

6 Albania and Kosovo

The Return of Islam in South East Europe: Debating Islam and Islamic Practices of Family Law in Albania and Kosovo

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Introduction

Albania emerged at the end of the communist era in Eastern Europe as the only country where the communist regime had completely banned and penalized the practice of religion. It is also the only Balkan country to have emerged from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire with a mainly Islamic population: an estimated 70 per cent of Albanians are Muslims. Following the fall of communism, Albania has been seeking integration in the European Union and it is often feared that any revival of its Islamic identity will be an impediment to that endeavour.

Kosovo, the other Albanian-populated country in the Balkans, declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and has been seeking Western support and European integration. Although religion was not banned in Kosovo under the Yugoslav Federation, as happened in Albania, the communist regime discouraged the practice of religion. Nevertheless, Kosovo is facing dilemmas very similar to those faced by Albania regarding its religious tradition.

In both these countries, the Albanian Muslim Community (AMC) in Albania and the Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK) in Kosovo represent Islam in relation to the governments and hold control and ownership of the mosques and educational institutions. Both these institutions have suffered from inherited weakness due to the long suppression of religion in Albania during the communist regime and the strict control of religion in Kosovo under the Yugoslav Federation. It is believed that this weakness created the conditions for the presence of Middle Eastern charity organizations in the 1990s that were instrumental, among other things, in providing scholarships for a new generation of Albanians to study at Middle Eastern Islamic universities. Upon their return, many of them questioned the legitimacy and the religious credentials of representatives of the older generation who led the representative institutions.

In more recent years, however, both these institutions have become stronger, due to a number of factors: first, governments in both Albania and Kosovo have preferred to negotiate with these institutions than with other Muslim organizations; second, Muslim activists in various Muslim civil society organizations, even those critical of the leadership, seem to have recognized that the strength of these institutions is beneficial for the whole community; and a third factor in Albania relates to representatives of the Gülen Movement, an organization with Turkish roots, having taken control of the leadership of the AMC. Despite criticism from other Muslims, followers of the Gülen Movement in Albania have concentrated their efforts on strengthening the AMC and on taking control of mosques and other religious institutions in the country.

Today, in both of these countries with Albanian majority populations, questions are often raised in public debates regarding the way Western Europe perceives the Islamic identity of Albanians and whether Islam is a hindrance to integration in Europe. These questions are part of a common debate in Kosovo and Albania on identity, perceptions of the Ottoman past, and political and cultural orientation.¹ These concerns have affected attitudes towards Islamic practices and particularly the novelty of women wearing headscarves and men growing beards is perceived as tarnishing the image of Albanians in the West.

This chapter will discuss some of the debates that have emerged from the political elites regarding Islam in both Kosovo and Albania; debates that are mutually informed and influenced by one another. Furthermore, I will examine some examples of practices in matters of Islamic family law, whereby I will limit myself to those from Albania.

Under the Gaze of Europe

On 15 October 2011, the President of the newly independent Republic of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, gave a speech in a remote region of her country, near the border with neighbouring Albania, in honour of Shtjefën Gjeçovi (1873-1929), a Catholic priest of the Franciscan order who is known for having recorded the tribal code that governed the highland regions, known as the *Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini*. Speaking about the *Kanun* and the role of the Catholic Church in the forefront of the struggle for freedom and progress in the history of the Albanian people, she added:

Through the *Kanun* of the Mountains, known as the *Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini*, the descendants of Scanderbeg in their national resistance

against the Ottoman invasion regulate the lives of people and this made it impossible for the implementation of *shari'a* in these lands and among our people of the Catholic or of the Muslim faith. In our lands it was unconceivable for the Ottoman authorities to cut off the hand of someone accused of stealing or to apply fifty lashes to someone's body in public. So this *Kanun* preserved the honour and dignity of the individual and the national dignity for over five hundred years.²

Anti-Ottoman rhetoric is common in Albanian nationalist discourse and Albanian nationalism considers mountains 'as sanctuaries of the nation' where national values were preserved. The *Kanun* is perceived as a particularly Albanian institution instrumental in this preservation of the national character.³ Juxtaposing Christianity and particularly Catholicism as the opposite 'other' of Islam – one representing Europe, progress, liberty and an indigenous religious experience, and the other representing a backward, eastern, foreign threat – has also been part of Albanian political rhetoric since the fall of communism. This situation, in which the leaders of a Muslim-majority country reject Islam and allude to Christianity as the true legacy of the people of Albania and Kosovo, has occurred repeatedly in recent years.

