions in church except for those of priests. They can work in departments, boards, commissions and the like.*
- *Women are particularly active in charity, education and cultural activities.*
- *Nuns have their tasks. Long time ago there were deaconesses who helped during rituals. The practice does not exist today, as there is no need for it.*
- *They can teach at faculties, however, not many of them do. The problem is, they graduate and marry priests; some stay, though.*
- *A woman could lead the prayer, but the sacred mysteries belong only to consecrated persons - who are men.*

- *The reasons why women cannot be priests lie in the fact that in the Judeo-Christian tradition only men were elected, and the overall development of society contributed to this.*
- *When God established the priesthood among the Jews, he chose Aaron and men from the tribe of Levi.*
- *Though there are women considered equals to the apostles, like Mary Magdalene, they have not been called to administer the sacred mysteries.*
- *It is tradition, and we respect it. If it were different, we would respect that.*

### **Catholic perspective**

- *In the Catholic church women participate in rituals and prayers on equal terms, they are equally invited to fulfill their commitments to God.*
  - *Women attend mass, even more regularly than men, and are more devoted to the church.*
  - *Women participate in funerals as well, they do not lead the prayer, but stand in the back with other laypeople, where they can follow the ceremony and pray.*
  - *Today, women and men sit together in church, but it used to be different depending on the customs and the cultures in which the church lived and work.*
  - *Women can perform all tasks except for the spiritual ones in the church that require meeting special conditions defined in the canons.*
- Women are very active, particularly in education and assistance to others.*
- *Beside the nuns, who are most involved in the work of the church, other women also participate in various boards and commissions, some are even leaders of certain types of activities.*
  - *It is impossible for a woman to be a priest. What Christ left to us we respect until this day. If the church was built upon that then let it be, women will not be less equal if they cannot be priests.*
  - *Jesus had a mother but did not make her an apostle. He did not do that, and that's how it's been since Christ established the Church.*
  - *Mary Magdalene did follow Jesus, he did communicate with women and accepted that they followed him; however, he never made them apostles.*
  - *Magdalene did not become his disciple or his apostle because that position has its price. But she was the first to announce the good news.*
  - *The apostles and disciples were the ones who spent all their time with Jesus during his mission, experienced everything and learnt the teachings. That is why women were not counted in.*

*– A woman is the first to announce the happy news in the family, but she cannot do so in church; women rely on the heart and emotions more than the intellect and reason. That is the natural state of a mother.*

## **Jewish perspective**

- According to the law women are not obliged to perform the positive commandments (mitzvot) as there are limitations due to obligations in the family, the menstrual cycle, and the postnatal cycle.*
- Jewish life requires all its members to fulfill their part, that the Law may be fully respected.*
- Women should take care of kosher food and other dietary rules, and prepare everything for the Sabbath (Saturday) that is reserved for rest and prayer.*
- Women come to prayer here, but they do not read the Torah, nor do they pray aloud nor are they counted in the quorum (minyan).*
- There used to be rules on where women sit and where men sit. Women sit separately and should cover their heads during prayer and they should be ritually clean.*
- Women may work in the Jewish community; there are no obstacles even to their being presidents.*
- They can participate in various educational and humanitarian activities, and they do that within the framework we work in.*
- Women concentrate most on preserving the tradition, which was lost in the last century due to various atheising pressures.*
- Unfortunately, we do not have educated people, whether men or women, so it is hard to talk about the participation of women.*
- Women cannot be rabbis. It has been so since the beginning, so there is no need for further discussion.*
- How can a woman be a rabbi and lead the congregation when she is absent from the synagogue for 15 days due to ritual uncleanness?*
- Rituals are not women's obligation; they can attend, but they don't have to. The question is, how can a person who is not obliged to attend lead the ritual for those who are obliged to attend?*
- It is a new fashion trend in the reformed communities to allow women to be rabbis. They had to neglect all the rules on ritual cleanness and the like.*
- I would not accept women as rabbis as it is not their responsibility. They are rabbis at home, where they need to raise children and keep the family stable. That is worth more than the volumes of books written by rabbis.*

### 7.2.1.5. Participation of Women in Government and Politics

#### Islamic perspective

- I support women in politics if they are capable and professional.*
  - She may be an extraordinary politician, the only question is, how will she manage her household duties?*
  - Experience shows that it is easier to agree upon things with lady ministers. I think women listen more.*
  - Generally speaking, we all support women's participation in politics, but not with our own wives - there the story ends. It is a customary tradition and it is socially unacceptable for a married woman to be absent for long and to be exposed to inappropriate situations.*
  - Maybe if the working conditions in politics changed, there would be more women.*
- In my opinion, women must fight for their rights and in order to do so they must be involved in politics; married women must, of course, do so in agreement with their husbands.*

#### Orthodox perspective

- Women in politics are not often mentioned, but I support women's participation in politics as long as they can reconcile all their duties - and that is not impossible.*
- The best time for women with families is after they turn 40, after they have brought up the children.*
- The same does not apply to men, because they do not have the same tasks as women, though they must participate in the upbringing of children.*
- A woman is a mother, and unlike a man, she will rarely decide to rush into the unknown and insecure, that is perhaps why less women opt for politics.*
- Men rarely share household tasks, because there are some tasks that women do more easily, and some that men cannot do at all. This should be accepted.*
- When a woman and a man make an agreement, it is their decision and that is the most important point here.*



## Catholic perspective

- *We are a traditional society, where the roles of men and women are more or less known. The question how much of tradition should be preserved and what should be changed in gender relations is an open one.*
- *Traditional values are important, and if we apply them, we will have more respect and agreement in society. However, one should not blindly obey every rule: some things need a critical perspective.*
- *Woman can be politically active because equal participation of women and men would contribute to the progress of society. We need to be represented by the best, whether men or women.*
- *Believers need to support women in politics as well, but women find it hard to enter that sphere and most often we hear messages in favor of men.*
- *In church we do not speak about politics, so we do not speak about support for women in politics.*
- *Priests cannot tell believers who they should vote for.*
- *Women are capable of being politically active, but that is when their children grow up and when the period of intensive motherhood passes. That is the time when children need their mother most in order to develop into stable personalities.*
- *Maybe women could be in the highest positions of power, but the circumstances are such that it is very hard for women to survive there.*
- *A woman is more sensitive than a man: she does not need to participate in the ruthless struggle for power that will turn her into a man and where she would lose all the gifts she has as a woman.*

## Jewish perspective

- *Women can participate in the government, but not in the most demanding positions.*
- *I would support women, that is, the younger ones without many obligations, or those who with grown children who have the time for it.*
- *I think that a woman can be a good politician, the only question is how she will reconcile her private obligations with her work and politics, because politics demands time. If she cannot reconcile those, she will fail.*
- *The problem is that most people support other men's wives and do not even think about the option of their own wives being candidates.*



### 7.2.1.6. Summary of Interviews with Religious Officials

This overview of the attitudes shared by religious officials of the four religious traditions is a very good indicator of the official policy pursued by religious communities concerning the role of women in the private and public spheres of life. The interviews were anonymous, so individual statements have been summarized thematically. The attitudes of the representatives of all the religious traditions are mostly patriarchal and the majority keep to traditions, norms and regulations created and shaped centuries ago within the dominantly masculine theological and legal environment. They emphasized the importance of the social and historical circumstances and way of life, as well as the ultimate importance of the preservation of the family as a guarantee for the survival of the nation and a healthy community. Some of the interlocutors advocated the importance of a critical perspective on some issues in their respective religious traditions, as the demands of the time we live in pose new challenges that the communities often find difficult to face. But that should be initiated by someone else, as the Bosnian and Herzegovinian religious communities do not have the capacity of the big educational and religious centers. The attitudes about the role and place of women in the community and society may be summarized as follows:

*Woman is equal to man in creation, and has the same intellectual and spiritual potential, however, there are biological differences that condition the different psycho-social characteristics of women and men;*

*Inter-gender relations are defined as equal, but it is explained that the exclusion of women from certain spheres of action and from performing the function of priests in Christian churches, as well as from being imams and rabbis, from being witnesses on equal terms with men, and from inheriting the same as men in the Islamic and Jewish traditions, does not mean that they are less equal;*

*Marital relations between men and women are complementary relations, not an unfounded hierarchy, and therefore men may not abuse the role of shepherd, guardian and head of family that they have been charged with;*

*Women cannot unconditionally pursue the emancipation that is being imposed on them by the West; they should try to fulfill themselves in the community and in the gifts bestowed upon them, the most important and honorable of which is motherhood;*

*All of them support political participation, on the condition that the woman manages to reconcile it with her family obligations and that she reaches agreement with her husband.*

### 7.2.2. Analysis of Religious Communities' Magazines

The subject of this analysis is the image of woman promoted by religious communities through their official magazines, that is, through print media aimed primarily at their members, but also at the broader BH public. The Jewish community was not included since they do not have their Magazine. The reason for analyzing the image of woman in the framework of a project on the "religious other" is that woman is conceived as other with regard to man (de Beauvoir, 1989) and that she does not participate in the representation of the group to which she belongs (Lacan, 1977).

