Introduction

The Changing Face of Islam in Bulgaria

Silvi, a Bulgarian Muslim and an Avon lady,[1] always worried about her roots. Not where she came from, nor who her great-grandparents were. Silvi obsessed about the roots of her hair—how many millimeters of white she could stand before she had to dye it again. When I met her in the small Bulgarian city of Madan in 2005, Silvi was in her late forties and had thick jet-black hair that hung all the way down her back. Over the years the gray had taken over, and it was only nine days after each dye that she could see the silvery sheen glistening at her temples once again. Silvi had been born with the name Aysel, which she was told means "moonlight" in Turkish. She did not care that the communists had made her change her name as she was a rather secular Muslim and really only cared about selling Avon products, which she had been doing for almost ten years. Silvi, short for Silvia, is a Western-sounding name whereas Aysel is Muslim. Since so many Bulgarians associated Muslims with rural life and tobacco growing, it was hard for someone with a Turkish name to project the aura of glamor needed to sell beauty products. "Women will buy more toiletries from 'Silvi' than they will from 'Aysel,' " she told me.

In recent months, there had been a growing trend that disturbed her: an increasing number of young women were dressing head to toe in a new Islamic style imported from abroad. Some of her best-selling Avon products were anticellulite and bust-firming creams, and Silvi wondered if the market for them would shrink as fewer and fewer young women wore the once ubiquitous combination of micro-miniskirts and ample décolletage. "If ugly old women wear a *kŭrpa* [kerchief], it does not matter. No one wants to see them anyway. But young girls?" She told me this as we walked to the center of town. She pointed to the big mosque. "Those *fanatitsi* [fanatics] will be bad for business." Silvi then began reciting a list of things that were changing in her home city of Madan: restaurants had stopped serving pork—once a staple of the local diet; some women were no longer allowed to leave their homes without their husbands' permission—something unheard of before 1989; men who went to the mosque were being given preference for local jobs; and old people who should be venerated were now being chastised as "bad" Muslims for carrying on local traditions practiced in the region since before the Second World War.

Figure 1 Girls dressed in the new "Arab" style

One of Silvi's Avon distributors was named Liliana (Lili for short), and she was the daughter of one of the oldest hodzhas (Muslim preachers) in the area. She was a tall, thin, clear-complexioned woman in her early thirties. Like Silvi, she had long, straight hair, but hers was a natural auburn while Silvi's was a chemical black. Lili preferred frosted lipsticks, nail polishes, and eye shadows, and the heavy dose of glitter in her makeup gave her a dated and almost otherworldly appearance. She lived in a village just outside of Madan with her aged mother and her chronically ill father, who even now still made *muski* (amulets) for those who took the trouble to come visit him. Lili had been married and was the mother of two school-aged children. Her husband had long since abandoned them, so she moved back in with her parents in the mid-1990s to help take care of her father.

The village where she lived was a thirty-minute walk from the center of Madan; Lili came into the city two or three times a week to look for work. Lili had only an eighth-grade education, and for women like her

there were only three possible jobs: seamstress, shopkeeper, or waitress. Lili had taken a sewing course through the municipality and was hoping to find a position in one of the local garment factories. Since seamstresses were paid by the piece, she would earn as she produced, unlike the waitresses and shopkeepers, who might work twice as many hours for a tiny monthly wage. But most women in Madan were trying to find work in the garment factories; to land a job, you had to have the right connections or to be in the right place at the right time. So Lili ostensibly came into town to follow up on possible job leads, but she also wanted to take a break from the boredom of village life and the seemingly constant folding and unfolding of the prayer rugs.

Watching Lili come into Madan was always a curious affair. She would walk on the main road coming into the city wearing an ankle-length, long-sleeved, loose, patterned dress and a large square of cloth folded in half, draped over her head and tied beneath her chin. She always carried a large canvas bag slung over her shoulder on a long, yellow nylon strap. She dressed exactly as most women in the villages around Madan dressed, a style typical for the Bulgarian Muslims in this region. But each time she arrived, the first thing she would do was order an espresso at the pizzeria and then duck immediately into the bathroom to change. She would emerge moments later in skin-tight jeans and a low-cut blouse, her long hair spilling over her sometimes bare shoulders. I was accustomed to these costume changes because I had coffee in front of the pizzeria almost every morning.

"And do you change back into your other clothes when you go home?" I asked her one day.

"Of course," she said. "My father is very old. He believes in the old ways, and he is very proud that he is a hodzha. People respect him, because that was very difficult during communism. He is sick now. I do not want to make him angry."

Lili was fairly sure her father knew about the city clothes she changed into on her excursions away from the village, but he preferred not to see them. Lili believed that her parents, having lived most of their lives under communism, had limited understanding of the world after the coming of democracy in 1989 and none at all of the market economy, in which the state no longer guaranteed full employment. No matter how often she explained it to him, her father could not comprehend why there was not a job for Lili when she was willing to work. The last time that he had felt well enough to go into Madan for the Friday prayers, Lili's father had been perplexed by the many changes that had befallen his beloved city: the dirty streets, the abandoned buildings, the obviously drunken men stumbling into the mosque. Lili's father's heart had soared with joy when work began on a new mosque, so many years after the communists had

Figure 2 The center of Madan in winter

destroyed the old one. And so it was most upsetting of all when the new imam (congregational leader) and some young, local men who were studying in Saudi Arabia started saying that the old hodzhas were not true Muslims, that they were uneducated, and that they had deceived people into accepting practices which were un-Islamic.

"I am not sure which would kill him faster," Lili reflected one morning over coffee as two young girls dressed in the new *Arabski stil* (Arab-style) of Islamic dress passed us in front of the pizzeria. "To see me wearing a short skirt or to see me dressed like an *Arabka* [female Arab]. This is not the city he knew."

Madan, the small city that was home to women like Silvi and Lili, was named after the Arabic word for "mine." It is about a six-hour drive south and east from the Bulgarian capital of Sofia, most of it on secondary roads that wind precariously through the undulating peaks of the Rhodope Mountains. Bulgarians claim that this is the legendary land of Orpheus, the cradle of ancient Thrace. The mountains straddle the once impervious border between communist Bulgaria and capitalist Greece, and they are filled with small towns and villages tucked away into deep valleys or

perched high atop remote peaks. Among these small towns, there are only a few cities, created through carefully planned projects of communist rural economic development. At a certain point in the drive down from Sofia, the crosses and bell towers of the small country churches found across most of Bulgaria are replaced by cone-tipped minarets—minarets recently rebuilt after having been systematically torn down by the communists. Cities like Madan, and nearby Smolyan and Rudozem, were clustered in the central part of the Rhodope Mountains and were home to the indigenous Bulgarian-speaking Muslim population: the Pomaks.[2] By 2005, the minarets in many Pomak settlements had sprouted anew, like resilient dandelions, in the fertile soil of newfound religious freedom.

