

Western Europe
PATRICK HAENNI

The relations between Islamic revival and ethnic allegiances are all too often presented as being in opposition. Islamic identity – and this dimension is very present in Islamic discourse – is by its very nature dedicated to transcending the centrifugal tendencies of ethnicity, of nationalism or of any form of segmentarism. In the face of ideological discourse, the social imaginaries of the interested parties are contradictory. Arab nationals in Switzerland affirm an engaged Muslim identity by a rejection of national and cultural ethnicities, while the Turks affirm their Muslim identity by borrowing the paths of ethnicity. These divergences from the trajectory of 'Islamization' have less to do with cultural differences between places of origin than with forms of social change that have diversely affected these two populations of Muslim origin since their settling on Helvetic territory.

In the framework of the Turkish immigrants, the reference to Islam was imposed at two points in time. Firstly, by the establishment of a fragmented network of mosques, inscribed in both community and religious strategies followed by small groups that sought to preserve religious practices of the migrants' home community. Later on, the network of Turkish mosques in Switzerland became politicized along ideological lines, but ethnicity continued to play a determining role. In the 1970s, while immigration was essentially a male phenomenon not intended to become a permanent situation in Switzerland, religious practice did not matter much. It was simply placed aside while the immigrants awaited their return home. Religious association, not hegemonic in the least, served as a space for remembering one's origins (the religious space coexisting with friendships, sporting associations, game rooms, and cafés), destined to facilitate the return of an immigrant population. In the 1980s, the Islamic reference progressively acquired greater status as the plans to return became increasingly illusory. This was due to, on the one hand, the political and economic hardship in their country of origin and, on the other hand, the arrival of families and the entirely Swiss education of their children (the second generation). The mosque, having been a place of remembrance of ethnicity and a functional space for 'preventative asocialization' (Dassetto) for the first immigrant men awaiting their return home, became in the 1980s a protective structure, as much for regrouping families as for preserving the identity of the second-generation immigrants heavily exposed to the host society. The reproduction of cultural and social identity of the group thus became the principal function of the mosques. The pennants of the football team in the cafeteria of in the place of prayer, posters of the regions of origin, and the systematic presence of a parabolic antenna, all demonstrate the strength of particularistic identities and allegiances. Turkish Islam from 1970-1980 was an Islam of

Divergent Trajectories Islam and Ethnicity in Switzerland



PHOTOS: PATRICK HAENNI

Turkish mosque in Lausanne.

the community, far from the universalism displayed by their Arab co-religionists (to be dealt with further on). This was to change at the end of the 1980s. From then on, the substance which brought them together was to fall prey to a double dynamic of politization and fragmentation. With the population increasing, political and religious networks lost no time in implanting themselves in this population fully in the process of establishment. This continued until the Turkish community stabilized its core, having reproduced itself within the main lines of the ideological spectre of the political and/or religious field of their country of origin. In Zurich, the immigrant associations were to either join up with partisan or religious networks, or be directly put in place by militant immigrants. Zurich was thus to witness the emergence of 'independent associations'. With the creation of Milli Görüş (European wing of the Islamist Party of the Prosperity of Islam) in 1973 in Germany, some associations were to re-attach to this organization. Soon after, the Dyanet, State Ministry of Religious Affairs, with its imams and places of worship, appeared on the Swiss scene. The fragmentation was not to stop at this bi-polarity of state Islam / Islam of opposition. Contrary to what was occurring in French-speaking Switzerland, the fragmentation was then to continue simultaneously along religious and political lines. The Nurcu movement (see p. 7 of this Newsletter, Yavuz), known as an ideological 'think-tank' of Rifah, was to leave the Milli Görüş, for its ideology was too dogmatic in their eyes. The Suleymancies, a third important network in Turkish Islam both in Turkey and elsewhere in Europe, proposing a popular Sufism, was also to secede, just as the Grey Wolves, an ultranationalist political party which already in 1978, founded its second Swiss political antenna in Zurich. Nurcus, Dyanet, Milli Görüş, and Suleymancies contribute to the complexity of Turkish Islam in Switzerland, but all seem to come together on one point: they make Islam congruent with Turkish culture, where the Arabs tend to render Islam autonomous from other aspects of their heritage and identity.