There are several definitions of otherness, but the most prominent are those that concern the other sex and the other culture. The other and otherness has become a category of philosophy, mainly as a result of Simone de Beauvoir's definition of woman in patriarchal society as a being different from man. A different definition of otherness and the other is that of Orientalism – the Western conception of the Orient (Said, 1978). He demonstrates how European culture defines the East as radically other, not based on its knowledge of Asia or of non-European cultures, but simply as an opposite to its self-conception.

It is well known that women have for centuries been systematically excluded from the sphere of public life and from positions of power. One of the most influential factors promoting such a policy have been the churches and religious communities, whose rules and interpretations imposed a patriarchal value system with a distinctively hierarchical power structure. Given that religious communities enjoy great authority and popular trust (Tomić-Koludrović and Kunac, 2000), it is important to examine what model of womanhood they promote and what messages they send to male and female believers. On the one hand, this greatly influences the system of values in a society, and on the other, it reflects the actual status of woman in that society.

There are various theoretical accounts for how we understand the other. On one account, the way we look at and represent the other and the different is circumscribed by language and by visual symbols that contain the meaning(s) of our messages. The key question is why we pay attention to the other and different, and the answer is that difference is essential to the understanding and to the very existence of meaning. Jacques Derrida argues that there is always a question of bipolar power relations – upper class/lower class, man/woman, black/white and so on – and that one pole is always dominant with respect to the other (Derrida, 1981).

Another account is also tied to language, but from a different angle. Difference is necessary because meaning can be constructed and created only in dialogue with the other and the different. However, the Russian linguist Bakhtin argues holds that

meaning does not belong to either speaker in the dialogue but emerges in the very process and interaction of give-and-take (Bakhtin, 1981).

A third, more anthropological account seeks to show that culture depends on the meanings that one social group imposes on the rest of the world, placing those meanings in an organized system of classification (Douglas, 1966). Lévi-Strauss, too, has worked on this problem and has asserted that classification can be done on multiple levels, taking differences into account (Lévi-Strauss, 1970).

A fourth account is a psychoanalytical one, with the key argument that otherness is essential to the constitution of self. Lacan explained this with the fact that the child does not have a conception of itself and its self, its identity, until it distinguishes itself from the mother, or until it sees itself from another's point of view. (Lacan, 1997.)

It is clear from the above accounts, then, that from linguistic, anthropological and psychoanalytic perspectives, we can understand the question of the other and the different as one in which we construct our identity and our self. The subject of the present analysis of the contents of religious media is to what extent and in what way women are represented in the texts and in the accompanying symbols, and how this shows their position as other in relation to men in their own religious discourse. This is, furthermore, closely connected with the question of power. Very often, the concept of power is understood in the sense of economic power, physical coercion, prohibition or control; however, there also exist other kinds of power in a cultural and symbolic sense, that are promoted in media.

Symbolic and cultural power works through stereotypical images of the other and the different to create unequal relations between social and gender groups. This power is particularly evident in gender relations, which are dominated by stereotypical images of the the roles of men and women and about the hierarchy of patriarchal society. If these images are imposed by the official establishment of a religious community, which has great influence on the forming of attitudes to oneself and to others, it is extremely important to examine what messages we receive through the official magazines of religious communities.

The aim of the analysis is to find out, using quantitative and qualitative methods, how the magazines of religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina represent woman and what value system they promote and defend, in terms of the following four questions:

- to what extent are women represented as authors of texts in religious magazines;
- what topics and questions about women are represented;
- what roles, functions, qualities and attributes are ascribed to women in the text contents and in the accompanying pictorial symbols;
- what messages and images prevail in these texts and pictorial symbols.

The basic hypotheses, confirmed in previous analyses of religious magazines (Savić, 1995), are:

- that religious communities perceive woman as otherness;
- that women are not equally represented in the hierarchical structures of religious communities;
- that women are mainly represented in the fields of education, social and medical care-giving, and other service activities;
- that the role of mother and child-raiser is glorified as one by which women gain a special place both in the community and before God.

The results of this analysis will tell whether these hypotheses are confirmed, or whether we find a different concept of gender politics.

The method used will be quantitative and qualitative content analysis of religious magazines (Savić, 1995), to establish the number, kinds and contents of messages sent by the official magazines of religious communities in BiH about the role and position of woman in the family and society.

### 7.2.2.1. Sample

For this purpose, I have selected three official religious magazines for the period January–March 2006:

- *Katolički tjednik* (Catholic Church, BiH);
- *Preporod* (Islamic Community, BiH);
- *Pravoslavlje* (Orthodox Patriarchy, Belgrade).

The *Pravoslavlje* and *Preporod* magazines appear twice a month, and *Katolički tjednik* once a week, while *Preporod* is considerably larger than the other two, so quantitatively, there is more material for *Katolički tjednik* and *Preporod*. Even so, there is sufficient material for a comparative analysis of these three religious magazines, since the qualitative part of the analysis, in which one can see the actual attitudes and views of religious communities concerning woman's role in society, is by far the more important part. For all three magazines, the text (including headline, text body, byline), its content, and its accompanying illustrations will be analyzed. The analysis will include the categories unsigned and signed texts (whether signed by full name, initials, monastic name, religious title, or pseudonym).

**Katolički tjednik** ("Catholic Weekly") is the official magazine of the Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its founder and publisher is the ordinariate of the Archdiocese of Vrhbosna (Sarajevo). It appears weekly and is also distributed outside BiH in Croatia and to the worldwide Croat diaspora. The format is approximately A4, and every issue has 42 pages. It is printed in BiH in the Croatian language, with color illustrations.

**Preporod** (“Rebirth”, subtitled “Islamic informative magazine”) is published by the Rijaset (executive) of the Islamic Community in BiH as an official magazine appearing bimonthly. It is distributed in all the countries of the former Yugoslavia as well as in the congregations of the worldwide Bosniak diaspora. The format is A3, with a variable number of pages from 40 to 56. It is printed in BiH in Bosnian language, mainly in black and white, though with some color illustrations.

**Pravoslavlje** is published in Belgrade, but it is aimed also at a readership in BiH and the other countries of the region as well as worldwide diaspora communities. The Serbian Orthodox Church is organized so that the Orthodox Church in BiH is under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Patriarchy in Belgrade, the most widespread and influential print medium of which is *Pravoslavlje*. The other religious periodicals of the Orthodox Church, published by the individual eparchies, do not enjoy the same authority and geographical coverage. The format is A4, and each issue has 51 pages. The magazine appears twice a month, and is distributed in the countries of the former Yugoslavia and in the Serb diaspora. It is printed in Belgrade in Serbian language with Cyrillic script.

## 7.2.2.2. Results

The results fall under four headings: the relative frequency of male and female authors, and the kinds of the texts they write; the frequency of topics dedicated to women; the roles of men and women; and text content analysis.

### 7.2.2.2.1. Male and Female Authors, their Texts and Topics

I will first present quantitative data about the number of women and men who appear as authors of the texts and creators of illustrations and other accompanying materials, as well as women’s representation in editorial policy. There will follow an analysis of what kinds of text are written about women and by women in the three publications.

The total number of texts analyzed is 1,146, of which 498 in *Katolički tjednik* (12 issues), 234 in *Pravoslavlje* (6 issues), and 414 in *Preporod* (6 issues), all from the period January–March 2006. Of these, a total of 748 were signed with a full name, allowing us to determine the sex of the author (Table 50, Graph 38), while the rest were unsigned, signed with initials only, or from news agencies.

In *Katolički tjednik*, there are 278 signed texts, 53 of them (19%) by women. *Preporod* has 338 signed texts, a significantly larger number, but only 26 of them (7.7% of the total) are signed by women, nearly three times less than in *Katolički tjednik*. *Pravoslavlje* has a total of 132 signed texts, 27 of them (20.5%) signed by

women. This is the highest percentage of female authorship. Women, then, have a small share in the authorship of texts, especially in *Preporod*, but it is also important to analyze what women write about.