Although Islam has a long history in Bulgaria, its local meanings and practices began changing after 1989 as the religion evolved and adapted to the exigencies of the global forces—social, political, and economic—unleashed by the end of socialism.[3] The contours of Bulgarian Islam were also being shaped by the contentious internal politics of its Muslim leaders as well as by the dynamic and increasingly controversial position of Islam in "old" Europe, where Muslim minorities began rejecting secularism and demanding that the Western nations make good on their promises of multiculturalism and tolerance. In this book, I examine the complex and ever-mutating trajectory of Islam through the lives of men and women living in one small corner of the European continent: the Rhodope Mountains. But rather than depicting Islam west of the Bosphorus as an undifferentiated totality, this case study of one Muslim city will demonstrate how the social meanings of Islam in former communist countries may be qualitatively different from its meanings on the other side of the now-phantom Iron Curtain.

Moreover, this case study shows that people embrace new forms of Islam for locally defined reasons, that is, in response to ground-level cultural, political, historical, and economic factors that do not easily fit into grand schematic models to explain the growing influence of Islam in Europe. Certainly, European Muslim communities share some common geopolitical circumstances, such as the ubiquity of globalization, the financial dominance of Saudi Arabia over the international Islamic charitable aid establishment, and growing worldwide Islamophobia. But these macro factors interact with particular local conditions to push or pull Muslim communities toward new beliefs and practices. This examination of Madan is just one glimpse into a change that seems to be occurring in Muslim communities around the world, namely, the eclipsing of "traditional" forms of Islam by "purified" ones imported from abroad. But as I will demonstrate, these changes are occurring in some Bulgarian Muslim communities while other, almost identical communities are relatively unaffected. The central questions are: Why here and not elsewhere? And why now?

Set within a shallow, narrow valley and bisected by the Madanska River, Madan hardly qualifies as a city; in 2005 there was only one road that led in and out. When I did my fieldwork there between 2005 and 2008, I had to drive south first to the regional capital of Smolyan, and then turn east and travel on a dilapidated two-lane road that led toward the Greek border and the twin Pomak cities of Madan and Rudozem. As I entered Madan, a small blue sign with white Cyrillic lettering informed me that I was 670 meters above sea level and that the city had a population of 9,000. I knew, however, that many people had left; Madan had dropped down to about 6,000 in the last few years. As I drove into town, one of the first things I passed on the right was an old communist garment factory, now owned by an Austrian company that produced luxury ski clothing. In the summer, the windows were always open, and I could see the women inside sewing and embroidering the individual jackets and pants that could cost as much as one year's worth of their wages. Yet the factory paid the highest piece rate in town, plus all of the required worker's insurances. On the left was a neighborhood called "25," full of ageing five- and six-storey apartment blocs and small local shops selling dry goods, vegetables, children's clothes from Turkey, and cheap, imported Chinese goods in the Bulgarian equivalent of a "dollar store."

Further up the road on the right there was a small cluster of businesses, including a gas station, a car wash, a restaurant, and a small hotel, all new and painted bright yellow. Although the signs read "Regal," the locals called the place "Saramov," the last name of the man who built and owned the businesses. Saramov was one of the 10 percent of Madan's residents, or Madanchani, who were Christian. Although his wife was a Bulgarian Muslim from a nearby village, a prominent banner of six naked blonde women advertised his car wash to those entering the city. Some of the locals interpreted the banner as a sign of disrespect for the more conservative religious values of Madan's increasingly devout Muslims. Some claimed that Saramov had links to the *mutri* (the Bulgarian Mafia). He drove a Mercedes jeep and had two large bodyguards, who hung around drinking coffee and glowering at the customers. Despite this, his restaurant was the most popular place in town, and his small hotel was always full.

The road curved slightly after I passed Saramov's complex, and it was from there that I caught first sight of the towering minaret of Madan's imposing new mosque. About a minute later, I would arrive in the center of town. Here, there were three important landmarks that could serve as architectural metaphors for the tempestuous postsocialist history of the city. The first was the old GORUBSO building, headquarters of the once all-important communist lead and zinc mining enterprise. The second was the Ivan Vazov Kulturen Dom (community center), and the third was the megamosque. If the Austrian-owned garment factory and Saramov's Regal

Figure 3 The GORUBSO building

complex represented the city's transitionary protocapitalist present, then the GORUBSO building stood as a symbol of Madan's once vibrant communist past. The community center, the façade of which was restored and repainted with funds from the European Union's "Beautiful Bulgaria" project,[4] represented one possible future for the Madanchani in the years leading up to their country's 2007 EU accession, while the mosque stood for another possible future that would draw them closer to the Middle East.

The GORUBSO building was the tallest structure in the city and sat at the top of the main intersection, where the single road took a sharp left turn and led drivers out of Madan and toward the city of Zlatograd. Although GORUBSO had divisions in five southern Bulgarian cities, Madan had been its administrative center. The nine-storey building held all of the administrative offices of the enterprise. This site had once supported Madan's old mosque, a picture of which can still be found in the GORUBSO mining museum. The low, humble, square structure with its telltale minaret had been the previous center of the city until it was bulldozed to make room for the lead-zinc enterprise headquarters. For over three decades, the GORUBSO building dominated the center of Madan, a shining beacon of communist modernity, just as the communist enterprise had once dominated the lives of all who lived in the city.

Figure 4 A building in Madan in 2005

GORUBSO brought immeasurable wealth to the city between 1945 and the early 1990s, when mining and metal processing were among the most respected and well remunerated professions in Bulgaria. Thousands of workers came from all over the country, and from as far away as China and Vietnam, to work for the thriving industry. Its success was based on the rich ore deposits in the Madan area, and GORUBSO invested heavily in the development of the city, building apartment blocs, recreation complexes, community centers, a soccer stadium, pools, schools, special hospital wards, etcetera. It supported the entire local community until Bulgaria was suddenly thrust into the global capitalist economy in the early 1990s, and a fatal combination of labor unrest, international market pressure, bungled privatization, and high-level corruption conspired to run the mines into bankruptcy.