Arabs Islam in Switzerland

Arab Islamic institutions emerged in Switzerland from 1960-1970. Two dynamics, one political, the other social, contributed to this: in the first place, Islam in French-speaking Switzerland initially developed in the wake of conflicts that formed the Arab political landscape. Saïd Ramadan, son of Hassan Al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brothers, created the first Islamic centre in 1961 in Geneva, fleeing from repression in Egypt. When relations deteriorated between the Muslim Brothers and the Saudis in the 1970s, Saudi Arabia founded its own mosque in Geneva. The polarization between official and unofficial religious institutions which, until the present, remain a central point of conflict of the political systems in the Arab world, reproduced themselves in the crucible of Arab Islam in Switzerland. The dynamic of Islamization amongst Arab immigrants did not take the same path as that of Turkish populations. In the Arab-speaking community, there exists a direct constitution of a religious field relatively unified both ideologically and in terms of identity, and in clear opposition with the pre-migratory heritage and identity. Contrary to the situation amongst the populations of Turkish origin, the Arab nationals experienced a rapid alteration of their pre-migratory social structures. This occurred as part of the process of individual assimilation. By tradition, however, parents still endeavour to prevent their children from marrying Swiss partners, although the notion of free choice, having been assimilated by that generation, means that the family directives are not accepted without contestation. Many young people have opted for individual integration in the host society either parallel to, or as a substitute for, family ties. This can be the result of marking one's position in relation to parents or simply because one has come to the host society alone for study or for work. However, it has not necessarily rendered the youth laic. Some, whether stirred by such occurrences as the Gulf War, the stigmatization of Islam by the media, or simply because of repeated questioning about their origins or their religion – a quest for an existential ethic – have

chosen to play the card of the 'reborn Muslim'. For these young people, it is not a question of returning to the traditions of their parents, generally rejected for their old-fashioned ways, nor is it a way to launch a community project. Neither the demand for, nor the offer of, Islam in the Arab-speaking Islamic groups in Switzerland is fundamentally destined for 'separate development' (even if certain tendencies of this sort do exist). All members of the Arab-speaking Islamic network insist upon the necessity of participation in the Swiss social domain and upon cooperation with Swiss authorities. Thus the affirmation of an Islamic network – open to the host society and socially active – is at the root of the decrease in traditional social control. Islamization, advocating specificity by dialoguing with the host society, and individualization are not conflicting. In this case, they mutually reinforce one another.

The forms of Islamization amongst the populations of Muslim origin in Switzerland are thus diverse – this is no surprise – but the interest lies less in plural Islam than in the syncretisms that the unique situation (of ethnic heterogeneity under the Islamic reference, while spatial differences are abolished) risks engendering. Islam in Europe is confronted with the challenge of internal diversity (and not so much with secularization), that is to say with intra-religious multiculturalism amongst ethnic or national communities placed in contact by their migratory experience. After 30 years of maintaining particularisms, that ideological unanimism will manage to impose a vision of Islam that is both particularist and homogeneous is highly unlikely. ◀

Bibliography

- Bamba, A. (1992), *L'Islam en Suisse et à Genève*, post-graduate thesis, Institut Universitaire d'Études en Développement, Geneva.
- Basset, Jean-Claude (1989), *Le croissant au pays de la croix fédérale. Musulmans et chrétiens en Suisse*, *Islamochristiana* 15.
- Baumann C.P. & Jäggi (1991), *Musulime unter uns. Islam in der Schweiz*, Luzern: Rex Verlag.
- Haenni, Patrick (1994), *Dynamiques sociales et rapport à l'Etat. L'institutionnalisation de l'Islam en Suisse*, *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 10.
- Idem (1995), *Les déterminants anthropologiques de la réislamisation en Suisse*, Lausanne, unpublished.
- Idem (December 1995), *Musulmans de Suisse et Religion. D'un islam à l'autre*, *Cahiers d'histoire et de science des religions* 4.
- Waardenburg, Jacques (1995), *Muslims as dhimmis. On the emancipation of Muslim immigrants in Europe*, Leiden, unpublished.

Patrick Haenni is currently finishing his PhD at the Institut d'Études Politiques on grass-root political mobilizations in urban Egypt. He previously conducted fieldwork on 'transplanted Islam' in France and Switzerland and is currently working as a delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Yemen, Algeria, Bahrain and Western Sahara.

Islam in Switzerland: a few statistics

In a 1980 census, the population of Muslim origin in Switzerland had tripled within 10 years, passing from 17,000 to 56,000 persons. In the 1980s, nationals of Muslim origin continue to flow in at the same rate as in the 1960s: 157,000 people affirmed their membership to Islam in the national census, which means 2.1% of the entire population. By 1996 Switzerland counted approximately 200,000 Muslims – slightly more than 2.5% of the entire population. Amongst them, 40% have permanent residency, 15% are refugees or asylum seekers, 45.7% are of Turkish origin, 36.4% are of Yugoslav origin, and 9.2% are from Maghreb or Machrek countries. 76% are based in German-speaking Switzerland, 14% in French-speaking Switzerland. Turkish nationals are mostly found in German-speaking Switzerland, while the Arab-speakers are concentrated in French-speaking Switzerland.