Six years earlier, in 2005, addressing an audience at the Oxford Union in the United Kingdom, the former President of Albania (2002–2007), Alfred Moisiu, declared that in essence, Albanians are Christians and Islam is not an original religion of the Albanians.⁴ In a similar vein, former deputy Prime Minister of Albania, Gramoz Pashko (1991–1995), stated in a paper he wrote on Christianity that the only hope for Albania is its young generation, 'which has loved European Civilization and Christian values.' Commenting on Mr. Pashko's writing, the scholar Maria Todorova points out that '[this] frank appeal to Christian values from a country that before it became atheist was 70% Muslim bespeaks the naiveté and straightforwardness of the Albanian political discourse that has not yet mastered the ennobling façade of the pluralist vocabulary.' She further adds: 'It is, however, also a tribute to the sound political instincts of the new Albanian political elites who have not been duped by the pretence of supra-religious, non-racial, and non-ethnic universalism and pluralism of the European or Western discourse.'⁵

In her speech on the *Kanun*, Kosovo President Jahjaga has joined other representatives of the Albanian political elites in Kosovo and Albania in affirming a self-designation of European-ness permeated by Christian values and distancing itself from, if not completely rejecting, Islam.⁶ The novelty of President Jahjaga's speech, however, is the reference to *shari'a* law. The Ottoman past and Islam are often blamed for

the backwardness of the Albanians, for being the cause of historical misfortunes and for keeping Albanians away from their natural family of European nations. Shari'a law, however, has not been part of this tradition of nationalist discourse. The images of the cutting off of hands and flogging in public seem to have been transported from current events in distant territories into threats in the Albanian historical imagination and into the current political discourse, as part of this politically engendered identity construction of being European.

As Talal Asad has pointed out, since the last decades of the twentieth century, Europe has witnessed a shifting of borders that aims to represent what European Civilization is. 'They reflect a history whose unconfused purpose is to separate Europe from alien times ("communism," "Islam") as well as from alien places ("Islam," "Russia").'⁷ It is under this configuration of the European identity map that Albanian politicians position themselves in the 'right place' of the dividing line between East and West, Islam and Christianity, where the affirmation of European-ness comes with the rejection of Islam, the Ottoman past and shari'a law. President Jahjaga's anti-shari'a rhetoric does not relate to shari'a per se, since the draconian punishments that she refers to were not part of the Albanian Ottoman experience, and we have not witnessed any calls in Albania or Kosovo for a 'return to shari'a,' the cutting off of the hands of thieves or the flogging of adulterers. Her reference to shari'a reflects the fears and anxieties of the West in relation to its former colonial subjects and Muslim migrants, as projected in the political profile of countries in the Balkans that seek to affirm their place in Europe.

On the other hand, Albanian Muslims in their daily life and in their religious practices make attempts to live according to the teachings of their religion, teachings that are known to be part of the corpus of Islamic law, or shari'a. As I have attempted to show above, there are important similarities, overlapping issues and mutual influences in the discourse of the political elites in both Albania and Kosovo regarding religion. Despite similarities, however, there are differences in religious practices and discourse in Albania and Kosovo. In the next paragraph I will illustrate this discussion with examples of Islamic family law practices, whereby I will restrict myself to the situation in Albania.

