# Modern Constructions of Islamic Identity.

# The Case of Second Generation Muslim Women in Germany.

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**ABSTRACT** Since the beginning of the nineties several free Islamic Women's associations have been developing and influencing Islamic life in Germany. Particularly the grown-up daughters of the first generation of Turkish foreign workers are engaged in participating in shaping German Islam. The following research based on a qualitative-empirical approach examined the thesis that the Islamic identity constructions of Sunni-Turkish women who have grown-up in Germany are strongly influenced by structures of modern secular-Christian society.

I present data for three single cases of second generation Muslim women between the ages of 22 and 24. These cases show various ways of understanding Islamic faith. They are representations of three types of identity construction which I found in a larger study of modern Islamic "Lebensführung" (to use Max Weber's phrase): 1) an exclusivistic type of Islamic identity, aiming at the Islamisation of all spheres of life, 2) a "universalising" type of Islamic identity, aiming at a general ethical and spiritual support for everyday life, and 3) a modern but "traditionalising" type of Islamic identity that maintains the rituals and norms bound to the family. These three types are all full of aspects of a modern way of life, but represent different attitudes towards the normative expectation of Western society that action and thinking should be individualised and rationalised. Introduction

# Introduction

First I would like to give a short impression of what I mean when I speak of the modern construction of Islamic life in Germany. Some years ago I saw a Muslim couple walking through the streets of a German town: she was wearing a headscarf, not the traditional scarf, which does not completely cover the hair, but the long veil, which covers all but the face and goes down to the shoes. While the couple was walking hand in hand through the town they were sharing a can of coca cola. I must confess that, at that time, I was very surprised at this sight because I associated Islamic clothes like the veil with a strict segregation of the sexes and I thought that clothes generally indicated a traditional and hierarchical relationship of the sexes. However, the fact that they were walking hand in hand seemed to me to be a public expression of a modern ethic of love, a nearness and solidarity of the sexes without ties to the traditional bonds of the family. And I associated the can of coca cola with Western consumer mentality and youth culture. The curiosity which this sight aroused in me, which I was now to see more and more often made me want to understand it better.

This impression is a typical example of Jacques Waardenburg's thesis (1988) that "living Islam" is always "interpreted Islam" and moreover that this is never the successor to an alleged static ideal of Islamic dogmatism. This, of course, is applicable to all living religions. Despite a general consensus on this thesis only a few studies on living religions have worked with qualitative-empirical methods up to now within German Religionswissenschaft . In the following I intend to show some results of my empirical investigation in the mid-nineties, which was based on a broad qualitative approach (2000). In this approach Islam is understood as a general open field of discourse, as an arena where numerous participants negotiate with each other what Islam 'is' (Schiffauer 1998). This means a methodical rejection of any judgement about a real essence of Islam. In this way one can recognise the statements of the Muslim women as strategies to establish and to interpret their realities. In the context of Religionswissenschaft, Islam in Germany is then not assessed as a result of a presumed degeneration but as a product of religious identity politics (Klinkhammer 2001).

The Canadian scholar of religions, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, has already pointed out that publications and statements of official institutions are only one of the resources needed for research on religions. A further important resource is the living faith of the individuals:

To know Islam, as to know any religion, is not only to be appraised of, even carefully acquainted with, its institutions, patterns, and history, but also to apprehend what these mean to those who have the faith. (1957: 8)[1]