The collapse of GORUBSO left thousands of men in Madan unemployed and destroyed the local economy, leaving the whole city to sink incrementally into a state of visible disrepair. Time and gravity swallowed up much of the infrastructure so proudly developed through the now-hackneyed communist ideals of progress and modernization. The coming of democracy had promised to make the lives of the miners even better, combining economic success with political and religious freedoms, but in Madan, as

Figure 5 The renovated façade of the Culture House, representing the ideal communist man and woman

elsewhere throughout the postsocialist world in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, democracy failed to live up to its promises and left thousands of deserted rural cities in its wake. Indeed, "living blocs" that once housed two families in each apartment were now empty and crumbling. In many places older buildings collapsed; the neighborhoods on the outskirts of Madan were pockmarked with the ruins of the failed enterprise, like an archeological site of the recent past. As in Russia, Eastern Germany, or Kyrgyzstan, where the closure of inefficient or highly polluting communist-era enterprises destroyed the local economies they once supported, Madan was decimated by the privatization of the lead-zinc mines. With few local reemployment opportunities, many men were forced to seek jobs as construction workers in Bulgaria's larger cities or in Western Europe. Those who stayed behind often turned to alcohol, drowning their despair in strong local *rakiya* (brandy).

As a pre-accession candidate to the European Union, however, Bulgaria was the beneficiary of many initiatives. The "Beautiful Bulgaria" project was one that tried to kill two proverbial birds with one stone. As a way to combat the high level of unemployment after the closure of the mines and to restore Madan's center to its former glory, the European Union invested in the restoration of the square and the buildings surrounding it: the Ivan

Vazov Kulturen Dom, the offices of the municipality, the fire station, along with a few smaller projects. The main effort, however, was concentrated on the roof, doors, windows, and plaster façade of the community center, which all needed extensive repairs. The European Union measured the success of the project by how many unemployed laborers were put to work on it and for how many "man-months." The community center project employed twenty-four people for fifty-five man-months and left a beautifully restored crimson building with white columns at the top of a wide plaza, with a children's playground nearby. But when the work was finished, the laborers were once again left without jobs. The community center was indeed a beautiful building, one of the few in a city in which almost every other structure had fallen or was falling apart, and it stood regally as a reminder of the promise of the European Union. But to many, it was also a symbol of the shallowness of that promise. The Europeans might be happy to repaint a few buildings, but there were those in Madan who questioned whether the EU would ever substantially invest in the future of the city, or if Madan, with its 90 percent Muslim population, would be a victim rather than a beneficiary of the EU accession.

"The Europeans can do nothing for Bulgaria," said Hasan, a retired miner who worked in the café of the new mosque. "The goods we have to sell them, they already have. They only want to sell us their goods. Our natural trading partners are in the Middle East and the [Soviet] Union, like it was before democracy. We have goods that they need. Bulgaria should establish closer ties with the Muslim world, and not with the Europeans. The Europeans do not need us."

Hasan told me this while we shared tea in the café of the main mosque. A thin blue curtain in the doorway billowed inward with the light breeze. It was a sentiment that I had heard from others in Madan, particularly from those frustrated in their attempts to penetrate the Bulgarian market with the products of local industry. The owner of a small ice cream factory complained incessantly that the aggressive Greeks had taken over Bulgaria with their Delta ice cream, leaving him no choice but to seek markets in the Middle East, where being a Muslim at least earned him some advantages. On the walls of the café, there were three glossy posters of Mecca, and in addition to the juices, hot drinks, snacks, and (Madan-made) ice cream, Hasan sold an assortment of Islamic newspapers, magazines, books, and compact discs for learning modern Arabic. Hasan told me that ordinary laborers also looked to the Middle East for work when they could not find it in Bulgaria and were unwilling to work illegally in Holland, Germany, or Spain. The café we sat in was tucked on the ground floor of the three-storey mosque, which included a huge windowed dome and a towering minaret topped by a small silver crescent. The outside walls of the mosque were a cool white, and the first three meters were tiled with large mosaic-

like pieces of smooth gray marble. The minaret was tall and white, with golden vertical stripes, two circular balconies, and four bullhorn speakers that delivered the call to prayer five times a day. It was an impressive structure.

The most impressive part of the Madan mosque, however, was the prayer hall. An elaborate five-tiered crystal chandelier hung in the center of the voluminous room, with twenty large arched windows streaming light in from the right and left sides. The main floor, where the men prayed, was carpeted with a luxurious indigo blue and gold rug. There was a U-shaped balcony supported by white columns that divided part of the hall into two floors; the upper level was the women's section, an architectural feature that most Bulgarian mosques did not have at the time. At the front of the hall, there were four more arched windows that dribbled light around an exquisitely decorated niche indicating the direction of Mecca and covered with blue mosaic tiles and Arabic script. The room evoked a sense of awe and grandeur that was quite out of place in the otherwise impoverished city.

The sheer size and opulence of the mosque led to many speculations about the origin of the funds responsible for its construction. Although no one could speak with certainty, many Madanchani thought the funds had come from abroad. They had first wanted to build the mosque in the early 1990s, and collections were taken up among the city's residents. Men volunteered their labor to help with its construction. But the project soon ran out of funds for materials as the future of GORUBSO became uncertain. The mosque languished unfinished through the middle part of the decade. Then, toward the end of the 1990s, the money suddenly appeared. Hasan claimed that the money had come from Madan residents who lived abroad. Silvi believed that the funds had come from Saudi Arabia, although some of her Avon clients whispered that it had come from Iran. In 2005, the mosque stood as a powerful reminder of the growing influence of the Muslim world on the small city. The mosque became a vibrant cultural and educational center, unlike the community center, the symbol of the EU's fleeting and superficial aid.

In the battle for hearts and minds in Madan, the promises of global Islamic solidarity challenged the still-remote allures of Western Europe. On Fridays, when the imam (congregational leader) gave his weekly sermon, the mosque was overrun with close to a thousand men, many of them former miners. The mosque had become the central distribution point for ritually sacrificed meats donated from abroad during the two big Islamic feasts: Ramazan Bayram and Kurban Bayram. During the month of Ramazan (Ramadan), at the end of each day's fast, the mosque distributed an almost endless supply of free cookies, pastries, and other sweets. The imam was also responsible for supporting the studies and ambitions of young people

who hoped to get an Islamic education either in Bulgaria or, more importantly, abroad, in Turkey, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, or Kuwait. Most of the local businessmen and politicians congregated at the mosque, and in local affairs, the imam, who had also studied Islam abroad, was becoming more powerful with each passing year. In a community caught in a tempest of political and economic change, the mosque provided social and spiritual support for those desperately in need of a bulwark against the storm.

Why Bulgaria?