Certainly, there is another discourse on shari'a law emerging in Western Europe that seeks to accommodate aspects of shari'a family law in the framework of multicultural citizenship.⁸ Albanian elites have made clear, however, that their countries will follow a French model of republicanism⁹ that sees multiculturalism as equal to a 'balkanization' of society. The dominant and unchallenged notion of citizenship in

post-communist Albania and newly-independent Kosovo is permeated with the notion of national interest. However, Muslims are often challenged to answer whether their primary loyalty stands with the nation or with the *Ummah*, the global Muslim community. The assumption embedded in the question is that Muslim loyalties stand with a foreign entity in opposition to the national interest and European identity. The assumption is that young Muslims that embraced Islam after the collapse of communism are loyal to religious agendas originating from the Middle East.¹⁰

Muslim responses to these challenges have been diverse. Some have appealed to an Anglo-Saxon understanding of secularism when arguing for the right of women to wear the headscarf in public schools. However, there have not been attempts to go as far as to claim separate Muslim judiciary systems or to articulate a notion of similar forms of 'privatized diversity.'¹¹ Ayelet Shachar points out that 'the main claim raised by advocates of "privatized diversity" is that respect for religious freedom or cultural integrity does not require inclusion in the public sphere, but *exclusion*.'¹² The dominant tendency of Muslims in Albania, however, has been one that seeks inclusion in the dominant societal paradigm and rather than claiming a distinctive place as a tolerated minority, they claim a place for Islam under the national umbrella. Muslim practices related to shari'a, including those practices that incorporate matters of family law, have to be understood through the lenses of a post-communist society that often perceives its Islamic past and current Muslim practitioners as a liability in their bid to join 'the European family'; they have to be understood, also, in terms of a Muslim community that seeks a place for Islam in contemporary Albania, rejecting marginalization.

Islamic Marriage and Divorce in Secular Albania

A question was presented to *imam* Ahmed Kalaja, *imam* of Dine Hoxha Mosque in Albania's capital, Tirana, during a question and answer session in the mosque: 'Am I permitted to hit my wife? Although I haven't got married yet, I have performed the *nikah*.'¹³ The *imam* criticized the questioner, advising the congregation to lead a marital life of common understanding and affection, and to overlook shortcomings. He affirmed the permission granted in the sacred texts for such punishment, but he clarified that physical punishment is only allowed in extreme cases when the behaviour of the spouse is posing a threat to the religion and the wellbeing of the children and the family in general. He stressed,

however, that the Prophet Muhammad advised against hitting women and mentioned the example of the Prophet who is reported to have never hit a woman or a child.

Next, he addressed the rather awkward situation of the questioner's status of being engaged but not married, although he had performed the Islamic contract of marriage, the *nikah*. A number of couples that intend to build a family and a home together are often, mostly for economic reasons, unable to have their own house and, by consequence, are unable to have a wedding, which is customarily the event after which a couple will live together. The performance of a religious marriage – *nikah* – rather than a civil marriage, however, enables the partners to be in each other's company without the presence of a chaperone. This distinction between being married and not being married, but having performed the *nikah*, seems to worry many *imams*. First of all, it leads to an understanding of *nikah* as somehow less than 'a real marriage.' In these cases, *nikah* seems to resemble what is customarily known in contemporary Albania as the status of being engaged.

The *imam* who answered the question, therefore, emphasized that once the *nikah* has been performed, the couple is considered married and that prior to this, the couple is not allowed to be secluded or have any physical contact. The *imam* emphasized that *nikah* is marriage. A number of *imams* that I interviewed in Tirana insisted that prior to the act of *nikah*, the couple ought to present the marriage certificate from the municipal office. There seem to be two main reasons for taking this approach. According to *imam* Ferid Piku, *hatib* of the Medrese Mosque in Tirana, Islamic law recognizes marriage contracts conducted by non-Muslim entities. If a couple that has been married in a Christian church, for example, later becomes Muslim, they don't have to repeat the marriage, since their marriage is considered valid in Islamic law. Similarly, if a couple is married in the municipal office according to secular law, the marriage is still valid according to Islamic law. Therefore, a couple that is married in the municipal office of a secular state is also considered married by the community of Muslims.¹⁴ According to *imam* Tahir Zeneli, who served as deputy head of the AMC in the 1990s, the Islamic validity of civil marriage contracts is the reason why the AMC did not take any steps to ritually recognize the marriages conducted during the communist regime, as was done by other religious communities, since those marriages were deemed legal and acceptable from an Islamic point of view.¹⁵