Reasons for focusing research on descriptions of the believers themselves are found in other systematic reflections on Religionswissenschaft. Peter Antes (1979) pleads for using "religion" in research only as a working notion because Religionswissenschaft seldomly works on religion as a cultural phenomenon but as a phenomenon of how believers see themselves. As a result, Religionswissenschaft has to choose an approach that is able to discover "being religious" as a part of human life. Hans G. Kippenberg's project of "Diskursive Religionswissenschaft" tends in a similar direction (1991 and 1993). According to Kippenberg, religion should be investigated within its context of interaction and interpretation. Religion may neither be understood as an abstract phenomenon nor only as a subjective meaning of an experience of transcendence. Rather, it is necessary to research the meaning of religion as a form of establishing and opening the competence of action (Kippenberg 1991:59f). Thus when I collected the data of the Muslim women's self-descriptions and daily behavioural patterns, I tried to analyse the connection between thought and action as determined by value concepts, the "subjective sense" of action and its consequences for methods and order in their daily life. This approach is connected to Max Weber's concept of "Lebensführung" (1972: 245-381).[2]

I want to highlight another theoretical point of interest for the approach to second generation Muslim religiosity. For this purpose I shall return briefly to the above described sighting of the Muslim couple. The scene irritated the observer not only because of its anti-dogmatic message, but because of the aspect of modernity within it. In the literature about Islam and modernity no harmony between the two can be found. On the contrary, one finds discontinuity and disharmony.[3] Therefore I have also focused my investigation on the sociological analysis of the relation between religion and modernity. Many studies have been written on this subject in the last years.[4] Briefly summed up, it can be said that religion no longer has a naturally integrative meaning in modern societies. Individuals often experience the choice and function of religion as contingent. Religion has to be a private affair. This must be understood on the one hand as a result of the process of secularisation and on the other hand as an effect of increasing religious pluralism in Germany. Western secularisation does not mean the exclusion of religion from society but the changing of its place in society

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1   Even so, I disagree with Smith's emphatic and sympathising attitude: "Anything that I say about Islam as a living faith is valid only in so far as Muslims can say ›amen‹ Eto it" (Smith 1959, 43). He himself also grants, for instance, that the perspective of a historian opens new views which the believer does not want to see. (Ibid.)

2   In general Max Weber intended to analyse the dynamics of ideas and the material interests of action (1972: 252).

3   C.f. the mass of studies on fundamentalism and Islam by authors such as Tibi, Kepel or Rieserodt.

4   I follow for instance Luckmann 1991, Gabriel 1996 and Kaufmann 1989.

toward individualisation and privatisation. The immense importance of religion to individuals in today's society is therefore no surprise to the theoretically based researcher of religion. On the contrary, in this context of empirical confirmation, hypotheses have been developed which assume a specific productivity generated by religion in modern societies: Competition stimulates business as in the dynamic of free markets. (See e.g. Bainbridge/Stark 1985, Finke/Stark 1989, Iannaccone 1991)

The French scholar of sociology of religion Danièle Hervieu-Léger (1990) has observed that particularly privatised and individualised forms of religion have increased, as have those forms which are specific for social life in modern times in general. Hervieu-Léger also proposes the thesis that the specific modern tension between the image of an endless possibility of progress and the empirically limited realisation of progress produces a gap which religion always tries to close. The high demand for such individual forms of religion by academic, highly educated people supports her thesis.

Second generation Muslim women in Germany grew up within this social situation. It can be assumed that these women were affected by individualisation and secularisation. While the new Western religious seekers and the reception of new and old religious traditions of East Asian origin is often interpreted as compatible with modern societal structures, the new religious Muslim consciousness is always understood solely as a counter-movement to modernity. Therefore, I have dealt with the thesis that the personal religiosity of second generation Muslim women has already developed its structures and norms into a modern and individualistic way of believing.[5]

Up to now research on second generation Turks in Germany has dealt with problems of identity and disintegration due to language-problems, unemployment or continued relations to their native countries etc. Sometimes this research has mentioned religion or Islam as one further negative or disintegrating traditional factor (e.g. Zentrum für Türkeistudien 1995). Contrarily I have focused my research on looking for modern and integrated structures and constructions of Islamic identities in the second generation of Turkish Sunni women in Germany. For this purpose I interviewed many Muslim women all over Germany in the mid-nineties. I recorded 19 of them on tape and interpreted seven in detail. These seven were selected schematically: There were to be some women who wore the headscarf and others who did not, some of them were to be engaged in a mosque association, while others were not. The women were between 20 and 31 years of age, grew up in Germany and went to a university or were otherwise trained for a profession.

