

Jana GOMBÁROVÁ. *Islámská kultura a její reflexe v Českých zemích* [Islamic Culture and Its Reflection in Europe and the Czech Lands]. Prague: Karolinum Publishing House, 2017, 555 pp. ISBN 978-80-246-3338-1.

Scholarly works treating themes of Islām and its impact on Christian lands have always been rare in Czech and Slovak scientific production and this claim is still more valid for the field of culture. Jana Gombárová, PhD. is a graduate of the Faculty of Philosophy at Charles University in Prague, and she has spent several years in Muslim countries (Libya and Syria) during her husband's diplomatic missions there. Therefore she has gained first-hand experience on the addressed topic. The general aim of the present monograph is a reflection of Islamic culture within the Euro-Mediterranean multi-cultural dialogue. Its specific aim is a study of a reflection of the Arab and Islamic communities in the Czech Republic.

The first chapter provides methodological and theoretical analyses of the conceptions of “end of history” by Francis Fukuyama and “clash of civilisations” by Samuel P. Huntington, which provoked a wide and controversial discussion both around the world and in our country. It also provides an analysis of more recent “catastrophic scenarios” (Laqueur, Spencer, Rodríguez, Sarazin). The Islamic culture within the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and with the history of the Barcelona process of cooperation of the European Union with the Southern-Mediterranean countries, which culminated in the founding of the Union for the Mediterranean in 2010, are also included in the chapter. The Anna Lindh Foundation as a European non-government organisation and its network in the Czech Republic is an object of special interest. The last part of the chapter includes the controversial results of the “Arab Spring” characterized by the rise of Islamists to power.

The second chapter is focused on “Orientalism” in culture. The motto “Ex Oriente lux” expresses not only the interaction between the Orient and Europe in Antiquity, which culminated in Hellenist syncretism, but also the Arab cultural influence on medieval Europe. According to Edward Said, Europe has never deeply understood the ideas, culture and civilisation of the Islamic world. Europe's attitude toward the Islamic world changed in the Age of Enlightenment after the “Turkish danger” had disappeared. Cultural “Orientalism” was reflected in European painting in the 19th century (French, Italian, Spanish, German, British and Russian schools), which was “rediscovered” in Western Europe in the late 1980's. Elements of “Orientalism” in the Czech lands existed in Czech literature (Josef Kajetán Tyl, Jan Neruda) and architecture.

The third chapter deals with the Muslim community in Europe focusing on the neighbouring countries like Germany, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary. The position of the Muslim community in Central Europe is compared to the situation in France, the United Kingdom and Spain. The Muslim community in the Balkans as a result of the Ottoman rule is also mentioned. The fourth chapter is devoted to the history of the Muslim community in the Czech lands. The primary sources of this chapter were the periodicals of the Islamic community (Hlas, Al-Islám) and interviews with 75 members of the Arab community in the Czech Republic. Many members of this community are Christians or non-practising Muslims living in mixed marriages. The author of this thesis visited the mosques in Prague and Brno to discuss with leading

personalities (Vladimír Sáňka, Hassan Alrawi). Based on her own experience, the author only paid attention to women's rights in the Arab countries, which in reality do not correspond with the classical image of an Oriental woman in a harem.

The last three chapters analyse in detail the activities of the Czech non-government organisations related to the Arab and Islamic culture. The subject of the fifth chapter is focused on the history of the Czech-Arab Society founded in 1993, following the Czechoslovak-Arab Society. The cultural activities of the Czech-Arab Society are the subject of the sixth chapter. The seventh chapter deals with the activities of the Czech-Arab Chamber of Commerce.

The work *Islamic Culture and its Reflection in Europe and the Czech Lands* fulfils all standards set on a monograph of this kind. This monograph means a qualitative enrichment of our scientific literature and both for the scholars and students will be a reliable guide for further study. Dr. Jana Gombárová's monograph under review is a reliable work and it will undoubtedly find its place in the wider scientific research of Islamic culture and its impact on European societies, particularly in the Czech lands.

*Karol Sorby, Jr.*