Another important reason, however, why Muslim *imams* in Albania insist that a couple should present a marriage certificate from the municipal office prior to performing the *nikah* contract, is to do with

the potential for divorce. According to the abovementioned *imams*, under current conditions, the act of *nikah* or the marriage contract according to Islamic law is more of a religious ritual. An *imam* that concludes a *nikah* has no power in the case of divorce to enforce the consequences of such a divorce, such as the conditions of the financial obligations on husbands as envisioned by Islamic law. In the case of a marriage contracted in the municipal office, however, the divorce litigation can be taken to court. Indeed, the result of such litigation could be very different from that which would be envisioned in Islamic law. However, according to the *imams* that I interviewed, this is preferable to not having any legal recognition of the marriage or any legal protection at all. While quite often, when discussing marital conflicts, these *imams* exposed a gendered view of the relations within the family, when discussing divorce, their main concern was related to securing legal protection for women. Their concern relates to an understanding that in the case of divorce, women are in a position of disadvantage and that the court can provide legal and financial protection.

Certainly, shari'a religious law retains moral strength, but these *imams* argue that matters of marriage and divorce should not depend on the strength of the participants' religious convictions at the time of the marital conflict. In the absence of a system in which Islamic law can impose the obligations ensuing from a divorce settlement, they instead have the laws of the secular state impose a system of safeguards and obligations in the case of divorce, even though these legal obligations do not reflect or otherwise refer to Islamic family law.

According to these *imams*, in almost all cases of marital conflicts where they were asked to serve as mediators, the process of mediation was requested by women. This process of mediation is not recognized by the courts and has no legal weight. The *imams* themselves referred to these processes as 'offering advice,' that is, advice that the couple was free to follow or reject. The approach taken in these mediation processes also differed. Some *imams* preferred to remind the couple of the words of God in the Qur'an and the teaching of the Prophet, the Sunna, in matters of marriage, reminding the couple that although Islam recognizes divorce, 'it is the most hated of the matters that have been allowed.' Other *imams*, however, insisted that the best approach is to counsel on the basis of the standard ethical norms in society for maintaining a healthy marriage. Regarding the models offered in contemporary Albanian society, these *imams* were referring to 'traditional' norms, and they envisioned a gendered understanding of the obligations of women and the responsibilities of men.

It is interesting to note that while traditionally in Islamic law and in many Muslim societies around the world today, the question of divorce is often discussed in relation to the deferred *mahr*, or dowry, and the financial settlements, particularly when the *mahr* amounts to a considerable sum of money and valuable assets, the *mahr* does not seem to carry an equal weight among Albanian Muslims. The concept of *mahr* was abandoned in Albania with the abolition of religion in 1967, but was reintroduced in the 1990s with the re-emergence of religion. The first generation of *imams* that graduated from Islamic universities in the Middle East favoured and preached an idea of *mahr* that avoided large sums of money. Even in conversations with devout Muslims, the idea of large sums of money as *mahr* is scorned as indicating greed, monetizing marriage and as standing in contradiction to the religious principles of Islamic marriage. Albanian *imams* have quoted the prophet Muhammad as stating that even a ring can be given as *mahr*. In most cases, giving a ring as *mahr* has given an additional meaning to the custom, followed by most Albanians regardless of religious affiliation or lack of it, of offering the ring during the engagement party, known as 'the exchange of rings.'

During the early years of the re-introduction of religion in post-communist Albania, one would often hear about conflicts between a young generation of devout Muslims who had discovered a new religious identity and their parents and relatives, who had grown up under communism. The way in which the 'exchange of rings' has been transformed to also represent the offering of *mahr* is one of the ways in which some of these conflicts have been resolved.¹⁶ It is quite common, however, for the *mahr* to constitute the groom's promise to provide for the bride's expenses when performing Haj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Since this journey is to be undertaken under the condition that it is financially possible, it is understood by the *imams* in Albania to be a deferred *mahr*. Contrary to the stipulations of the deferred *mahr*, however, it is unheard of for a divorced wife to request that the sum of money needed to pay for the pilgrimage be given to her as part of a divorce settlement.