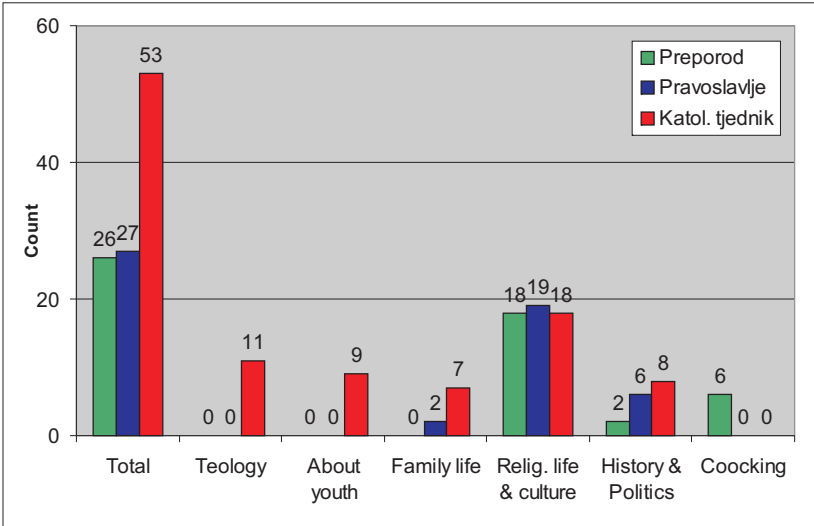
In **Katolički tjednik**, the greatest share of the texts signed by women relates to religious life and culture (18 texts, 33%). Women most often write short reports about religious and cultural events in which, judging by the illustrations, both men and women participate, though the pictures are predominantly of men, especially pictures of religious authorities and important persons from religious and cultural life. Second most numerous are theological texts; it is positive that women write, comment, and discuss theological questions (11 texts, 20.8%). Third come texts about young people, their activities in the church and in the framework of church events (9 texts, 17%). Fourth come texts from the fields of history and politics, presentations of historical persons and events (8 texts, 15%). Finally, there are topics related to family and everyday life, and on how to overcome frustration with the help of faith (7 texts, 13.2%).

**Table 50: Texts of female authors by subject matter**

Subject	Preporod	Pravoslavlje	Katolički tjednik	Sum
Religious life and culture	18	19	18	55
History and politics	2	6	8	16
Theology	0	0	11	11
Family	0	2	7	9
Youth	0	0	9	9
Cooking	6	0	0	6
Total	26	27	53	106

In **Preporod**, the greatest share of the texts signed by women relates to religious life and culture; they are about religious and cultural events, public talks, and religious weddings (18 texts, 69%). The second group are texts about cooking, or recipes for housewives (6 texts, 23%), and the third is connected with history and politics (2 texts, 7.8%, of which one is a translation and the other is a report on the founding of a Women's forum for protection of the rights of Muslim women in Europe). In *Preporod*, then, women do not deal with theological topics at all. However, they also do not write about family matters, which, in other cases, is what women most often deal with when they are given space to write. It is also interesting that there are no articles dedicated to young people and their participation in religious life.

**Graph 38** *Texts of female authors by subject matter*



In **Pravoslavlje** as in the two foregoing magazines, the greatest share of texts with women authors concerns religious life and culture (19 texts, 70.4%). This is followed by texts on history and politics, tied to the current political events in Kosovo (6 texts, 22.2%) and finally texts on family life and child-raising (2 texts, 7.4%). As in *Preporod*, women in this magazine do not write about theological topics. Such topics are the exclusive preserve of male authors.

**7.2.2.2.2. Texts about Women**

In this section I will present the texts that deal with women, whether they are entirely dedicated to women or only indirectly relate to them. The aim is to spot the messages that directly or indirectly tell the readers what roles the religious community promotes for women.

**Table 51:** *Texts about women by subject matter*

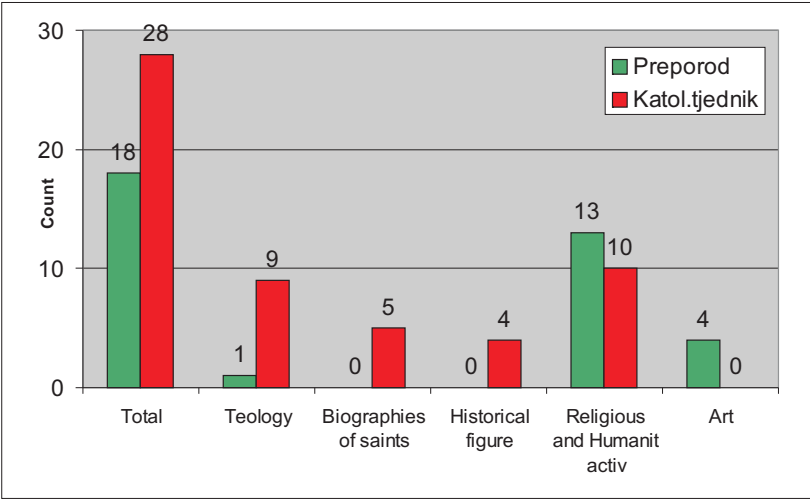
Subject matter	Preporod	Pravoslavlje	Katolički tjednik	Sum
Theology	18	0	28	46
Religious and humanitarian activities	13	0	10	23
Saints' lives	0	0	9	9
Historical personalities	0	0	4	4
Art	4	0	0	4
Total	35	0	51	86

Table 51 (Graph 39) shows the number of texts about women by subject matter, that is, the context and activities in which women are mentioned. It is clear that women do not only mostly write about religious and cultural events, they are also most often written about in these areas of social activity.

In **Katolički tjednik**, the gratest number of texts is devoted to family life and the role of mother and child-raiser. The remainder of the texts devoted to the lives of saints and famous historical personalities in Christian tradition sends a clear message that if woman is not a mother and is not raising children, it is best for her to be devoted to the service of God or to care for others, as do religious sisters in the frame-work of the church. Since women are only mentioned twice in decision-making posi-tions in public life, in the context of a visit by a female Croatian government minister to the Banja Luka parish office about refugee return, it is clear that this kind of engagement is relegated to the back of the drawer. Compared with the number of male politicians that are presented both in words and pictures (29 pictures), it is clear that the sphere of politics and decision-making is mainly reserved for men. Nor are other occupations better represented. Women appear in three other kinds of profes-sion: seven writers and poets, six journalists and two teachers. Besides church call-ings as nuns and religious sisters (who in two cases appear also as the conductors of church choirs), then, women are most frequently represented in the arts, journalism, and education, the fields in which women are generally present in high percentages in society (so-called female occupations).

The other most important kind of topic devoted to women is in the field of theology (9 texts, 32% of the total number of texts about women). Two women regu-larly write on topics concerning the preservation of spirituality, morality, and life according to Christian teachings.

**Graph 39** *Texts about women by subject matter*





Although one gets the impression from the illustrations that there is a high percentage of women represented, because of the photos of nuns and other women who are active in the fields of family life, education, and cultural events, the textual contents are not proportionate. Furthermore, it is clear that only men appear on the first ten pages (and sometimes more), and that the topics here are exclusively connected with men. If one bears in mind that in journalism, the first pages or first part of the newspaper or magazine are used for the most important and striking topics, it is clear who, in the official messages of the religious community, is “more equal” (in the Orwellian sense), who is the norm to which all must conform (Lacan, 1977) – and who is the other with respect to that norm.

Women are also outside the hierarchy. They are not found in high-level religious delegations, nor as representatives of the official political community. This is also attested to by the fact that, according to an unofficial survey, women are not found in the hierarchical structure of the community at all, nor in the more important positions.

The general impression is that there prevails in the texts a stereotypical positioning of male and female persons, which goes to confirm the thesis that the messages sent to believers by the religious communities on the one hand influence the value system, and on the other hand reflect the actual position of women in society (Spahić-Šiljak, 2005). The latter is attested by a study on the socio-economic situation of women in BiH (STAR, 2003) that shows the dichotomy between a male/public and a female/private sphere of activity, and the restriction of women to motherhood and fields of work that are a natural extension of her duties in the private sphere.

Based on the messages sent by *Katolički tjednik*, the position of woman is second-class, marginal, and mainly restricted to the “naturally conditioned” role of mother, spouse, or nun. In other social positions she is represented very rarely, and without power or influence.

Regarding **Pravoslavlje**, it is important to stress that though the magazine has a high percentage of female authors, *it has no texts about women at all*. There is not a single topic wholly or even partly devoted to women. Since there are no texts on women, one may conclude that the Orthodox Church promotes a policy of disregard. These questions simply are not in the church’s field of interest and attention, unlike the other historical, cultural, and political topics that female authors, too, write about in *Pravoslavlje*. In *Pravoslavlje*, women have space to write about these topics that interest the church, but they have no space to write about women’s issues, not even about the purely religious topics that one might expect in the contents of this magazine.