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5   For a critical discussion of theories of modernity in research on non-Christian religion see
    Klinkhammer 2000: 51-70 and 2001:117-118.

# Second Generation Muslim Women in Germany

It is well known that in the last ten years Islam in Germany, as well as in Western Europe, has increasingly consolidated its institutional life. (Vertovec/Peach 1997) But the changes and activities in the field of second generation female Islamic life have been largely unattended to. Activities of Muslim women may be observed in several sectors and on several institutionalised levels.

Firstly, more and more women with headscarves can be seen going to mosques. They take part in worship, particularly at the weekend. Furthermore they take part in events organised by and for Muslim women in the mosque. Some mosques offer a primarily social or leisure-time program, like courses for computer, cooking, handicrafts or mother-and-child groups, theatre, fashion events, excursions and so on. Other mosques offer a more religious program, like courses on the Qur'an or Arabic, or Islamic study-groups with special interests in gender problems. There they also pray and celebrate the holy feasts together. Almost all of the mosques offer both kinds of events. The organisation and realisation of these courses is the women's own responsibility. The active women are in most cases part of the second generation or they are German converts.

Second, this new participation in life in the mosques is only possible because of the many local and self organised unions of women in so-called "sister-groups". The meetings of these "sister-groups" often take place outside the mosques and are independent of affiliation to and support of the patriarchal mosque management. The "sisters" who meet in a mosque room often told me in interviews that they had to struggle hard for their own room. Today nearly every urban mosque provides special social and religious offers for women and makes at least one women's room available. Further, many believing Muslim women accept the attendance at a "sister-group" as a natural thing . But the professionalism of the group and the frequency of the meetings are varied.

During the sessions they read an extract from the Qur'an with some corresponding explanations ("Qur'an" and "Tafsir"). Sometimes one of the women prepares the extract or a special subject (e. g. "Paradise" or "women and angels"), she then presents it to the group and after that they talk about it. Sometimes the groups invite an external female expert to give a lecture on a special subject. Moreover, many groups stress the high value of social and religious life. Some groups try to get contact to a non-Muslim public, for instance, they visit schools to give information about Islam.

Third, fully-fledged institutions in the field of religious education and women projects have by now developed out of some of the "sister-groups". These institutions exist parallel to the mosque associations and their activities. On this occasion I shall briefly

name some of the most famous and important institutions. There is the HUDA-network which edits a three-monthly magazine and has founded a project against women's circumcision. Another famous association is the IPD, Institute for Pedagogy and Didactics. This institute trains women and men to educate children in Islam and in the Qur'an. Until one year ago a very professional and dialogue-oriented educational institute for Muslim and non-Muslim adults (ISLAH) existed. Its director was Mrs. Nigar Yardim. She is a member of the German association of the VIKZ (Verein islamischer Kulturzentren e.V.). However, this institute was unfortunately closed by the new head of VIKZ in Turkey in 2000.

On the one hand, this relatively independent development of parallel institutions from and for women seems to correspond with the Islamic primacy of separation of sexes; on the other hand, these parallel institutions demonstrate that female community members claim a part in forming Islamic public life. For this purpose, they apply their main interests to educational workings: They produce pamphlets and teaching material, they set up consulting services, project groups and private training institutes. Through this focus on Islamic educational work, the women help advance the intellectualisation of Islam in Germany. Furthermore, they seem to aim at an independent European Islam.