When it comes to child custody, *imams* in Albania seem to encourage accommodation, arguing that there are no major differences between Islamic law and the secular law that favour the mother, particularly in regard to female children. Certainly, these *imams* are aware that the discussion in Islamic law, particularly regarding male children, is more complex (at a certain age, the custody switches from the mother to the father), yet this position seems to be motivated by the personal conviction that the interests of children will be better served under the

care of their mothers – reflecting a gendered view of the role of women as caregivers – as well as by reluctance to take a stance against the law of the land.

This accommodating attitude to the laws and customs of a deeply secularized society is not articulated in religious treatises as a response to living in the context of a secular state. It is in the religious answers to individual cases reflecting the complex realities of devout Muslims that one can see a general tendency to avoid a confrontation with the laws and norms of Albanian society.

There has been more prominent confrontation between religious law and secular state law in matters of political participation. Some *imams* argue against participating in elections, since this amounts to recognizing and supporting a system that is not founded on the laws of God.¹⁷ These voices, however, constitute a very small minority that carries little weight in the community. This stance is even more striking when one considers that the majority of *imams* in Albania were educated in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s, where the religious establishment insisted on preaching an apolitical approach to politics in response to the political opposition of the *Sahwa* movement in Saudi Arabia, following the first Gulf War.¹⁸ Politically active *imams* explain their political engagement in terms of *maslaha*, or public interest, arguing that it is in the community's best interest to be politically active as a way of combating marginalization and achieving better integration in society.¹⁹

In an interview given to the US-based *Slate* magazine, *imam* Ahmed Kalaja of the Tirana mosque is quoted as saying that 'he tries to "adapt to the peculiarities of the Albanian tradition." He says Albania will always be a society of tolerance, where religion and state are separate.'²⁰ In arguing for the right of Muslim school girls to wear the headscarf, for example, Albanian Muslims have not argued against the principles of secularism, but have instead appealed to those models of secularism that allow for more religious freedom.²¹

The latest debates between Muslim groups and the governments of Albania and Kosovo have focused on the very same topics: Muslim groups demanded permission to build new mosques²² in the centres of the capitals of Kosovo and Albania, Prishtina and Tirana, protested against the state's promotion of Mother Teresa, the former Catholic nun and Noble Peace Prize laureate, and also protested against the ban on Muslim female students wearing headscarves in public schools. The building of new mosques was debated in relation to new Christian cathedrals recently built in both capitals. Muslims in both Albania and Kosovo feel that their governments are favouring and supporting Christianity at the expense of Muslims, as part of their attempt to show

a more European face. In the view of many Muslims in Albania and Kosovo, the debate over the headscarf is motivated by the same concerns.²³ As shown by the debate about the state's promotion of the legacy and missionary activities of Mother Teresa, Muslims in both Albania and Kosovo have argued that the governments in both countries are acting contrary to the principles of secularism. Many have questioned the sincerity of these Muslim appeals to the principles of secularism and have interpreted them as indications of Islamic fundamentalism and intolerance. What people tend to overlook, however, is that Muslim activists regard secularism as protection from those government policies that they believe favour other religious communities.

Despite the similarities and parallel debates in both countries, Muslims in Albania have not followed the example of Muslims in Kosovo, who, on numerous occasions, have taken to protesting in the streets, sometimes leading to violent confrontations with the police. Imams and Muslim activists in Albania seem to have found their numerical strength to be the most suitable basis for addressing their concerns. The head of one of the major Muslim non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Albania told me about his conversation with a political candidate in the most recent municipal elections. After the politician had promised support for the building of a new mosque in the capital, the head of the Muslim NGO had responded that the building of the mosque is not the most important priority for Muslims. What Muslims want is not to be made to feel like foreigners in their own country. The common complaint of many Muslims is that many politicians have adopted the European right-wing rhetoric about Muslim immigrants and are using it against Muslims in Albania.²⁴

The Reflection of Europe

In October 2011, Albania completed a controversial census of the population that included an optional question on religion. Many people have questioned the results of this census, particularly with regard to the matter of the self-declaration of ethnicity. The census is largely believed and openly celebrated, however, as an opportunity to remove, in the eyes of the outside world, the stigma of Albania as an Islamic country. The AMC called upon the government to remove the questions relating to ethnicity and religion from the census.²⁵ In October 2011, the AMC restated its reservations regarding the process, but also called on Muslims to freely and proudly declare their ethnic and religious identity.²⁶

At the time of writing the results have not been announced, and they are expected to be made public some time in February 2013.