The official message of the church, then, promotes the negation of the "Other," who not only does not raise enough interest to even be an "Other," but is completely isolated and excluded. In this way, women and questions that directly or indirectly touch on women fall into oblivion, which is worse than criticism or open confrontation, for in an open dialogue, one arrives at some solution, but the disregarded and forgotten person ceases to exist and to be relevant (Mernissi, 1993). The conclusion is that women have to struggle not only against the position of the other and the second-class, but also against the policy of disregard that excludes them from the collective memory and history of a people, community, or group.

**Preporod** (unlike *Katolički tjednik*) does not deal with family issues at all, or at least, in the issues analyzed there is not a single text about it. Topics from religious and cultural life and humanitarian activities take up the most space, whether the authors are men or women. The role of women in religious life is mainly limited to the celebration of women who have become *hafizas* (who have learned the whole Qur'an by heart); women who participate in religious gatherings, whether as choir members or taking their final examinations (*hatma*) in religious instruction in the *mekteb*. In one interview with a young *hafiza*, the girl repeats a stereotypical image of woman as having a concentration deficit due to menstruation and as being more emotional, and therefore more easily upset by small difficulties, than men are (*Preporod*, 15 February 2006: 21).

The second most notable role of women is in the field of culture and the arts – in this case motion pictures, because there is extensive coverage of the movie *Grbavica* for which the director Jasmila Žbanić received the Golden Bear award (four texts, 22%). Although the director is celebrated, the articles are mostly about the content of the movie: the women who suffered in the recent war, against whom the crime of rape was committed, but who did not receive either legal nor social protection in BH society. In the third place is the role of the female journalist, who writes about various everyday topics, such as cooking, or reports from religious and cultural events.

Women as leaders, whether as managers, directors, or politicians, are almost invisible, for there appears only one woman in each of those roles, in the frame of some "more important" topic. For instance, a woman director appears once in a text about the recognition awarded to deserving individuals by the Gazi Husrev-beg *medresa* in Sarajevo. Women do not at all appear as theologians, nor do they write on significant issues in fields where rules and value systems are created. Taking into consideration that a large number of women have graduated from theology since the study was founded, it is surprising that there are no women writing, commenting on, and translating texts of that kind. There are no women in the official delegations of the Islamic Community, whether in the high delegations led by the *Reis ul-ulema* or in the delegations led by muftis or other representatives of the lower

bodies of the Islamic Community,. The reason is that there are no women in the hierarchical structure of the community or in decision-making positions, save an insignificant number of women members of the Assembly of the Islamic Community, who are not many enough to influence the passing of any decisions (in 2006 there were three women, making up 3.6% of the 83 members).

Women, then, have a marginal position in the textual contents. Questions strictly concerning women are hardly discussed. Women do not appear on the first pages of *Preporod* except in a few cases (as writers of letters to the editor, in connection with world events, or as converts to Islam), and as already mentioned, the first pages always carry the key news. The position of woman is the position of the other, who is not only different but also second-class in all spheres of religious, cultural, and political life. Women are mainly the implementers of established policies, norms, and standards that are always created for them by someone else. This is also confirmed by data from the above-mentioned study on the socio-economic position of women in BiH, which shows that women are under-represented in positions of power, decision-making and policy-making, and that the traditional division of labor and roles between men and women is still the preferred one (STAR, 2003).

### 7.2.2.2.3. Roles of Women and Men

Since women often appear in illustrations, especially in *Preporod* and *Katolički tjednik* and less often in *Pravoslavlje*, it is important to analyze the kind of roles in which women are represented. The following data on the visual depiction of male and female roles, then, will tell us something about the gender policy of the religious community. Table 52 shows the frequency of the male and female family roles depicted in the illustrations of *Katolički tjednik* and *Preporod*. In *Pravoslavlje*, there are no such pictures at all (this magazine is generally less illustrated than the two others.)

It is not surprising that the roles of mother and daughter are the most frequently represented, followed by the roles of father, wife, husband, and son. The mother is the paradigm of the homeland and hearth, as is symbolically underlined by a *Preporod* heading: "Bosnia is like the face of a mother" (*Preporod*, no. 5, 1 March 2006: 19).

All the texts promote the model of the pious woman, whether the connection is to the Mother of God, to a saint, to some other historical person, or to pious women in a present-day context. She is, above all, a good mother, whose most sacred task is to bring up her family and fulfill the sacred duty she has been given. In one of the texts signed by Don Jozo Ančić, the author stresses that children's upbringing is the most exalted and holy task of the mother, for it is the mother who shapes the character of the child ("Odgojna zadaća žene, majke," *Katolički tjednik*, no. 11: 32). Other

texts by the same author thematically devoted to women have similar messages, reducing the role of woman to motherhood, piety, and giving her love to others.

**Table 52: Family roles of persons depicted**

Role	Preporod	Katolički tjednik	Pravoslavlje	Sum.
<b>Mother</b>	11	10		21
<b>Daughter</b>	5	9		14
<b>Father</b>	7	6		13
<b>Wife</b>	6	5		11
<b>Husband</b>	6	5		11
<b>Son</b>	3	5		8
<b>Grandmother</b>	0	2		2
<b>Grandfather</b>	0	1		1
<b>Brother</b>	0	1		1
<b>Sister</b>	0	1		1
<b>Total</b>	38	45		83

Androcentric interpretations within the religious discourse of monotheist religions define woman as “otherness” with respect to man and a male God, reducing her personality to an object, which results in the subordinate position of women. This is why feminist theologians insist on reconceptualizing a language and intellectual framework in which both man and woman would be subjects of culture and scientific discourse (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1996). In this way one might deconstruct the social construction of gender that was created and institutionalized by the patriarchal elite (de Beauvoir, 1989). The language of religious discourse in the monotheist traditions is highly masculinized, so that all these traditions are dominated by the father figure or figure of God the Father who has power and authority, and by grammatically masculine nouns: pope, bishop, *reis*, mufti, cardinal, metropolitan, Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, believer, follower, etc.<sup>533</sup>

The illustrations sometimes correspond to and follow the contents of the text, but sometimes they are not strictly tied to it. For example, in *Katolički tjednik* the role of mother appears not only in illustrations of texts about family life, but also in other texts.<sup>534</sup> In *Preporod*, sadly, the figure of the mother appears most often in connection with the suffering of Bosniaks, the sons lost in the war in BiH, and the search for missing family members, or in current war zones around the Muslim world. Mothers

<sup>533</sup> All of which are grammatically masculine in Bosnian, or have a masculine and a feminine form, of which the masculine form alone tends to be used.

<sup>534</sup> See e. g. “Vjera ljubi i tješi,” *Katolički tjednik*, no. 1 (8 January 2006).

are unfortunately still connected with the suffering and pain that dominates Bosniak political discourse.

In this section, I analyze the occupations and religious roles of women as well as men to indicate the range and kinds of roles of each, and to more explicitly show the position of the “other” in the official policy of religious communities (Table 53 and 53).

The greatest number of pictures of women in various religious roles and occupations is in **Katolički tjednik** (79 pictures). Nuns and religious sisters appear in half of these (40 pictures). This is followed by pictures of saints from Catholic history (9), Mary the Mother of God (7), journalists (7), disciples of Jesus (6), and poets. Other everyday roles such as teachers, directors, or politicians are quite marginal. The illustrations depicting women, then, are dominated by pictures of religious sisters engaged in education, aid work, and care for the ill and the weak, which is a direct message to the readership what kind of woman person is preferred in the Catholic church. In comparison, it is clear that pictures of males are more frequent and that they are dominated by pictures of cardinals and bishops (104), popes (61), and priests of various ranks (55), followed by educators and theologians (54). Politicians appear on 29 pictures, which is not a high share (6.1%) of the total number of males depicted. Male figures, then, occupy the most important positions in the church and in religious life, positions that are characterized by power. This kind of spiritual power has a strong effect on the minds of male and female believers, for the pictures presented establish the domination of the male sex over the female sex (in terms suggested by Derrida, 1981.)

**Preporod** has a significantly lower number of pictures of women compared with *Katolički tjednik*. The greatest number is of female artists (7) who have distinguished themselves in defense of human rights, especially the human rights of women who suffered in the past war. They are followed by journalists (6) appearing as authors of texts, and *muallimas* (religion teachers, 4) and *hafize* (who know the Qur'an by heart, 4). Compared to *Katolički tjednik*, where pictures of nuns predominate, the pictures of *muallimas* in Preporod are hard to notice, although they work in the same activities – education and cultural events – as the nuns in the Catholic magazine. This is evidence that the traditional division of labor is promoted and that women continue to be most strongly represented in so-called “female occupations.” The image of woman as director, professor, and politician is presented once each.