Although many of the believing Muslim women are very active in sister-groups, it is important to remark that most female mosque visitors do not belong to these groups. Rather the mosque associations have changed their function in that they are now not only centres of religious life, but also of social and cultural activities. Moreover, Muslim women and men may benefit from consultations about their professional affairs. This situation changes the relation of the visitors to the mosque. If the young Muslims are mobile enough they start to take part in that kind of mosque association that offers interesting activities. The religious interests are no longer necessarily the most important ones for their choice. Due to this situation a special kind of associational structure has developed. It may be called a modern and individualistically structured, "offers orientated membership parish": there is an inner circle of active members, a wider circle of more or less regular visitors and a strong group of sporadic "clients" who only take part in special events. The mosque association is turned into a service which is both religious and profane. Accordingly a high frequency of visitors is not necessarily an expression of a strong religiosity or, for example, an indication of a Muslim's "fundamentalising". The service includes affairs like Islamic burials, marriage feasts and circumcisions and the organisation of the feast of Iftar (breaking the fast). Usually non-practising Muslims call on the mosque association for these affairs, because they don't know how to do it by themselves.

As a result of this situation the male as well as the female Muslim self-image is more differentiated and refers to different facets of religious practice and affiliation.

# Three cases of Islamic identity construction

## Hatice - an exclusivistic type of Islamic identity

At the time of the interview Hatice was 23 years old, already divorced from a Turkish "non-believing Muslim", whom she married against her parents will. She studied Politics, English and Arabic in a small town, 600 kilometres away from her parents' home. Hatice described her approach to Islam as a crisis which started before divorce and first led her to Muslim faith and later also to practising Muslim rules. Today Hatice practices her faith within a wide network of Muslim women. This means that she is in contact with many other Muslims. Some of them live together in a student's hostel, they care for each other and talk about personal and Islamic subjects. She called this "Umma". Hatice does not want to be a member of an Islamic association because she thinks that such associations aim at excluding other Muslims.

Hatice emphasised that she wears the headscarf voluntarily. Her parents did not like her doing so because they thought it would have negative effects on her professional life in Germany. Through wearing a headscarf, Hatice acknowledges the distinct Islamic opinion that it is the women's task to separate themselves from men through veiling. During the third semester at university she started to put on a loose scarf to cover most of her hair. One year later she made a green dress to cover her whole body in public - it looked like the Iranian Tschador, but in green. Even though she claimed to have chosen the colour and size of the scarf purely for aesthetic purposes, the symbolic power of the colour should not be underestimated: Green is the colour of the prophet and the Tschador refers to an especially strong view of Islamic rules. Hatice also describes very clearly how she got respect and power from Muslim men when she wore the green Tschador. She told me:

"For me it's a form of liberation. I may develop better, and people deal differently with me. It's very interesting: I only need to go to the university library to observe how Arabs, Palestinians or Turks behave towards a veiled woman. These men, who are Islamic, behave differently towards a veiled woman than towards a non-veiled woman. That's the way it is. Naturally, believing men behave towards all women in the same way. But it's very interesting to see, how the - yes -, the "half-believers" (laughing) behave, that's very interesting. Some of them eat women with their eyes, but when I come there, they are afraid to look at me."

Hatice tells in this words how the veil puts the "half-believers" in their place and reminds them of their religious, Islamic duties towards women. For Hatice, wearing the Tschador means demonstrating her belief in the public sphere and expressing that she is autonomous but honourable because of her strong orthodoxy. Wearing the Tschador marks a special bond to Allah rather than subordination to a male head of

household. Hatice demonstrates independence by this matter of course personal presence in the public sphere. This self- confident handling of Islamic symbols corresponds to her individual handling of the five-times-a-day praying ritual. Sometimes she prays less, sometimes more.