Of all of the EU countries, Bulgaria may seem the most obscure in which to examine the growing presence of Islam in Europe. But Bulgaria is a fascinating location to study the dynamism of Islam because it is a place where the "West" has historically met the "East." Although both NATO and the European Union have now embraced Bulgaria, it has been at the crossroads between the "Occident" and the "Orient" for over a millennium. It has been in turn part of the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires, and Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, and Islam have all left their legacies in the modern nation of fewer than eight million people. As a close Soviet ally, Bulgaria also experienced over four decades of the official state atheism of Marxist-Leninism and scientific socialism. During the 1990s, when internal conflicts tore apart neighboring Yugoslavia, Bulgaria remained stable and peaceful despite similar religious divides, severe economic hardships, and the massive social and political changes that followed the arrival of democracy and free markets. In 2008, Bulgaria had the largest Muslim population in the EU and was the only member state with a large, historically indigenous Muslim population. And unlike Muslim populations elsewhere in the EU, Bulgaria's Muslim Pomaks, Turks, and Roma have professed Islam for centuries. Finally, as the Americans moved their European military bases into the country to bolster strategic positions for future forays into the Middle East, the Middle East was strengthening its presence in Bulgaria through its religious aid to Muslims, the same aid that probably helped build the imposing new mosque in Madan. Bulgaria had become a meeting point once again.

Bulgaria has also had a long and tempestuous relationship with its eastern neighbor, Turkey, and its ethnic Turkish minority has been the subject of much international controversy. Bulgaria was part of the Ottoman Empire for the better part of five centuries before obtaining its independence in 1878. Although there were several emigration waves of ethnic Turks back to Turkey and large population exchanges after World War I, a sizeable Turkish minority remained in Bulgaria throughout the twentieth century. This was a particularly thorny issue for the Warsaw Pact Bulgarians, who

feared that their own Turks were a "fifth column" for NATO-allied Turkey. Several attempts were made to assimilate the Turks of Bulgaria, including a massive name-changing campaign in the mid-1980s.[5] The situation came to a head when the Bulgarian communists unilaterally declared that there were "no Turks" in Bulgaria, precipitating a massive exodus to Turkey in May of 1989. By 2008, Turkey's desire to join the European Union found little support from those who believed that Europe should stop at the Bosphorus. This vexed geopolitical relationship with Turkey would be one important factor pushing Bulgaria's Pomaks to forge closer ties with the Gulf Arab states.

Although my analytical focus is on the micro level of human interaction, the questions that drive this book go beyond just one city on the edge of Europe; they apply to postsocialist populations from Budapest to Vladivostok. They shed light on how religious ideologies fare after decades of state-imposed atheism and Marxist critiques of capitalism. They also provide a window on the situation of Muslim minorities in the European Union, where a new passport-free travel regime means that Bulgarians will be more and more integrated into Western European Muslim networks and communities in Germany, France, England, and Spain, despite the fact that there may be significant differences in the reasons why Islam is embraced by different groups. The personal histories of individual men and women in a rural city like Madan give texture and detail to these questions and reveal the specificities of place within the transnational generalizations made possible by the persistence of communist material culture throughout the postsocialist world[6] and by the homogenizing effects of European legal harmonization.

Thus, one can explore pressing global issues by telling the stories of ordinary people: secular Muslims, atheist Muslims, Christianized Muslims, and the newly devout. In the pages that follow, you will encounter people like Iordan, an atheist Pomak and a laid-off miner, who agonized about his Christian name. His recollections of the period before 1989 will help to explain the situation of the Bulgarian-speaking Muslims during the communist period and the strident campaigns launched in order to assimilate them. A woman named Higyar explains how the "new" Islam differed from the "old ways," and Aisha will illuminate why so many Muslim youth felt that the Islam practiced by their parents was tainted by atheism and was in need of renewal. And Silvi, the former bank teller turned Avon lady who lived in Madan for almost five decades, will share her own perceptions and fears of the changes transforming her beloved city, changes she desperately wants to make sense of if only so that she can keep things from changing too quickly. As far as Silvi was concerned, one unexpected and world-shattering change, the almost instantaneous demise of communism, was enough for one lifetime.

The Problem of Terminology

Actually naming the new form of Islam that was making its way into Bulgaria during my fieldwork was a difficult task, and there are many scholarly debates on what it should be called.[7] After 1989, the increased contact with the Muslim world slowly began what has been termed the objectification of Islam in Bulgaria. This occurs when Muslim practices that had been observed without much critical reflection become the subject of intense public scrutiny and debate.[8] "Objectification is the process by which basic questions come to the fore in the consciousness of large numbers of believers: 'What is my religion?' 'Why is it important to my life?' and 'How do my beliefs guide my conduct?' "[9] Islam is extracted from its roots in local traditions and becomes a systematized body of ideas that is distinctly separable from nonreligious ones. In Central Asia, Adeeb Khalid has argued that the Soviet oppression of Islam prevented its objectification, leaving it fixed in the realm of tradition and custom throughout the socialist period.[10] Although Islam in Bulgaria was not subject to the extreme attempts at eradication that it was in the Soviet Union, and the Muslim clergy was left intact (albeit coopted by the communist government), it too remained part of the fabric of everyday cultures, rather than an objectified system of beliefs distinguishable from local custom. Bulgaria thus began the process of objectification after 1989.

But Islam in Bulgaria is very heterogeneous. This heterogeneity has made it difficult to have just one conversation about what Islam means in the Bulgarian context. Although 95 percent of the Muslims in Bulgaria are technically Hanafi Sunni, there is a very wide spectrum of beliefs subsumed in this category. Additionally, there is a small heterodox Shi'a population, called the Alevis, and a wide variety of Sufi brotherhoods such as the Bektashis, which have a long history in the country. In addition to this spectrum of beliefs, there are also three different ethnic groups that profess Islam: the Turks, the Roma, and the Pomaks, who are the focus of the present study. And even among the Pomaks, there are those that consider themselves to be Turks, those who consider themselves Bulgarians, and yet a third group which believes that "Pomak" is a separate ethnic identity altogether. This book hones in on the replacement of traditional practices of Islam with new forms of the religion imported from abroad among the latter two groups of Pomaks: why is this happening specifically among this population?

In the Bulgarian context, this new form of Islam seemed to come largely from Saudi Arabia and from the influence of the Jordanian Muslim Brothers. The Bulgarians who promoted it referred to this new interpretation of Islam as the "true Islam," because it supposedly came straight from the Arabian

Peninsula where the Prophet[11] had lived and died. Those who supported it positioned this "true" Islam in opposition to the Islam of Turkey, Iran, or the Balkans more generally. Because the resources that financed the publications and organizations that promoted this new form of objectified Islam were linked to Saudi-funded charities, members of the Bulgarian government and those in the leadership of the Bulgarian Muslim community who rejected it tended to refer to this Islam as "Wahhabism," specifically linking it to Saudi Arabia. Those ordinary Bulgarian Muslims who still clung to their own traditions referred to it as "Arab Islam," because they also saw it as originating with the Saudis, Jordanians, and Egyptians and contrasted it to their own Balkan or Turkish Islam, that is, Hanafi Sunnism. In Central Asia, Muslims also referred to "Arab Islam," because it was seen as distinctly foreign to local traditions.[12] Although "Arab Islam" was the term most commonly used by my informants in the field, it assumed a static and homogenous form of "Arab" Islam that did not actually exist in the Arab world, and also elided the ways in which Bulgarian religious leaders were actively recrafting foreign interpretations of Islam for their own purposes.