The general impression is that there really are not any women on the pictures, except in the background of some religious, cultural, or political event. Women are not present in a single significant gathering organized by the Islamic Community or

meeting attended by its representatives, except somewhere in the background or as service staff at receptions or official visits.<sup>535</sup>

In comparison, men occupy the majority of the illustrations. Most of these show imams (75 pictures) in the framework of various religious, cultural, and political activities. Imams, then, are the key figures in the Islamic community and they officially represent it, while *muallimas* are in a second-class position, for they appear only as participants in certain events, but not as representatives. There follow 58 pictures of politicians (20.4% of the pictures of males), which is a rather large number for a religious magazine. The reason may be the large number of pictures in the column "News from the Islamic world," where sadly there is a large number of war going on, and so the number of such news is fairly large. Besides, a large number of politicians' pictures appears in connection with the visits of official delegations of the Islamic Community to the authorities of BiH and other countries to solve problems regarding the religious freedoms and rights of Muslims in BiH and in the diaspora.

The conclusion is that women are entirely marginalized in the pictorial messages, which presents a clear message about the status and positions of men and women. Men dominate in roles of power and authority, and women in secondary roles tied to questions of education, culture, and conversion to Islam. This signifies a strict polarity and domination of one sex over the other (Derrida, 1981).

**Pravoslavljje** has the fewest pictures compared to the other two magazines, and the number of pictures of women is also very low in comparison. Women appear only in eleven illustrations, of which six show the Mother of God (*Bogorodica, theotokos*), but only as accompanying pictorial symbols in a text that deals with some other, "more important" historical, political, or cultural topic.<sup>536</sup>

There are also three pictures of nuns, shown in the background of some other "more important" event, such as witnesses to the destruction of the churches in Kosovo (*Pravoslavljje*, no. 936, 15 March 2006).

When we compare with the pictures of men, we see that the situation is the same as with the previous two papers, for the pictures of religious leaders of various ranks in the hierarchy predominate. Priests appear on the greatest number of pictures (37), followed by bishops, metropolitans and the patriarch (36). Politicians appear on 17 pictures (11% of male pictures).

In conclusion, women are entirely relegated to the back of the drawer, for they appear only incidentally in the framework of other and more important topics. Their role is reduced to the point where one gets the first impression that there are no

535 See Preporod, no. 1 (1 January 2006): 4; *Preporod*, no. 3 (1 February 2006): 14.

536 See *Pravoslavljje*, no. 931–932 (1–15 February 2006): 26–27.

women in this magazine at all. The domination of male figures clearly shows who has the authority, power, and position to define the rules and establish the norms. As in the two other papers, man is the norm and woman is otherness deep in the man's shadow (Lacan, 1977).

#### **7.2.2.2.4. Summary of the Analysis**

The analysis of the texts, illustrations, authorship, the numbers and kinds of texts by or about women, and the depiction of male and female figures in the three religious magazines *Katolički tjednik*, *Preporod* and *Pravoslavlje* confirms the initial hypotheses:

The religious communities perceive women as otherness, and very often ignore her completely in their texts and illustrations, as is the case with the magazine *Pravoslavlje*.

Women are not equally represented in the hierarchical structures of the religious communities. They are not found in their official bodies and delegations. This is characteristic of all three religious magazines.

Women are mainly represented in the fields of education, social and health care, and culinary and other service activities, which are extensions of housework and the duties that women carry out every day.

Female authors are under-represented relative to males. For the most part, they write neither about women, nor about theological issues, except in *Katolički tjednik*, where female theologians have the space to deal with the most important topics of a religious magazine.

The role of mother and child-raiser is glorified as one in which women gain a special position in the community and before God. This is particularly stressed in *Katolički tjednik*.





## 8. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODS AND CONCLUSION

The theoretical foundations of the empirical research for Women, Religion and Politics: Impact analysis of interpretative religious heritage of Judaism, Christianity and Islam on the engagement of women in public life and politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina began with theoretical notions and functions of religion. These notions and functions include:

- The status of women,
- Gender roles in monotheistic traditions,
- Interpretations of the creation of man and a woman,
- Messages delivered by males who take it upon themselves to define the nature of women,
- Rights to participate in education, economics, rituals, community work, public life and politics.

These issues are then directly applied to the context of political and socio-economic rights of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The manners and methods of the empirical research are elaborated, including the substance and results of the Questionnaires, analysis of religious magazines, and the interviews that were conducted with religious officials and the analysis of religious magazines.

The entire endeavor has been conducted with the aim of determining whether and how monotheistic religions influence the status of women in public life and politics.

### 8.1. Theoretical considerations

#### Notions and Functions of Religion

Since religion yields what *is essentially* important to a society (Emil Durkheim), it is critical to study religion to fully understand the cultures and civilizations in which we live, and the relations we build in family and society. This book offered substantive (Durkheim and Tylor), functional (Jinger) and symbolic (Geertz) definitions of religion. While trying to understand how people perceive the meaning of life and explain certain phenomena in society, scientists have analyzed different religious forms and functions. Among them, chosen to inform this book are: the *identity and*

*identification function*, the *interiorized control function*, and the *ideological religious function* (Šušnjić, Đuro, 1998). Though all three are integral to this research, the ideological function is crucial. Ideologically conditioned interpretations of the relation between man and woman serve as justification for hierarchical approaches to life, discrimination and exclusion of women from the religious interpretive processes and women's place in institutions (Shussler Fiorenza, Elizabeth, 1996), the major concerns of this book.

## Woman in Jewish Tradition's Legacy

When analyzing the status of women in Jewish tradition and defining gender roles on the basis of the *Sacred* texts and the Law, we concluded that patriarchal tradition significantly shaped the attitudes and theological and legal solutions created by rabbis over a period of more than five thousand years. The Divine egalitarian message was for centuries intertwined with the masculine ideology of patriarchy, so that it is very hard to grasp its egalitarian spirit and concept. The analysis of the historic Jewish legacy showed that:

- Women are, according to the sequence of creation (second Biblical story and creation from the rib) given the secondary position, with an incomplete nature, weaknesses and susceptibility to men, which conditioned the division of roles for women and men in both the private and public spheres;
- Women were not allowed to be formally educated and study the *Torah* and *Talmud*, except in some more educated and aristocratic families who were able to establish schools, examples of which we find in the Middle Ages;
- The advantages of inheritance were given to men, except when the daughter was the only inheritor, but along with this,
- Women were entitled to receive the dowry (*mohar*), which – especially with richer families – would give the woman economic security;
- Women were not counted into the quorum in the synagogue (*minyán*) nor invited to read the Sacred texts;
- Women did not participate in public and political life of the community although in the *Bible* there are examples of women who were spiritual and worldly leaders; nevertheless such female paradigms have been suppressed by male spiritual leaders and teachers;
- Reform, and later Reconstructionist, and Conservative branches of Judaism promoted and re-endorsed at least in theory, and often in practice, the egalitarian divine message and universal principles of gender equality during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. This resulted in growing integration of women into the faith life of Jewish communities. Women received opportunities to help create new concepts like *Bat*

*Mitzvah* – the ceremony of maturity for girls, as a parallel to the *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony for boys, and ultimately to be ordained as rabbis.

## Women in Christian Tradition's Legacy

Insight into Christian tradition's legacy, with its centuries-long interpretations of the role of women as men interpreted it from the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible about the status and the role of women, reveals that the patriarchal culturological matrix significantly influenced the subordinated position of women in the family, and the exclusion of women from public religious life. Dominant masculine theological thought came close to completely suppressing the egalitarian spirit of Jesus' teachings related to the participation of women in the life of the community. This participation was a reality during the first centuries of Christianity, before it became the state religion of the Roman Empire. Analysis of the Christian tradition showed that the role of women is perceived in the following way:

- Women were blamed for the Original sin, the Fall from Heaven, and the entrance of the sin into the world, attitudes leading to and justifying the murder of thousands of women during the Middle Ages;
- The Jewish patriarchal Pharisee tradition, in which St. Paul was raised, along with the thinking of Aristotle and St. Thomas, influenced the perceptions of female nature as sinful, incomplete, and seductive, necessitating the belief that just as a man is under the leadership of Christ, a wife should be under the leadership of her husband;
- Because women were not supposed to teach but learn in the secrecy of their homes, they were consequently excluded from the formulation of theological thought and church canons. Still, there were prominent women educated in religious studies, who could therefore testify, in writing and by their actions, to the glory of the faith;
- The economic status of a woman was inseparable from her marital status, since it is after the wedding that man and woman gain the right to use their property. According to the Church law, the property of the woman, and how she used her time and formulated her service, were in the hands of her husband, though inheritance was mostly regulated by state laws, which until the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century did not include women as legal subjects;
- Originally women actively participated in Church life, serving even as *deaconesses*, but their role was later minimized and reduced to monastic life, teaching, and care and assistance to the needy;
- Women were not present in public life and politics, except as ruler's wives who could influence political events behind the scenes, but not through direct exercise of power;

- Christian churches changed their attitudes; Beginning with reformed Protestant Churches recognizing woman's completeness, her creation in the image of God, and her common obligation to promote the Word of God. The Catholic Church, after the Second Vatican council (1962-1965) amended its course in gender policy, and instead of subordinated relation between the sexes, the notion that men and women were complementary was introduced, and also adopted by the Orthodox Church. This allowed women to receive education, and to perform functions in churches, even as they were prohibited from becoming priests. Nevertheless thanks to their own efforts in Protestant churches, women started preaching as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, so that by 1894, the Conference of Brotherly Churches adopted a Resolution guaranteeing women the right to serve as female pastors and priests. The first officially ordained woman was Mary Sterling, who preached in the USA, in the states of Virginia and Pennsylvania.