It is typical of this form of religious identity construction that bringing up children is understood as an important task for women. I have named it the "exclusivistic" type. Hatice wants to fulfil this task through motherhood as well as through employment. "Exclusivistic" women and men disagree on this very point. Both assess the aim of getting a high level of education positively. But the men argue that bringing up children is not compatible with being in employment. However, the women argue that because bringing up children is a public task, it is also necessary to support women working. Hatice justifies her studies and her right to work as a service towards building up an alternative Islamic community in Germany. With this attitude she wants to dissociate herself from the  as she puts it: - "Western self-finding-desire". The duties of an alternative Islamic community are not confined to the private sector but extend to the formation and organisation of public life, and further the community must seek to maintain its public responsibility for education. In this way, Muslim women become independent of a male head of household because they justify this public duty by their responsibility to Allah rather than to the other sex. The headscarf gains an important inner-Islamic meaning to assert the women's interest of being in public life. It demonstrates the true Islamic orientation of the women and, at the same time, that they accept the authority of Allah, but not of men.

## Ayla - a universalising type of Islamic identity

Ayla started to wear a headscarf at the age of 16. Her mother does not wear a headscarf, but Ayla repeatedly did so with her female friend in Turkey on their yearly holidays. One day at school she had to prepare a report on Islam and that, she says, was the actual beginning of her transformation. Important for her recent form of religiosity is her lifestyle since she started university. Ayla studies English and Education at a university approximately 500 km away from her parents' home. She stays in an international student hostel, which can be characterised as having a sub-cultural migrant background. Ayla appreciates this wide social network and called it the "Islamic utopia": "Faith should serve for..., well..., I think every person within Islam should... one should begin by caring for each other first but less for oneself." But one should also be able to say: "I care for you ... and we are a community, it is good for us ... if we stick together, but you can make your own decisions in all cases - one hundred percent."

Ayla is very well integrated within this social network. She emphasised that she uses it for her own benefit and shapes and organises it because it is free from personal and

formal hierarchical structures. If she has a problem, she discusses it with her friends, but there is no pressure to follow their advice. Her non-German and non-Muslim boyfriend lives in the student hostel too. They intend to marry, even though the Qur'an (2,221) does not allow the marriage of a Muslim woman with a non-Muslim man.

Ayla regards Islam as the frame for expressing her faith as a matter of course. She wears a headscarf, reads the Arabic version of the Qur'an - without understanding Arabic- and is very committed in a Muslim student group, which is working on a draft for an Islamic-pedagogy conception of school didactics. But also typical for her is a symbolic-ethical generalising of specific religious duties and her emphasis on the spiritual and personal relationship to God, for instance during prayer. Moreover Ayla always speaks about "religion", "faith" and "God", she never says "Islam", "duties" or "Allah". She thus highlights the unity of religions and her belief in the one and only god. This belief results in a common ethical attitude which she has termed the "Islamic utopia". It is only today that she has come to understand that she can practice her faith solely through prayer. She hardly ever says the ritual prayer (namaz), but she mostly prays in her own language (German, because her Turkish is not as good) and she only prays at moments when she feels the need to do so. Sometimes she just reads in the Arabic Qur'an as "meditation". When doing so, she feels "safety" within and a "responsibility" to all beings.

Wearing the headscarf for Ayla means acknowledging Islamic rules of the separation of sexes. But she shapes the headscarf in a very European fashion style (i.e. plain and tight at the neck) and wears it with trousers. Besides, the headscarf shows the affiliation with the international sub-cultural background. Ayla says about herself that she neither looks like a Turk, nor is her Turkish any good. But the headscarf also has the ascetic-spiritual character of being at a distance to the environment. Sometimes Ayla goes out without the headscarf if it is more appropriate for the situation of encounter: For instance she did not wear the headscarf for the first time at a practical training at school. A non-Muslim colleague of hers told me that she had explained her manner at the time by saying that she wanted the pupils to get used to her first, before seeing her with the headscarf.

In accordance with her distance to all ritual forms and dogmatic expressions and with her friendship to a non-Muslim man, Ayla does not plan her future within a Muslim dominated background. She wants to work as a teacher at school[6] or to offer courses for painting[7] and pottery at a cultural centre.

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6  At the time of the interview there had been no civil action against wearing a headscarf by teachers at school in Germany. Today she would have encountered many problems wearing a veil at school. However, I do not think that this would have been a reason for Ayla to take off her headscarf.