Recognizing that there were a variety of terms which meant different things to different people, I initially planned to use the terms most familiar to me in the discipline of anthropology and to refer to this form of Islam as "orthodox Islam," following the very influential work of Talal Asad,[13] even though it might be very confusing to use this terminology in a (big *O*) Orthodox Christian country. The term "orthodox Islam" seemed to work well in the Bulgarian context because of Asad's juxtaposition of "orthodox" Islam with traditional Islam and the ways in which proponents of the former use scriptural authority to claim a more "rightful" version of their religion. Asad describes (small *o*) "orthodox" Islam as the "scripturalist, puritanical faith of the towns"[14] and argues that it attempts "a (re)ordering of knowledge that governs the 'correct' form of Islamic practices."[15] For Asad, "orthodox" Islam has its historical roots in the "process by which *long-established indigenous practices* (such as the veneration of saints' tombs) were judged to be un-Islamic by the Wahhabi reformers of Arabia . . . and then forcibly eliminated" (emphasis in the original).[16] In her ethnographic study of women healers in Saudi Arabia, Eleanor Abdella Duomato also uses the term "orthodox" to refer to the interpretation of Islam promoted by Wahhabi reformers, opposing it to the word "heterodox," which referred to specific local Muslim traditions. She writes: "Wahhabi authority defined itself very specifically in opposition to saint worship, praying at graves, votive offerings, and Sufi *zikr* chanting and dancing, as well as fortune-telling, spell making, truth divining, and amulet wearing."[17] In the work of both Asad and Duomato, I found important parallels with the Bulgarian case.

As I solicited feedback on early drafts of the manuscript, however, I learned that many experts outside of the field of anthropology were very dubious about the term "orthodox." Edward Walker, a political scientist at Berkeley whose specialty is Islam in the post-Soviet context, objected to the word on two grounds. Firstly, the etymology of the word is from the Greek *ortho* (correct) and *doxa* (belief), and implies a theologically correct version of a religion as determined by some overseeing person or body. Walker felt that because Islam had no overseeing body, there could be no orthodoxy. Secondly, much of the "correcting" of Islam is about proper devotional practices rather than belief, so "orthopraxy" (correct practice) would be more appropriate than "orthodoxy."[18]

I was also fortunate to get invaluable feedback from the esteemed historian of Islam, Nikki R. Keddie.[19] She quite vehemently objected to the term "orthodox," because she felt that there could be no "correct" belief in a religion as diverse and complex as Islam, particularly when one considers the fundamental divisions between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims and the long history of conflict over what is "correct" belief and practice. Keddie also felt that I might, as an author, be interpreted as endorsing this specific form of Islam as the "correct" one. Finally, my colleague and mentor, Gail Kligman, felt that the word "orthodox" was too analytical for an ethnographic text, and that, as an ethnologist, I should use the terminology of my informants.[20] This would be either "Arab Islam" (*Arabski Islyam*), if my informant did not embrace it, or "true Islam" (*istinski Islyam*), if he or she did.

From these comments, I began to have reservations about using Asad's terminology, despite its wide acceptance in anthropology. The problem was what to replace it with, particularly because I wanted to be sensitive to the Bulgarian context and how the media there has deployed different terms. I ruled out "fundamentalist" Islam or even Olivier Roy's "neofundamentalism"[21] because of their very negative connotations in Bulgarian, where "fundamentalists" are synonymous with "terrorists." The term "Wahhabism" conflates radical Islamic movements such as Al-Qaeda with the official religion in Saudi Arabia, and since the 2002 publication of Stephen Schwartz's *The Two Faces of Islam*[22] has become a placeholder for "bad" Islam in opposition to "good" Islam. "Salafism" is an Arabic word that refers to the "ancestors" and connotes a version of Islam to be practiced as it was practiced at the time of the Prophet. The problem with this term is that it is distinctly backward-looking and rooted specifically in the Arabian Peninsula. The new forms of Islam in Bulgaria seem to be much more forward-looking and supranational, in the sense that their adherents are advocating a newer, more inclusive form of Islam, stripped of its local variations and cultural particularities, as in Olivier Roy's idea of "globalized Islam" or what one Bulgarian Islamic Studies scholar preferred to call

"universalist" Islam.[23] Furthermore, both "Salafism" and "Wahhabism" denote a form of Islam that is seemingly fixed and unchanging, whereas in Bulgaria it was still rather vague and undefined. Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori have reminded us that "religious communities, like all 'imagined communities,' change over time. Their boundaries are shifted by, and shift, the political, economic, and social contexts in which these participants find themselves."[24]

Then there were the terms "Islamist" and "Islamism," which connote a political form of Islam, one that includes a focus on gaining political authority in order to promote morality (or deploying a discourse of morality to gain political power). In the Bulgarian context, at least during the time of my fieldwork, the promoters of this new Islam distanced themselves from politics and in fact were quite critical of the Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedom party for mixing religion with statecraft. There were also the terms "objectified" Islam or "authenticated" Islam (used in the Shi'a context),[25] which denoted a continual process of defining and distilling Islamic beliefs and practices. These terms better described the theological negotiations surrounding what this new Islam would look like among the Pomaks, and why it was considered "purer" or more "authentic" than the local beliefs, but they were rarely used in the Bulgarian context. Finally, Nikki Keddie suggested simply calling this new form of Islam "Saudi-influenced Islam," since it relied so heavily on Saudi resources, but I felt that this term ignored the important Jordanian influence, particularly that of the Muslim Brothers.

After much debate and rumination, I will continue to use Asad's terminology because it accurately reflects the attitude of Bulgarians embracing this new Islam, who claimed that their version of the religion was the "correct belief" and that the overseeing body to which they deferred was the Qur'an itself. I will keep the word "orthodox" in quotes throughout the text, however, to make it clear that I am not endorsing this version of Islam (or any other) as the correct one. I will also occasionally use "Saudi-influenced Islam" (without quotes), because it is accurate to say that this form of Islam is largely promoted in Bulgaria with monies derived from Saudi-funded Islamic charities, even if the ideas themselves are of more diverse origin.