## Women in Islamic Tradition's Legacy

Based on Qur'anic messages and interpretation of the practice of the Prophet, it is possible to conclude that the patriarchal tradition and masculine ideology significantly influenced the egalitarian message and ultimately replaced it with a hierarchy that suppressed women and relegated them to the confines and privacy of their homes. The attempts of the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. to ensure women's dignity through rights and obligations of parties to contractual agreements were replaced with old culturological concepts of hierarchical relations promoted by the Meccan aristocracy. Although woman was not blamed for the expulsion from Jannat (Paradise), since the Qur'an contains egalitarian stories about the creation of man and woman, sayings attributed to the Prophet (*hadith*) are filled with stories about the creation of woman from the crooked rib, with consequences similar to those in Judeo-Christian tradition:

- Interpreters characterize female nature as fragile and weak, requiring, like the crooked rib, caution so as not to straighten (liberate) it. Accordingly, in time, protection of women came to mean exclusion from all social events, and the requirement that women be covered with a veil and be silent;
- Women were excluded from intellectual processes and the shaping of the interpretive process and substance of Islam. They were not prohibited from gaining knowledge within the family, and inside private female schools. There were even prominent women with knowledge in Sharia, theology, philosophy, Arabic language and art, and they taught some of the great Islamic scholars, including Ibn Asakir and Ibn Arabi;

- Women have the right to inherit and use their property (half less than men), to earn, sell and buy, with no obligation to spend money in the support of the family;
- Women were invited to take part in mosque rituals, but in separate rooms, and behind the rows of men. They were not able to lead mixed jama'ats, only female ones;
- Women were excluded from public and political life, with the rare exceptions of women (wives or daughters of rulers) that ruled at certain periods, but who were completely expunged from the pages of official history. Since Islam does not have a Church-like hierarchy, it was the social, political and cultural environments of diverse Muslim countries, many of which adopted modified European rules and laws, that determined gender policy. Those policies that purported to allow for greater freedom usually still meant that in the sphere of family and marital law the application of Sharia was preserved and interpreted differently at different places. Women gained legitimacy to be present in educational and other state institutions, even to participate in the government but the situation remains unchanged when it comes to participation of women in rituals and possibilities to appoint women imams for mixed jama'ats.

## **Women and Politics in BiH**

This chapter gives a short overview of how women acquired the right to vote in BiH within the SFRY in 1946 together with the constitutional guarantee of equal participation of women in political life. After the liberation of Sarajevo on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1945, women have actively taken part in the public and political life, what led to the foundation of AFŽBiH whose activities were primarily focused on the solving of social problems in the country destroyed by war and the campaigns to make women vote at elections, that enabled women to enter the politics area. But as the AFŽBiH acted as the part of the Communist Party and as a comprising part of the general National Front, it was the technical executor of the political goals that have been created in advance, with a series of branches and a cumbersome bureaucratic apparatus, so it could not have had the actual power or a more significant effect on the improvement of the position of women.

In the period from 1946 to 1953 women were represented in the National Assembly of BiH from 4 to 5 %, and in 1965 the percentage increased to 15%, to fall again to 7% of women in the republic and municipal assemblies in 1969. The stated reasons for such a fall were higher competition, but also the impossibility of implementing the legally established gender equality criteria in practice, (Smiljana Leinert-Novosel, 1990). In the period after 1969 the literacy and employment rates of

women increased, as did the percentage of their participation in politics, so in the period 1974-1986 we see 15 to 24 % of women at the republic level, and 15-17 % at municipal level in BiH. The high decision making positions remained inaccessible for women what was explained by the fact that "women were the part of the political self-management system, but have remained outside the core of decision making" (Slobodanka Markov, 1984). The researches conducted in the region (Tanja Renner in Slovenia) show that, beside the socio-economic factor, we should examine the institutional, socio-cultural and other factors of under-representation of women in politics. The *Star Pilot* research conducted in BiH (Bakšić-Muftić, Jasna, 2003) confirmed that the relation of women and men at the political scene corresponds to their relation in family life, where the patriarchal culture grants men the role and power of deciding that is being then transferred into the public sphere of action.

Socio-cultural factors and economic rights of women in the period from 1946 until today have been taken into account when women in political life were considered. The status of women until the establishment of SFRY was mostly regulated by customary law, civil codes and confessional law within the religious communities that had the autonomy to regulate the family, marital and proprietary relations in the time of the Ottoman Empire, but also later during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Until the adoption of Austro-Hungarian Code in BiH the Sharia law regulated inheritance and property rights of Muslims, and the customary law regulated the rights of non-Muslims in these areas, but only in 1911 the wider reception of the Austro-Hungarian legislation occurred, and this legislation continued to respect the customary law. By the establishment of SFRY all confessional laws went out of force, formally and legally. The Constitution guaranteed the equality of women and men, and gave women the right to education and equality before law, enabling more employment opportunities, better standard of living and inclusion of a number of women in all spheres of life. Under the influence of the patriarchal culture, women were mostly employed in the so called "female professions", less paid and leaving more time for family obligations, as the family and child bearing remained the woman's duty. In rural areas women were in an even harder position, as they were less educated and continued to live under the customary law rules, having no right to inherit, except for the dowry and the things that the woman received at the wedding. However, it was unacceptable in culture, even shameful, if the woman registered as hers even that small part of, in most cases, movable property. Such perceptions are present even today in rural areas.

In the beginning of 1990's BiH enters a period of political and economic transition, which was disrupted by the war 1992-1995. Consequences of the fall of communism, but also those of the war destruction, led to a total ruin of industry and a collapse of the economic system, which was all reflected in the high unemployment rate and the economic crisis followed by all negative social implications, espe-

cially for women, who were the first to lose their jobs and the last to have a chance to get it again. Traditional cultural values have been reaffirmed together with the national political ideologies; it all led to the repression of women to the private sphere and to their acceptance of the 'most honorable' role in life – the role of the mother and the child-bearer. Due to the difficult financial situation in the country and in family, but also to the process of reaffirmation of traditional values, women were facing hard obstacles in the attempt to enter the political life, which is in the opinion of many of them just additional burden. The status of women in terms of property did not significantly change when compared to the period of the SRBiH, especially in rural areas of BiH, regardless of the religion.

## **8.2. Empirical Results**

### **Educating Male and Female Children**

Four questions that have been elaborated in the theoretical part of this book are: differences in education of men and women and perception of their respective roles, the economic status of women, the participation of women in the work of religious communities, and their representation in political life.

The quantitative analysis of the research showed that male and female children had a high degree of equal access to education (76.93%) informants said that their children have equal access to education, and (57.27%) of them responded that both they and their parents had had equal access to education. The group of informants over age 30 confirmed that in their families, male children did have a qualitative advantage compared to female children. Because they assumed that the interview question referred exclusively to primary education, a high number of informants answered that access to education for men and women was the same. However, the interviews demonstrated that there were differences in educating male and female children when it comes to the higher levels of education because of economics, women's role in the family, women's need to be part of the work force at family farms, and traditional norms of girls' upbringing that were more deeply ingrained in rural areas. Informants provided personal examples of favoring male children in education, justifying it by saying that the most important thing for a woman is to get married and have a family, a response congruent with the religious legacy of monotheistic traditions that particularly glorify this aspect of a woman's life.



## Male and Female Roles

Research confirmed that the standard structure of Bosnian and Herzegovinian families is traditional, patriarchal, conventional, and to a large extent conditioned by the prevailing attitudes of society about certain issues. Concern with the question: "What will people say?" reinforces retention of social, cultural and religious norms and the perception that these norms, regardless of whether they are just, enjoy respect. The place and role of a woman in her family are tightly circumscribed, and defined by customary norms and religious values that are so intertwined that it is difficult to draw clear lines and distinctions between social custom and religious or ethical history. These dynamics make it harder for women to move closer to equal participation in the public sphere.