7  This is unusual for Muslims because of the Islamic prohibition of making a picture or a figural copy of beings. This is meant to prevent Muslims from adoring other beings than God.

I have termed this type of Islamic identity construction a "universalising" type because of its fundamental understanding of religion as ethical behaviour. The women of this type base their Islamic faith on the construction that all (religious) good values found in other religions have their origins within Islam. They do not want to be members of a Muslim Organisation or to be identified with ethnic traditional behaviour. They consider themselves to be cosmopolitans.

## Hilal - a traditionalising type of Islamic identity

At the time of the interview Hilal was aged 22 and worked at a kindergarten of mixed confession. A few weeks before she had moved house. She was now living with one of her younger sisters who was studying law. The new flat is in the same house as their parents' home. Hilal grew up in a practising Muslim family. They all are members of the Community of Jama'at un-Nur.[8] Today Hilal is very active in the community, she goes to the weekly meetings and once a month she prepares a text of Said Nursi (1873-1960, the founder) for the meeting to read and explain his mostly devotional thoughts about the universe and the need of religion and Islam in times of secularisation.

Hilal told me that she has never had a problem with her parents and their religion. But before she had read the writings of Said Nursi she often did not want to do her duties. Now she is very conscious of them and likes to carry them out. But that does not mean that she scrutinises all her religious behaviour.

In spite of emphasising the importance of knowledge about Islam, Hilal differentiates between two approaches to Islam: hers and that of converts.

"Well, if you are born into a thing like Islam it is very different from converting later to such a thing as Islam. You inform yourself much more precisely about all new things ... That it is a very very different thing. It is beyond comparison. You see the things from an entirely different point of view. The convert takes everything much more seriously than I do, I notice it. I'm a little bit more relaxed, I don't know. Well, I don't mean I don't take my duties seriously, not in this way ... I just take it for granted and so sometimes I do things without knowing the reason why it has to be done in this way."

Normally Hilal knows what she has to do. She is neither unsure about daily practices, nor has she doubts about the messages of Islam. The conscious turn to Islam at the age of 17 hasn't changed her view and practice of Islam. The hope for the next world is

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8   This Turkish community was founded by Said Nursi (1873-1969), who wrote an extensive commentary on the Qur'an. He established schools for learning the Islamic message in the context of lay Turkish society. The associations were already being founded at the end of the seventies in Germany. See Lemmen 2000: 51 53.

narrowly connected to her correctness in carrying out the ritual and formal Islamic duties. She did not make a shift to an ethic and inner dimension of religion like Ayla or in some sense also Hatice.

Hilal acknowledges problems with Islam in encounters with non-believers or non-Muslims. She describes such encounters as encounters with some "other world". In contrast to her parents, she tries to "somehow unify both worlds". Because of the different rules in these worlds, she feels it as a real challenge. For instance, she told me, that the "nice" Islamic tradition to respect and obey the older generation competes with the working world and is not possible to practise. She gave further examples on a moral level, but her conclusion is not that she should give up her job. On the contrary, she is so involved in her job that she has to take care not to forget the duties of her religion. But the regular meeting of the women Nurculuk group helps her to do her duties anyway. This community strengthens the motivation.

With the exception of her job, Hilal tries to go inside the "other world" without giving up her Islamic world. She aims at testing her "personality", she said. So she has succeeded in moving in with her sister, going swimming and to fitness training. She accepts the traditional family's search for a husband of her, but she has reached a compromise. Not her father but her brother-in-law is present at the meetings with the applicants, thus the two young people are not alone. Hilal characterises her parents' Islam as the essence of their lives, but Hilal limits the meaning of Islam within her own identity and accepts the order of the "other world". Even so, she looks for compromises, for example, she only goes to fitness training if they have a ladies' day.

