

PAWLIKOVÁ-VILHANOVÁ, Viera (ed.) *Pestrý svet žitého náboženstva: Náboženská a kultúrna identita menšinových komunit vo vzťahu k majoritným*. [The Colourful World of Living Religion. Religious and Cultural Identity of Minor Communities in Their Relationship to a Majority.] Trnava: University of SS. Cyril and Methodius, 2008. 164 p. ISBN 978-80-8105-083-1. In Slovak.

The present publication by Pawlikowa-Vilhanova (ed.), a senior researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (Bratislava) and the University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava is a collective work of several authors. The work contributes to the study of comparative religion and the possible impact of religions on the life style of various groups in selected societies, and the issue of their coexistence.

Religion and membership of religious groups has always been an important aspect of creating cultural and religious identities in all nations. The authors examine the relationships between majority and minority religious groups in selected societies, including: Slovakia, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Polynesia, Mexico and Uganda.

The study has been divided into seven chapters that correspond to seven individual contributors. In the first chapter Silvia Letavajová looks into the circumstances surrounding the Muslims who live in Slovakia and how they comprehend the Slovak society and culture. In Slovakia cohabitation with Muslims is a relatively new phenomenon compared to Western Europe which presents a longer history of coexistence with groups of Muslims, mainly Turks. However, these groups of Muslims seem to have been less popular among the original inhabitants. In comparison, Slovaks have had no wider chances of meeting Muslims or living closer to them. According to the author, the reasons for the Muslims to live in Slovakia are very rare. The most frequent reasons for their life in Slovakia are connected with university studies or marriage to Slovak women. In the beginning of their new life they may feel lost because of different language, culture and religion. They may also have the impression of contempt and intolerance. For them, probably, assimilation into the European way of life is a very complicated process.

Concerning the attitude of the Slovak people towards Muslims, the study tends to maintain the notion that Muslims are not favoured mainly due to the great gap between the two cultures. Since most of the Slovak population is not familiar with Muslim culture they do not reflect positive attitudes towards them. On top of this, there is the huge influence of world media bias that has produced most of the prejudices elsewhere. This tendency is even mounting, particularly since 9/11 in Slovakia as in most Western countries where plenty of publications evaluate the Islamic world as abusive and intolerant. Nevertheless, while presenting the inferior position of Muslims in Slovakia, the author skillfully sheds light on the possibilities and/or impossibilities of their integration with the majority community.

Chapter two, by Jan Záhořík, examines the historical relations between Christian and Muslim communities in Ethiopia. Since Ethiopia is characterized by ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity, this condition has been the historical backdrop against which the state was created. Ethnic plurality has always dominated Ethiopian history until the present time. Following the author's assertion, we may as well confirm that Christianity

is Ethiopia's main religion. However, the interaction between Christianity and Islam in Ethiopia goes back to the 7th century A.D.

Apparently, there is a long record of history about the interactions and coexistence of these religions in the country. As the author points out, the space of time between the 13th and 15th centuries was associated with the process of the creation of Christian identity, but at the same time in some areas of Ethiopia there was an increasing consolidation of Muslim sultanates. During the 14th century there were some conflicts between the two trends in the country, but the major ones took place during the first half of the 16th century and they were connected with Ethiopia's effort to gain access to the sea. Again, at the beginning of 19th century history brought a revival of Islam in Ethiopia's lowlands, which increased the influence of Muslims in administration and agricultural areas.

Of course, since the 16th century the Oromo has become the most important ethnic group in the country, who were converted to Islam and to non-orthodox Christian beliefs. In fact, over centuries Islam and Christianity modified themselves under the process of Africanization. Thus it would be rather misleading to claim all Oromos as solely Muslims since evidence confirms that almost one half of them are Christians. The short reign of Lej Iyyasu (1913 – 1916) with a Muslim background was the climax of cultural and political interaction between Islam and Christianity in Ethiopia.

The most significant changes in the relations between the two major religions took place after the 1974 Revolution in the country. The regime changed from empire to socialist republic, and Islam was for the first time accepted as an equal religion in the country. After another regime change, the most recent Constitution, adopted in 1994, declares freedom of religion, confession and belief for all citizens confirming a plural platform for religions. The author's account on this subject has been impressive.

The third chapter, by Dušan Deák, covers the interaction between Indian Islam and Hinduism in connection with the life of Sheik Muhammad and his descendants. The Influence of Islam in India began in the 7th century, but substantially increased during the 11th century. This event led to significant changes in the social structure and religious traditions of the Indian subcontinent. Islamic society was perfectly developed and has become a self-sufficient part of Indian society. The cult of saints has become the strongest feature of Indian Islam. The best known saint is Sheikh Muhammad from Shrigoda. He was a saint and poet as well. He wrote his thought in the major language of western India, Marathi. His poetry belongs to the compendium *Sakalasantagáthá*, a collection of the poetical works of all famous Marathi saints. He lived and worked in Shrigoda, a small Hindu town. His works contain texts about yoga, dedication and monistic philosophy. For his descendants the Sheikh represents a very important part of their economic, social and religious life. This group is divided into various families. Most of them live in different parts of the district of Ahmadnagar. These families are divided into various religious lines and these provide a perception of Hindu features in Islam. The proliferation of families in this religious belief has caused separation between branches of the Sheikh's descendants. The author emphasizes how this separation has caused complications that hinder the creation of a stable social position in today's India.