Most informants (60% men and 68.56% women) think that women and men in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian society have equal rights in marriage. Most men and women advocate preservation of the traditional family structure, insisting on the importance of maintaining the family and raising children, responsibilities assigned to the woman. Only those who manage to harmonize their family life and careers "have the moral right" to be engaged in public spheres of the society. Many believers stated the faith requires women to fulfill the "most honorable" role that God has given her, and that is motherhood. Furthermore, most understand the nature of woman in the context of the Aristotelian-Thomistic thought, which defines woman as a weak, emotional, and manipulative being, and these ideas about her are reflected in many behaviors toward women in everyday life. A significant number of informants also supported the concept of wife's obedience to her husband, without which they feel it is hard to sustain the traditional model of a family. Informants believe that the general message of religious officials is that men *should be obeyed* by women, who in turn should be *good mothers and wives, should be obedient, and should take care of the house and children*.

Separate and exclusive male and female roles are a reality, and most informants, regardless of the facts of religious history, believe it has always been that way. They persist in thinking that separate and exclusive roles are ordained by women's physical constitution, despite proof that women can do everything, including intensely physical jobs.

Half of the informants professed equal responsibility in the house, and a somewhat lower number claimed that they apply this in their own families, even though the interviews proved that "equality" meant that men help with domestic chores only occasionally, and the chores are periodical vacuum cleaning, food shopping and helping the wife when she is sick. Most informants said that it is not embarrassing for a man to do house work, but then they used a number of insulting names and phrases to describe men who assist with domestic duties: henpecked husband,



aproned husband, sissy, womanish husband and others in a similar way). Male-female roles are separate and there is no will or interest of either men or women themselves in undertaking significant changes. In the process of primary socialization, women copy set models and role divisions, reinforcing a double standard: what is acceptable for a man is absolutely unacceptable, even immoral for women to undertake.

## **Economic Rights**

The economic status of women has a significant impact on their engagement in political and public life. An economically dependent person cannot make his/her own choices in life, and have meaningful input into what influences the lives of others. That is the reason why a whole set of questions was devoted to this area of life. More than half of all informants stated that women in BiH do not have equal rights of inheritance. Because women are paid smaller wages for the same work, and typically female jobs pay less than typically male jobs, women, to a large extent, are made economically dependent on men. Those women that inherit the dowry are not the owners by law, as such property is mostly registered as their husbands'. Jointly acquired property is only in 50% of cases registered to both spouses. Informants confirmed that husbands legally own such property and that women do not think about such issues, while simultaneously affirming that women should participate in decision-making regarding the joint property. One informant perhaps summarized reality best by saying: "I ask, he either allows or not." Some women are left with only manipulation as a means to achieve their just goals, further reinforcing societal perceptions of women's nature as manipulative, and corresponding with the image of women fashioned in the interpretive process operative in religious and traditional legacies. Joint decisions about property are more common in urban areas and in more formally educated families, though it is not a generally accepted model. Thus, women depend on men to a great extent, because in practice, civil laws are not implemented, and customary law with remnants of related religious laws are what is applied in practice.

## **Religious Identity and Participation of Women in the Work of the Community**

Belonging to a religion is a very important characteristic of informants' identities; most of them said that they belong to one of the monotheistic traditions, and that faith is particularly important to them (77%), signifying that it greatly affects their lives. Education of the mother is critical to primary socialization and is what makes it possible for her to be responsible for transferring tradition and religion. The less educated the mother, the stronger the traditional religious identity. Religion is mostly practiced by the least and most educated informants, while those with high school and two year college education practice it less intensively. Those with less education however, demonstrate relatively little understanding of the history and theology of the religion they practice, instead following inherited models uncritically. Those with the highest education possess knowledge, and they actively read and follow the events of religious life, yet show little readiness or tolerance for critical review.

Female informants received their religious education primarily at home from their parents, and at religious classes, while male informants acquired it independently and from reference books, and partly from religious classes. This shows that girls were less educated and had narrower access to reference books than men. Education of females focused on ritual practice concentrating little on the *Holy Books* and other references. This explains why female informants are reluctant to discuss certain issues like the ordaining of women and the enlightened changes in women's status occurring throughout the world. Women in BiH are engaged in religious community bodies only to a very small extent, those communities do not encourage participation of females and many women themselves are not motivated and interested enough to persist in the difficult battle for equality. Most informants (60%) think that women are equals and that the status quo is not discrimination but the natural division of roles where the sexes function complementarily.

## **Participation of Women in Public Life and Politics**

The answers provided by informants in this part of the Questionnaire were mostly socially acceptable ones, like those related to the equal treatment of male and female children in education, as they attempted to present themselves as supporters of gender equality and current global and local trends. Most informants said that they vote for women and they think that women's place is in politics, that they are capable of being at leading positions: however, the reality shows that women in politics in BiH are still represented by only 17% as was confirmed at the previous general elections in 2006.

Informants only declaratively support women's presence in politics: unfortunately, the society still does not accept women at the positions of power. Under the term 'support' for women, most men understand that it is about some other women, not their own wives and daughters. Most of them see politics as a dirty game, and they could not bear to hear someone publicly insult the reputation of their wives in order to obtain political advantage. The strike at woman's reputation is hard to withstand due to the double moral standards that the society is based on. A capable man is not the same as a capable woman, and what is most important the woman is, in the overall re-traditionalization of roles, held responsible for the morale and the reputation of the family and may not allow herself to be exposed to unpleasant situations that the political life includes. Women do not support women, do not vote for them and are jealous of the success of those who step out of the determined frames. Those who have openly admitted that they do not vote for women and would not do it in the future gave stereotyped reasons about the nature of women, their weaknesses and similar. Believers vote less for women especially those more devoted to religion and those whose mothers have a lower degree of education. Greatest support for women was expressed by atheists and agnostics, though they also refer to the differences that exist between sexes, confirming that the patriarchy continues to exist in their attitudes and opinions but instead of religion they rely on pseudo-scientific and ideological arguments. We also need to take into account that these informants have been exposed to the patriarchal upbringing that is intertwined with interpretive religious heritage.

## **Society's Mistrust in Women**

In the end, the informants talked about the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in politics, grading the offered answers in the Questionnaire on the scale from 1 to 6. The results of the analysis indicated the following:

- Most informants recognized the sixth answer as the most important one – *mistrust of society in the ability of women to be at the decision-making positions*. Comparing that with the question whether women's place is in politics (88.65% informants gave an affirmative answer), we have noted a great discrepancy in attitudes that once again confirmed the fact that the informants, especially in this part of the Questionnaire, gave socially desirable answers that do not reflect the actual state of things;
- Mistrust of society in the ability of women to govern marks that the socio-cultural and political environment is deeply saturated by the patriarchal system of values, with the dichotomized image of society and the division into the private and public sphere of action, where the role of women is reduced to motherhood and child bearing, the role

promoted by the religious communities as well. These were the values that the informants put as the second, third and fourth obstacle to the engagement of women in politics. Religion, in the view of the informants, 'may not be blamed', and in principle, religion is not to be blamed for the discrimination of women, but the consequences of patriarchal interpretations, as is shown by the results of the research, put women in a second-grade position.

### **Attitudes of Religious Communities about the Role of a Woman in Family and Society**

In the first part of the analysis of attitudes in religious communities, the interviews with religious officials have been presented. Interviewees were three imams, two Catholic priests, two Orthodox priests and a rabbi. Interview was led based on the prepared framework Questionnaire. Interviews were then summarized in a number of segments that in short presented their attitudes about and understanding of the role of women in religious communities. Religious officials tried to mitigate the evident and existing division of roles and spheres of action of women and men, emphasizing the importance of the role of women and the gift of motherhood that cannot be compared to anything else. However, they were not ready to engage into a critical discussion about any of the matters, leaving that to the authorities and institutions having the legitimacy to do so. Their answers were very similar and relate to the following:

- In the creation, intellectual capabilities and spiritual achievements women and men are equal before God, but there are calls and vocations reserved for men only (priest, rabbi, imam);
- Function and roles of men and women are different and complementary;
- Messages that religious officials give to women or about women mostly relate to family life, harmonious relations in marriage and child upbringing, as the mother transfers the love for God and plants the faith into the child's heart;
- A woman is considered equal in religious traditions, but she has not been invited to perform certain functions and tasks;
- Everyone declaratively supports the participation of women in political life, as long as they can harmonize it with motherhood and family obligations.