This objectified form of "orthodox" Islam mounts a direct challenge to traditional Muslim practices, which come to be characterized as forbidden innovations, even if these practices were a part of local Muslim culture for centuries. Here I also follow Asad in his definition of "traditional" Islam, not as a fixed and stagnant ritualistic practice of the faith but rather one where the legitimacy of the interpretations of Islamic belief and practice is rooted in local histories.[26] Saba Mahmood further argues that in traditional Islam "the past is the very ground through which the subjectivity

and self-understanding of a tradition's adherents are constituted."[27] Thus, "orthodox" Islam often comes into conflict with traditional Islam as the former tries to claim discursive hegemony over the latter by propagating the idea that it is more "authentic." This often results in a situation where widely varying local attitudes regarding mandatory Islamic practices (such as fasting, abstinence from alcohol, and head-covering) are criticized and targeted by "orthodox" reformers who claim there is only one "true" or "pure" Islam.

In Bulgaria, traditional Islam spans a very wide spectrum of belief from mainstream Hanafi Sunnism to Sufism to other forms of locally defined folk Islam. What they all share in common is that their collective practice is seen as a permanent part of the fabric of local Muslim communities, which have a centuries-long presence in the Balkans. Throughout Bulgaria there are remnants of mosques and other reminders of Muslim Ottoman culture that legitimate local interpretations of Islam—Bulgarian Muslims have been doing things their own way for a long time. Efforts to objectify Islam in Bulgaria, therefore, will inevitably meet resistance by those who want to preserve some form of continuity with the past, even if this is a past in which Muslim practices were banned by a communist government. A few examples of the shape of recent tensions between "orthodox" and traditional Islam in Bulgaria will help to sharpen the analytical focus around these two concepts.

One interesting example is the attempted prohibition of a Bulgarian Muslim holiday, Hadrales, which coincides with the Orthodox Christian holiday of Georgiov Den (St. George's Day). A Pomak and the Bulgarian chief mufti, Mustafa Hadzhi, explained in a 2005 interview that the celebration of Hadrales marked "the boundary between winter and summer" and came into Bulgaria through the Ottomans from the Persians who also celebrate a holiday by the same name. The mufti then went on to explain that Hadrales was a *pre-Islamic* holiday of the Persians and therefore, even though it has been celebrated for perhaps half a millennium, its celebration should be eradicated from local Muslim practice in Bulgaria.

> The celebration of a holiday such as St. George's Day or what the Muslims call "Hadrales" does not agree with the principles of the Islamic religion, because it is very clear on this issue—there are two holidays in Islam [Kurban Bayram and Ramazan Bayram] . . . As for other holidays, including "Hadrales," the celebration of such holidays is in no way allowed for the Muslims . . . the Islamic religion fully distances itself from the traditions and all other holidays of the other religions. We are not against the non-Muslims celebrating their own holidays, following their traditions . . . but we ourselves cannot accept them as ours and we cannot observe any rituals connected with them; this cannot be allowed

> by the Islamic religion . . . Islam is first of all an order from God, and it is the last religion, and because of this its religious principles should be observed, not old traditions and rituals.[28]

Although the chief mufti officially condemned Hadrales, many Pomaks continued to celebrate the holiday, braving the disapproval of their newly devout Muslim neighbors.

Another extreme example of an attempt to eradicate local Muslim practices was that of Ali Khairaddin, a Pomak who was part of the official Muslim leadership (the regional mufti of Sofia and all of Western Bulgaria) before starting his own National Association of Bulgarian Muslims in 2006. Khairaddin argued that there should be severe punishments for Muslims who claim to be able to divine the future. It was not an uncommon practice among the Pomaks in the Smolyan region to seek out local "fortune-tellers" in times of confusion and uncertainty, and then to ask for amulets from local hodzhas in order to protect themselves from the dangers predicted for them. In a 2005 interview, however, Khairaddin openly condoned the traditional Islamic punishment for fortune-tellers: death by decapitation. He said: "This extreme measure is right and it considers the psychology and the nature of man, because a man who has been tempted by this activity [fortune-telling] and makes an easy profit will have a hard time giving it up. Giving it up happens through the Islamic court."[29]

Both of the previous examples show religious leaders trying to cleanse local Islam of un-Islamic practices, often against the desires of local Muslim communities. On a more everyday level, few Bulgarians who would call themselves Muslim refrain from drink or pork, and most generally ignore a variety of practices associated with being a proper Muslim. The proponents of "orthodox" Islam trace the roots of this laxity in the local Muslim culture to lack of education and lack of critical reflection on what it means to be a Muslim in Bulgaria. These debates between "orthodox" and traditional Islam in Bulgaria are inevitably mapped onto ethnic divisions and intergenerational conflicts, and as we shall see in this book, also piggyback onto the country's forty-five-year history of Marxist-Leninism and its preoccupations with social justice and the "common good."

The discourses of "orthodox" Islam touched almost all Muslim communities in Bulgaria in the period after 1989, but what is fascinating from the point of view of the present study is the way in which this new and "foreign" form of the faith took root in a specific region of the Rhodope. The central question of this book is how and why this took place, and what we can learn from it about the process through which religious communities shift and refashion themselves in response to both internal and external stimuli. More importantly, in the European context, how are local, eclectic, traditional forms of Islam being shaped by the cultural,

political, and economic context of postcommunist societies? And why are these local forms of Islam being displaced by externally defined versions of the religion? Are these imported "orthodoxies" becoming hegemonic or are they only selectively appropriated and strategically redeployed to support specific local ideological needs? As of 2008, the embrace of this externally defined Islam in Bulgaria was still very localized and far from complete. But attempts to promote the "true" Islam, particularly with regard to the dress and behavior of women, have precipitated increasing tensions not only between the traditional Muslims and their more "orthodox" neighbors but also between Bulgaria's Muslim minority and its overwhelming Orthodox Christian majority.

Theories to Explain "Orthodox" Islam in Bulgaria

For more than twenty years before she began selling Avon, Silvi worked as a teller in the local branch of the Bulgarian People's Bank in Madan. By the mid-1990s, the economy had been devastated by the collapse of the lead-zinc mining enterprise, and Silvi lost her job at a time when her family most needed her income. Her husband, Iordan, was traveling around Bulgaria in search of construction work. Her two sons were still in school, one at the university and the other at the *gymnasium* (academic secondary school), and she was determined that they would finish their studies, for she believed that education was the only pathway to success in the new market system. No matter how much money Iordan sent home, there was never enough, but Silvi gave as much of it as she could to her sons.

"Avon saved my life," she explained. "Without Avon, I cannot say what would have happened to us."