Danica Mildeová, in chapter four also presents Hinduism with a focus on Indonesia, mainly Bali. In this region we come across several manners by which Hinduism was propagated. The first is connected with its historical development and the second refers to issues of its transmigration. Hinduism appeared in the Indonesian islands during the first millennium B.C. for the first time in history. It spread from India to Indonesian mainly through trade ties between people. Trade brought not only commodities, but the migration of culture and religion as well.

But the liberation of Hinduism took place only after 1962. Today, there are several centres of communities following Hinduism in the country. The biggest centre is the one on the Java Island with a huge concentration of the Tenggerese community. They live on the mountain with the same name. For these people, it is typical to practice the oldest rituals of Hinduism. Another community lives on Lombok Island. Hinduism on Lombok Island is strongly influenced by Balinese culture and traditions. Other facets of Hinduism are found on other mountains and islands like Sumatra and Sulawesi. Missionary followers of Balinese Hinduism are trying to unify the Hindus and spread their version of the Hindu religion.

In the next chapter, Martina Bucková, moves further East into the Pacific Ocean to cover Samoa in Southern Polynesia. This part of the publication discusses a millenarian movement known as Siovilli. The founder and propagator of the movement was a prophet of the same name. The Siovilli movement is also perceived as synthesis of a number of aspects including: Christian elements and influences of several other traditional polytheistic religions of Samoa. During the same time Siovilli's teaching was influenced by the Mamaia movement from Tahiti, mainly concerning an important issue about the position of prophets. Samoans showed interest in the new faith mainly because of Siovilli's personality and experiences. In the 1860s, however, after the death of Siovilli the movement began to decline.

As the author has figured out, some of the motivations accompanying the formation of the millenarian movement include an exaggerated aspiration for an unreal world full of dreams. The movement seemed to have emerged due to dissatisfaction of the population with their way of life. In addition, this movement and all similar movements have taken elements of Christianity in the most superficial context. The typical aspects related to the formation of the movement are mainly prophecy and medium based perception of life as well as unjustifiable hope for a better future.

The sixth chapter, by Radoslav Hlúšek, is oriented to the brand of Catholicism of the Mexican Indians. Currently, the Mexican Indians are considered Catholics. However, their belief includes syncretism with old belief elements.

In Mexico, one could possibly find several types of identities: national, cultural and religious. Although, the term "Mexican" should involve all the Mexican people with Spanish as their national language, this fact excludes the Indians. As a result integration started after the Mexican revolution in 1917. Regarding religious identity, in Mexico one may observe several brands of Catholicism in connection with individual communities. Each community has created its own form of syncretistic Catholicism, where the brands blend native and Christian identities into one complex whole.

In the last chapter, Viera Pawliková-Vilhanová, narrates a penetrating account about the Buyudaya Jewish community in Uganda. The Buyudaya refers to a tiny community

of new African Jews who represent a history of nearly a century. They were converted to the Jewish religion by conviction early in the 20th century unlike the neighbouring Jewish community in Ethiopia known as Falashas who claim to be one of the long ten lost tribes of Israel. The founder of the Buyudaya was Semei Kakungulu who was born in the small kingdom called Koki. Kakungulu was said to be extraordinarily talented, a capable politician and a military commander. At the beginning he was interested in Islam, but later on he preferred Christianity and in the 1880s he was converted to the Anglican Church. Gradually, he was supported by the British government and served the interests of British colonialism in Uganda. In due time, he felt more confidence and dared to take part in the Malaki movement, a faction within the Anglican Church. On disagreement with this fraction's way of interpreting the Scripture he broke away from it.

Then he devoted his attention to the Old Testament. In the wake of his studies, he showed an inclination towards believing that the Jews interpret religion correctly. Then he proclaimed "I am a Jew" and conducted circumcision on himself and on his sons, while creating the rules of his belief following patterns from the Holy Bible.

The author points out that the Bayudaya community has survived the death of its founder and persecution by the Idi Amin Dada regime. This implies that this tiny group will also survive the obstacles it will probably encounter in the future as well. Currently, this community comprises only 750 members who are supported by foreign followers of the Jewish religion. In fact, the number is far from impressive given the historical background of the community of a nearly a century.

On the whole, the publication presents varieties of religions in different part of the world. Some of the religions which have been encompassed in the publication are less familiar to many readers. In my opinion, one of the tasks of this book is to provide information about various still available forms of religion. The major objective is, of course, how these religions coexist in a given society. Despite the foregoing excellent contributions, the fate of minority religions and assessments of their future development in connection with the major ones remains a subject for further contemplation.

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