I have termed this type of Islamic identity construction as "traditionalising" because of its conscious keeping of a substantial traditional attitude even if it becomes limited in its validity. Moreover, for this type of identity construction, Islam is limited to a private, often familiar community. Those who belong to this category accept living with two (or more) contexts of different values.

# Conclusion

The above described types of Islamic identity construction in Germany show a degree of plurality that would not be discovered by looking only at the Islamic associations in Germany. It has been shown that the identification of "fundamentalist", traditional and political committed religiosity with wearing a headscarf is not plausible. The wider sample, which cannot be considered here, shows however that the contrary is equally incorrect: Muslims who do not wear a headscarf are not always secular in conviction. The qualitative-empirical approach of the study made the discovery of the diversity of religiosity possible, but it has not produced any reliable statement on a quantitative representation of these cases. On the basis of a sample of well educated women, the study was not representative of a majority but of Muslim women who participate in shaping Islam in Germany or who will become representatives of Islam in the public sphere in Germany.

The analysis of the cases described has shown a tension between the generations. Here, I was only able to show this by the fact that all three women had moved away from the parents' home before marriage and that they all live their religiosity in a different way. Often, a different relationship to the ethnic and national background can be seen. Moreover, Islam is in no way the same as tradition. If the women do not like a traditional link within Islam they argue against it. Thus Hilal does not want to do things simply because it is argued that they should not be done, like swimming or fitness-training, even though she likes to be traditional in her religious behaviour.

Some of the women interviewed started to reflect on Islam when they were asked about their position on Islam as Muslims. Thus an outside impulse was the turning point, not an inner dynamic of personal interest. At the same time the biographies of these women show that wearing the headscarf corresponds with overcoming family conflicts. But the impulse of initially putting on the headscarf did not come from parental pressure, but rather as a reaction to situations in school. A number of women interviewed reported that teachers had asked them to give some lectures on Islam in class. For some of these women this was the first time ever that they had been approached in the classroom concerning their relationship to Islam as Muslim women. This involuntary but distanced approach to Islam seems to have a positive effect on their reception of Islam.

The women use their religion as a medium to deal with their family background and to reflect on their biography before and after their Islamisation. Thus Islam becomes a form of secondary "Biographiegenerator"[9]. The adoption of Islam cannot be regarded as a completely new "choice". Nevertheless, the acceptance of Islam, aiming towards its authentic and meaningful integration into their life and experiences, proves to be

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9   The notion of a "Biographiegenerator" goes back to Alois Hahn 1993.

full of intense decisions. It may be stated that the women take up the expectation of individualisation and rationalisation typical of modern societies. Diverse elements of modern religious identity are found in the women's identity constructions: an aesthetical, spiritual and ethical internalisation of Islamic duties from a secular yet faithful view as well as a traditionalising differentiation that limits the value and function of religion in their life to the field of intimacy or family.

Although forms of spiritual seeking can be identified - especially in the cases of Ayla and Hatice - a specific "bricolage" in the sense of mixing the elements of various religions cannot. Indeed, the inner-Islamic offer of spiritual and esoteric media which could transfer such forms of "bricolage" is next to non-existent. Thus the women do not have too many opportunities for trying things out.

The three types of construction of Islamic identity described here are particular, individualised forms, but nevertheless they are clearly connected to Islam. Even if, on the surface, all the women's opinions seem to fall back into old traditional tracks by wearing the headscarf, it is very important for inner-Islamic dynamics that this is not based on a traditional understanding of relationships and religion. The women's subjective understanding is that they have chosen the covering individually or freely. They neither feel bound to a man nor to their parents. The personal relationship to Allah is more important than the obedience to a man. They interpret the religion of Islam from their experience and their claim to freedom and independence. This interpretation is connected to respect accorded by other Muslims, especially Muslim men. The headscarf enables them to go into the public area and do all the things that Muslim men do. It is exclusively through this possibility of freedom of action that they accept the headscarf as an expression of their personal religiosity.

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