Armed with her monthly catalogues, Silvi eked out a meager salary and, more importantly, found a reason to get up in the morning and leave the flat. During almost fourteen months of unemployment, she had stayed at home, "stuck to the couch like Velcro." A naturally social person, she remembered that period with great frustration. "I did not even want to go out to spend thirty stotinki[30] on one coffee. In truth, I did not have one stotinka to spend. I could not believe that something like this could happen to me."

Slowly, she managed to build a client base and hired some distributors below her on the pyramid. She soon became an astute businesswoman. Because her livelihood depended so much on peddling beauty products, she was quick to realize potential threats to her business interests. At some point, she had determined that this new form of Islam was one of them, and she tried to make sense of what was happening around her. Her view of religion was a decidedly Marxist one, like that of most Bulgarians of her

generation, who were schooled in the philosophy of dialectical materialism and taught to equate modernity with atheism. According to Marx, "Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness."[31]

For people like Silvi who were raised under communism, this was a familiar and compelling analysis of the resurgence of religiosity in their communities, and on the surface, the structural argument had plenty of evidence to support it. As the local economies of remote areas like Madan collapsed, the rural educational infrastructure crumbled, populations declined, teachers left, and schools closed. There was an empirically significant regression in the material conditions of people's lives after the end of communism.[32] Marxists believed that people were more susceptible to religion when they were poor and uneducated, particularly if the religious authorities had power and resources. It was a simple and mechanical explanation for a more complex phenomenon in Bulgaria, but it sat comfortably with the relatively accurate observation that destitute, rural populations tended to be more religious than affluent city-dwellers.

But there were other explanations for this Islamic revival as well, explanations that Silvi did not consider but which were posited by various experts I consulted as I grappled with the larger theoretical questions that were raised by my examination of daily life in Madan. Western missionaries and evangelists, for example, held that communist-imposed atheism had created a mass of godless souls in need of salvation following the fall of the Berlin Wall: "Capitalism alone is not able to fill the 'spiritual vacuum' left by Marxism's collapse."[33] According to this argument, Marxist-Leninism was an ideology that artificially filled in for the more spiritual needs of the people, and the implosion of that ideology left a great existential void in the hearts and minds of former communist citizens which religion could then fill.[34] Indeed, these convictions inspired the mad rush of Mormons, Moonies, Hare Krishnas, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Wahhabis, Ahmadis, Scientologists, Baha'is, and evangelical Protestants of every kind into the former socialist countries in the immediate aftermath of the events of 1989.[35] The spiritual free-for-all in Bulgaria led even the American magazine *Christianity Today* to claim in 1992 that the country had become a "fertile ground for false teaching."[36]

A third explanation came from the local religious leaders. Officials from the chief mufti's office (theoretically the spiritual authority over all Muslims in Bulgaria) and the regional muftiship in Smolyan argued that religious activity among Muslims in Bulgaria after 1989 was merely the reemergence of a piety that had flourished in the country before communism.

Forty-five years of heavy-handed oppression had forced many otherwise devout Bulgarian Muslims to abandon their traditions, lose touch with their faith, and, most importantly, forfeit connections that they would otherwise have had to the Muslim world. From this perspective the religious resurgence in places like Madan was a sort of spiritual restitution. New Islamic practices were being promoted by those interested in reinstating Bulgaria's long Muslim past, even if these supposedly "traditional" practices were taking on forms quite different from those preserved by old hodzhas such as Lili's father. These tensions were mapped onto significant generational divides, pitting young against old in a battle over the "proper" practice of Islam.

Some Bulgarian intellectuals,[37] and the deputy chief mufti in Bulgaria,[38] believed that the Islamic "revival" in the country was being driven by the Pomaks, who were having somewhat of an identity crisis. Because most (though not all) Pomaks believed that they were ethnic Slavs, they had always found it difficult to find their place in the Bulgarian cultural mosaic, to classify themselves in a way that expressed their political interests. The larger Muslim community in Bulgaria was made up of ethnic Turks, Slavs, and Roma, with the Turks accounting for the vast majority. While some Pomaks actually claimed that they were Turks, others argued that they were ethnically Arab, and still others said they had a unique ethnicity of their own.[39] The Greeks claimed that the Pomaks were Greek, and the Macedonians said they were Macedonian (which neither the Greeks nor the Bulgarians recognized as a separate ethnicity). This situation, so indicative of the complicated ethnic politics of the Balkans, supported the identity-crisis argument: the hybridity and fluidity of Pomak identity and the political powerlessness that accompanied it caused some Pomaks to embrace forms of Islam that diverged significantly from those practiced by the Turks. Some Pomaks did this to distinguish themselves from the Turks and make the claim that the Turks should not represent them politically (as had been the case between 1990 and 2008). By establishing closer links (even through an imagined ethnicity) to the Saudis or Gulf Arabs and practicing more "orthodox" forms of Islam, the new Pomak religious leaders also strategically positioned themselves to take advantage of the generous resources available from wealthy Saudi charities or other foreign sources of Islamic aid.

There was also the issue of faith, and indeed many young men and women embracing the new ways claimed that they had experienced a type of spiritual awakening that had been lacking in their lives. But why, I asked, would these spiritual awakenings be so geographically specific? Indeed, while each of the proposed explanations could account for a part of the story, none could fully explain the observed variability between almost identical populations. Many postsocialist communities were affected

by similar conditions, yet the embrace of this "orthodox" Islam was very uneven and concentrated in specific regions.

Communities throughout the postsocialist world experienced similar rapid rural declines and stunning increases in poverty since 1989; this situation was by no means unique to Bulgaria. Moreover, most rural areas in Bulgaria had experienced a severe decline in their living standards.[40] Rural industries had been closed down, populations had fled, and access to education had been severely crippled by the shrinking of social welfare provisions. Religious missionaries of all faiths traveled throughout the country trying to entice potential believers with promises of food, financial aid, and religious education alongside spiritual salvation. And although the Pomaks may have been particularly targeted for conversion because of the perceived ambiguity in their ethno-religious identity, not all Pomaks have turned to "orthodox" Islam, and many have actively resisted it.