In any case, the manner in which the Albanian Muslim community will deal with the challenges of a society still uneasy about its cultural identity will depend much on how Western Europe deals with its own Muslim communities, on the rhetoric that its leaders adopt when addressing issues related to the Muslim presence in Europe, and on the kind of image Europe reflects for countries such as Albania and Kosovo, that want to emulate Western political and economic systems.

As shown by many debates on social media networks, Muslims in Albania will have to address a number of issues that are today being debated within the community. The place of women in the mosques and their representation in community institutions are only some of the contemporary concerns of devout Muslims. They are also looking for ideas and answers from the West, as is shown by increased interest in the translation and the study of the works of Western Muslim thinkers such as Timothy J. Winter and Tariq Ramadan, who recently visited Kosovo and Albania.²⁷ There is an increased awareness that Muslim identity and practices will have to reflect the national consensus of modelling their society on the European model. The question remains, however: will Europe reflect a vision that represents its Muslims?

Notes

- 1 In 2006, a debate on the identity of Albanians between Dr. Rexhep Qosja, a political activist and member of the Academy of Science of Kosovo, and Ismail Kadare, the best-known Albanian writer and many times candidate for the Nobel Prize for Literature, dominated the headlines in the media for four months. Dr. Rexhep Qosja held the view that the cultural identity of the Albanians has been influenced by both Eastern and Western cultures and that this experience has enriched Albanian cultural identity (Dr. Qosja's main contribution in this debate was later published in a book titled *Realiteti i Shperfillur* [The Neglected Reality], Toena: Tirana, 2006). Ismail Kadare held that Albanians are solely Europeans and that any ambiguity in this regard is detrimental to the interests of the Albanians (his main contribution to this debate was also published that same year as a book titled *Identiteti Evropian i Shqiptareve* [The European Identity of the Albanians] Onufri: Tirana, 2006).
- 2 "Bashkohu: Presidentja të kërkojë falje, ofendoi Sheriatin." [Join us: the President should apologize, she offended the shari'a]. *Express*. 18 October 2011. <http://www.gazetaexpress.com/?cid=1,15,65319>.
- 3 See Ulf Brunnbauer and Robert Pichler. "Highland Values and Nation-Building in the Balkans." *Balkanologie* VI [1-2], December 2002, pp. 77-100.

- 4 Alfred Moisiu, "Fjala e mbajtur ne Unionin e Oxfordit." [Speech presented at the Oxford Union]. <http://www.president.al/english/pub/info.asp?id=1089> (the speech cannot be currently accessed from this link. Last accessed in January 2006).
- 5 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press: New York, 2009, pp. 45-6.
- 6 The President of Albania, Bamir Topi, added his weight to this recent debate. In a visit to a remote region of Albania, Mirdita, hometown of Shtjefën Gjeçovi, the Franciscan Priest, Mr. Topi said that, 'Mirdita ... symbolizes the most precious Albanian tradition, the autochthon laws that inspired Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi, the cultural monument of the *Kanun* and the resistance to whoever attempted to violate it. Mirdita symbolizes the strong and unwavering faith and the European Identity... [and the people of Mirdita] built the positive and modern cult of the Albanian cleric.' See "Vizita e Topit në Mirditë." [Topi visits Mirdita]. Top Channel Web Page. 6.12.2011. <http://top-channel.tv/artikull.php?id=224425>.
- 7 Talal Asad, 'Muslims and European Identity' in Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to European Identity*. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 218-9.
- 8 See the speech by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, at the Royal Courts of Justice. Dr. Rowan Williams, 'Civil and Religious Law in England,' and Tariq Modood, 'Multicultural Citizenship and the shari'a Controversy in Britain,' in Rex Ahdar and Nicholas Aroney (eds.), *Sharia in the West*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 293-308 and 33-42.
- 9 Arsim Bajrami, Head of the Commission for the Amendment of the Constitution, declared recently that Kosovo will follow a French model of republicanism. See 'Kosova me modelin francez te republikes.' *Telegrafi* 19 November 2011. <http://www.telegrafi.com/lajme/kosova-me-modelin-francez-te-republikes-2-18431.html>.
- 10 Piro Misha. *Arratisja Nga Burgjet e Historise: Cdo te thote sot te jesh Shqiptar*. [Escaping the prison of history: What does it mean today to be an Albanian?], Tirana: Toena, 2008, pp. 306-9.
- 11 By 'privatized diversity' Ayelet Shachar means 'the request by members of religious minorities on the territory of a secular state to *privatize diversity*. By this I refer to the recent proposals raised by self-proclaimed "guardians of the faith" to establish private arbitration tribunals in which consenting members of the group will have their legal disputes resolved in a binding fashion – according to religious principles – under the secular umbrella of alternative dispute-resolution.' In *Sharia in the West*, 2010, pp. 118-9.
- 12 Ayelet Shachar, *Sharia in the West*, 2010, pp. 118-9.
- 13 Ahmed Kalaja. 'Sjellja me Gruan.' [Behavior with the spouse], 19 January 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuMhgJRD5zg>.
- 14 Interview with the author, November 2011.
- 15 Interview with the author, November 2011.
- 16 For most Albanians, the marriage party is an event that takes a long time to prepare for, and a lot of drinking is expected. This is obviously contrary to the