In the second part the official magazines of religious communities have been analyzed: *Preporod*, *Katolički tjednik* and *Pravoslavlje* published from January to March 2006. The aim was to use content analysis to determine to what extent are women included as authors of texts, and what topics and issues about women have

been presented; what roles and functions are performed by women, and what characteristics and attributes are assigned to them in the content of texts and respective icons; and finally, what messages and images prevail in texts and icons. The results of the analysis showed the following:

- Women are under-represented as authors (*Pravoslavlje* 20.45%, *Katolički tjednik*, 19% and *Preporod* 7.69%);
- Topics and texts that women write about deal with religious, cultural and charitable activities, and only in *Katolički tjednik* female theologians write about theological topics;
- Women are mostly mentioned in family roles, and within public sphere in education and humanitarian work. In *Pravoslavlje* there are no topics whatsoever that deal with women. The roles and functions of women are those of a mother, caretaker, teacher – reduced in comparison to those of men, the role of a father, son and leader in the community and political life;
- In texts and images the role of a mother, nun, religious teacher and saint prevail, but never on first pages and in a negligible percentage;
- A woman is generally presented as the ‘otherness’ in relation to a man, who is the norm and whose roles of spiritual and secular powers dominate in the religious discourse.

### 8.3. Confirmation of Hypothesis

On the basis of the analysis of status of women in religious traditions in the theoretical part and the results of empirical research the set hypothesis has been confirmed as follows:

- Interpretive religious legacy of monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, intertwined with the patriarchal cultural legacy, influences to a great extent the status of women in public life and politics, denying them both the right and the possibility to equally participate in the public sphere of action, particularly at decision-making positions;
- The higher is the affiliation to traditional religious and cultural values, the lower is the support for women in political life;
- Informants with lower level of education coming from rural areas are less ready to support the participation of women in politics, as well as those whose mothers have a lower level of education, as the education of mothers proved to be a very important factor during the formation of the child's personality;
- However, it came as a surprise that the most educated informants that have declared themselves as believers showed neo-conservative attitudes about the status of women in public life and politics. The reasons for such attitudes could be looked for in the process of general re-traditionalization in the war and post war periods with the tendency of returning to the traditional religious values. Their attitudes further confirm the strong effect of religious legacy on establishment of gender relations in private and public sphere of life, as they, compared to other informants, have quite a good knowledge of traditional teachings of their religious traditions and they practice religion more often.

## SUMMARY

### WOMEN, RELIGION AND POLITICS

#### **Analysis of Influence of Interpretative Religious Traditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina on Participation of Women in Public Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Judaism, Christianity, Islam**

In twenty cities and villages throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, an empirical research was performed among Muslims, Orthodox Serbs, Catholics, Jews and others with the aim of determining the connection of religious interpretative heritage and cultural tradition with woman's participation in public life and politics.

The first, theoretical part of the Thesis is the analysis of the position and role of women in religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam from the perspective of traditional and feminist interpretations in five areas: perception of creation of woman and man, education, economic status, participation in religious communities, and public life. The main conclusion is that all monotheistic religions promote complementarity of gender roles that demands imposing dichotomy into private/female, and public/male spheres of action, and preservation of traditionally assigned gender roles, with motherhood as the most honorable, and the most important woman's mission. Women do participate in public life, but are completely excluded from leading positions in hierarchies, except in some protestant churches, and reformed Jewish communities.

In the elaboration of socio-cultural and political context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have concluded that since 1946, when women were given the right to vote till today, they have been equally entitled to education, career building, and even participation in political life. However, they remained outside the mainstream of the decision-making process.

In the second part of the Thesis, the results of the empirical research based on questionnaires and open interviews, indicate the following:

- Male children had advantage in education (particularly in case of higher education, and in rural areas), compared to female children;
- Gender roles were dichotomized through traditionally assigned duties and responsibilities, due to which majority of men did not share household activities with their spouses, they did not participate in their children's upbringing, nor did they consider household activities their own responsibilities;

- Women have been financially dependent on their spouses, due to inheriting a very small portion of family property, or due to the fact that in the majority of cases, they gave up their right to property, since they were expected to do so. Joint property in the family has been mainly registered as the husband's property, and women do not see it as an issue important to discuss;
- Religious identity has been very important for 77% interviewees. Women have participated in the work of religious communities in the areas of education, and provision of various services to those who are needy. Positions of priests, rabbis and imams are exclusively reserved for male members, as it was interpreted and regulated centuries ago;
- Women have been underrepresented in the public and political life, due to the patriarchal norms and values deeply rooted into both religious teachings and practice. Both male and female believers are less willing to support participation of women in politics, while the interviewees with highest education, who claimed they were well-informed believers, had neo-conservative attitudes towards gender roles.

Through interviews with the clergy, but also through the analysis of the contents of religious publications, it became obvious that religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina were quite patriarchal, and did promote gender dichotomized roles. Women have been excluded from hierarchies, and participated in religious life primarily in cultural and humanitarian activities and education. However, the key academic areas, such as theology and religious law have been exclusively entitled to males.

The main hypothesis, that the interpretative heritage of Judaism, Christianity and Islam closely connected to cultural traditions largely influences the status of women in public and political life, has been confirmed. Only those women who fulfill their motherly mission have a "moral right" to participate in political life.

**Key Words:**

Religion, women, gender, analysis, politics, representation, patriarchal tradition, conservative interpretations, feminist perspective, positions of interviewees



## APPENDIX 1.

**Table of Variables**

1	Tip naselja
2	God rođj
3	Spol
4	Bračni staus
5	Koliko godina ste imali kada ste se udali/ženili
6	Obrazovanje vaše majke
7	Obrazovanje vašeg oca
8	Vaše obrazovanje
9	Da li postoje zanimanja koja više odgovaraju ženama?
10	Sta mislite da li žene u BiH naslijeđuju imovinu jednako kao i muškarci
11	Treba li žena učestvovati u odlučivanju o zajedničkoj imovini
12	Vjernik/ca
13	Da li ste religiozni
14	Molitvu obavljam
15	Vjera u Boga mi je
16	Član ste vjerske zajednice
17	Da li žene imaju jednaka prava u vašoj religiji
18	Smatrate li da da su u našem društvu muškarac i žena ravnopravni u braku
19	Da li bi ste podržali ženu da bude predsjednica vjerske zajednice
20	Smatrate li da žene mogu tumačiti svete knjige (Kur'an, Bibliju i Toru)
21	Smatrate li da žena treba da bude jedino majka i domaćica
22	Da li postoje muški i ženski poslovi
23	Da li ste član/ica političke stranke
24	Glasam na izborima
25	Smatrate li da žene mogu biti uspješni rukovodioci
26	Da li ste glasali za ženu na izborima?
27	Nezaposlen/zaposlen



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Zilka Spahić-Šiljak was born in Zenica, nearby Sarajevo. She studied at the Islamic Studies and Law School in Sarajevo. Her MA Thesis was about the Political Participation of Women in former Yugoslavia at the International Program of Human Rights and Democracy (University of Sarajevo-University of Bologna). She received PhD in 2007 from the University of Novi Sad for the thesis: Women, Religion and Politics.

Dr. Zilka Spahic-Siljak is a research scholar and public intellectual addressing cutting edge issues involving human rights, Islam, religion and gender, and peace-building with more than ten years experience in academic teaching, and work in governmental and non-governmental sectors. She published more than 20 articles in Balkan and international journals.

Her monographs and multi-authored volumes includes:

- Multi-authored book: *Women Believers and Citizens*, TPO Foundation, Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies – University of Sarajevo, 2009.
- Multi-authored book: *Three Monotheistic Voices: Introduction to Judaism, Christianity and Islam* [for public school use], RABIC, IMIC, CIPS of the University of Sarajevo, TPO, Sarajevo, 2009.
- Proceedings: ed., *Religious Studies at Universities in BiH*, TPO Foundation, the University of Zenica and the University of Banja Luka, 2008.
- Monograph: *Zene, religija i politika*, A Bosnian version (*Women, Religion and Politics*) (Sarajevo: IMIC, CIPS and TPO, 2007).
- Multi-authored book: *Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: HcA B. Luka, Žene Ženama, and Lara Bijeljina, 2006).
- Multi-authored book: *Gender Equality and Judicial Practice in BiH*, HcA, Banja Luka, 2007.

She also translated two books from English into Bosnian language:

- *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy*, (*Islam i izazov Demokracije*), by Khaled Abou El-Fadl, Publishing house, "Buybook," Sarajevo, 2006.
- *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, (*Zaboravljene vladarice u svijetu Islama*), by Fatima Mernissi, Publishing House "Buybook," Sarajevo, April, 2005.

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