- ethical concerns of a young generation of devout Muslims. In recent times, however, many such parties have been organized using non-alcoholic beer.
- 17 Besnik Sinani, *From Students of Knowledge to Hoxhas*, unpublished MA thesis, Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near East Studies, New York University, New York, 2010.
 - 18 Stephane Lacroix, 'Between Revolution and Apoliticism: Nasir al-Din al-Albani and his Impact on the shaping of Contemporary Salafism,' in Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, p. 76.
 - 19 Besnik Sinani, 'From Students of Knowledge to Hoxhas.'
 - 20 See Nathan Thrall, 'Albania, the Muslim World's Most Pro-American State,' *Slate*, 3 September 2009. http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/dispatches/features/2009/albania_the_muslim_worlds_most_proamerican_state/the_muslim_worlds_most_tolerant_nation.html.
 - 21 Besnik Sinani, 'Ajatollahet e Sekularizmit [Ayatollahs of Secularism],' *Shekulli*, 29 April 2009.
 - 22 See Kerem Oktem, 'New Islamic Actors After the Wahabi Intermezzo: Turkey's Return to the Muslim Balkans,' European Studies Center, University of Oxford, December 2010, <http://balkanmuslims.com/>.
 - 23 Mark Lowen, 'Headscarf ban sparks debate over Kosovo's identity,' *BBC News*, 24 August 2010. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11065911>.
 - 24 Field notes from interviews with Muslim congregants in Tirana, winter 2010 and autumn 2011.
 - 25 AMC, 'Deklarate per Shtyp e Keshillit te Pergjithshem te KMSH-se. [Press announcement of the General Council of AMC],' March 2011. <http://www.kmsh.al/aktualitet/410-deklarate-per-shtyp-e-keshillit-te-pergjithshem-te-kmsh-se.html>.
 - 26 The census was largely debated because it was perceived as the result of Greek pressure to artificially inflate the size of the Greek minority in Albania. For the second press announcement of AMC see AMC: 'Mbledhet Keshilli i Pergjithshem i Komunitetit Mysliman. [Meeting of the General Council of AMC],' October 2011. <http://www.kmsh.al/component/content/article/15-faqja-e-pare/616-mbledhet-keshilli-i-pergjithshem-i-komunitetit-mysliman-te-shqiperise.html>.
 - 27 Tariq Ramadan in a speech held in Tirana, Albania, in June 2011, with Albanian translation, titled 'Muslimanet ne Evrope: Sfida dhe Perspektiva. [Muslims in Europe: Challenges and Perspective].' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQY8zQrq1os&feature=player_embedded. See also Tariq Ramadan's interview on Albanian television during the same visit: Interviste ne TV Al Sat: Studio e Hapur me Eni Vasili. [Interview on TV Alsat: Open Studio with Eni Vasili], June 2011. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oziPox-5XPU&feature=player_embedded).