The more formal explanations could also be applied to a wide cross-section of Bulgarian society. If religion had simply rushed in to fix a problem created by Marxist atheism, it would have applied to all Bulgarians, particularly since social mobility before 1989 was linked to joining the communist party and rejecting religion.[41] The so-called "spiritual vacuum," if it existed, would have engulfed the whole postsocialist world, not just Madan and Rudozem. In Russia, two prominent sociologists of religion found that while "belief in supernatural forces" increased in the early 1990s among Russians, this trend was not sustained.[42] Although the young were initially among the first to embrace religion as a rebellious act against the Soviet regime, they were also the first to abandon it. The Russian communists were more ruthless in their oppression of religion than their Bulgarian counterparts, but the postsocialist "spiritual vacuum" existed equally in both nations. The sociologist Dimitri Yefimovich Furman argues that the majority of younger Russians lived in a morally, philosophically, and intellectually ambiguous universe filled with what he calls "postmodern eclecticism."[43] He notices an increase in situational morality, an unwillingness to define right or wrong in absolute terms. Social rules and norms were flexible and fluid and able to accommodate all of the uncertain exigencies of the postcommunist era.[44]

This moral relativity also engulfed Bulgarians, who were raised under communism to believe that capitalism was by definition an immoral system, where hereditary privilege and brute force perpetually subjugated the toiling masses, and where theft, corruption, and exploitation were rewarded with power and wealth. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, many Bulgarians hoped that the communists had been wrong, and that open multiparty elections and free markets would bring liberty, prosperity, and greater opportunities for those willing to take individual initiative and work hard in the new competitive system. Instead, they watched as

corrupt politicians, disingenuous foreign investors, international financial institutions, and a new Mafia elite that terrorized the population into submission ransacked and pillaged their country. Valuable state-owned enterprises, which technically belonged to the Bulgarian people, were sold for a song to both foreign and domestic vultures that stripped their assets and ran them into bankruptcy in explicit violation of carefully prepared privatization contracts. The fire sale in Bulgaria left thousands unemployed; many experienced real poverty for the first time in their lives. The accumulated wealth of the country was concentrated into the hands of less than 5 percent of the population in just over a decade. There was no way to fight back. Judges were bought and sold, the police were thoroughly corrupt, and the West's cheerleaders for democracy supported privatization at all costs, despite the clear evidence that state-owned assets were falling into the hands of gangsters and thugs, who shot first and asked questions later.[45]

In spite of the chaos of the transition, few Bulgarians found comfort in faith, as many Russians did. Nationally representative surveys found a lack of religious interest in Bulgaria despite the influx of missionaries and the surge of religious activity in the early 1990s. In 2006, Bulgaria ranked seventeenth out of the fifty most atheist countries in the world (Sweden was first, the Czech Republic sixth, Russia twelfth, Hungary fourteenth, and the United States forty-fourth).[46] This study found that 34–40 percent of the Bulgarian population was atheist, agnostic, or nonreligious.[47] Another nationally representative survey, conducted in 1999, found that although 96 percent of ethnic Bulgarians claimed that they were Christians and 86 percent defined themselves as Bulgarian Orthodox Christians,[48] only 10 percent of those who declared themselves Orthodox said that they followed the prescriptions of the Church, with 49.3 percent claiming that they were religious "in their own way."[49] The survey also found that 30.5 percent of the Bulgarian population never attended church or mosque, with the same percentage saying that they only went on the big religious holidays, once or twice a year, demonstrating that Bulgarians are prone to defining religion as an aspect of ethnic identity, rather than a declaration of belief in the doctrines of a particular organized spiritual community. Furthermore, in an international study correlating wealth and religiosity, Bulgaria was a clear outlier. Although Bulgarians were relatively poor, they showed almost the same indifference toward religion as the Swedes and French.[50] In an overall culture of religious indifference, the resurgence of Islam in Madan and Rudozem was quite anomalous.

And while there was some sense of continuity with the precommunist past, this mainly applied to individuals and communities that were oppressed by the communists and fought to maintain their religious traditions and practices. Indeed, throughout the Pomak region and elsewhere

in Bulgaria men and women reembraced the religions that they had practiced prior to 1945 or in the early communist years. But these populations tended to be older, and their return to traditional Hanafi practices could not explain why the younger Pomaks in Madan, Rudozem, and Smolyan were latching onto imported interpretations of Islam promoted by new nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Union for Islamic Development and Culture (UIDC). Proponents of these imported versions of the faith claimed that Bulgarian Islam was corrupted by forbidden innovations. Indeed, this was part of the draw of the new Islams: young people specifically wanted to distance themselves from what they deemed the incorrect practices of their elders and thus claim superiority over them. The young gained a newfound authority from the presumed purity of their own practices, adapted "directly from Arabia," the birthplace of Islam.

Finally, there were Pomak villages spread throughout the Rhodope, and while it was true that their inhabitants were becoming more religious than the Turks of Bulgaria, it remained unclear why the two largest postsocialist mosques in Bulgaria were built in Madan and Rudozem and not in other parts of the Rhodope where Pomaks lived. Some Pomaks embraced a Turkish identity, and others converted to Christianity or remained staunch atheists like Silvi and Iordan. But why were those who chose to reach out to the newly imported forms of Islam concentrated in just a few cities when the larger Bulgarian society seemed to be moving away from organized religion in general? And although intergenerational conflicts are apparent, the youth population here was not significantly greater than in other regions. All of the reasons discussed above play an important part in setting the stage for our story, but there are other factors as well.

One crucial factor, unique to these communities, was the collapse of the lead-zinc mining enterprise and the massive male unemployment that followed in its wake. Because miners, and especially lead and zinc miners, had been among the most respected and best-paid workers in the entire Bulgarian communist economy, the dominance of this industry had shaped the construction of masculine identities in this region more than perhaps any other external factor. The social project of communism had asked men and women to radically reshape existing conceptions of family, particularly in Muslim regions of the country, where patriarchal gender roles were deeply entrenched. Under communism, men were encouraged to allow women to leave the home, obtain formal education, and take up employment in the public sphere, but this solution to what the communists called the "woman question" was not about women's rights or about their individual fulfillment or personal emancipation. Instead, the dramatic change in women's roles between 1946 and 1989 was seen as a

collective sacrifice that both men and women had to make for the good of society. Women's labor was required to realize communist industrialization, and their legal equality with men (although only theoretical) was considered the hallmark of a modern society.

In her study of women healers in Saudi Arabia, Eleanor Abdella Doumato[51] argues that it was Muslim women who lost out the most in the Wahhabi reforms. This was not because the Wahabbi reformers targeted women's practice of Islam specifically, because men also participated in these "heterodox" rituals. But as the focus of Muslim spirituality began to center exclusively on the mosque, women were excluded from this new space and became increasingly isolated. Thus, women lost power and public presence in the process of reforming "heterodox" Islam to make it conform to what the Wahhabis imagined to be a more "orthodox" interpretation of the religion. Similarly in Bulgaria, there are important gender repercussions of the shift to more "orthodox" interpretations of Islam that must not be ignored. But the importance of gender as an analytical category is not only in the realm of effects. In the Bulgarian context, I will argue that shifting definitions of masculinity and femininity might be one important factor fueling the post-1989 embrace of these new forms of Islam.

With the closing of the mines came a crisis in the way men and women understood their place in the local system of gender relations. In many families after the mid-1990s, men who had been miners stayed home while women went out to work in the garment factories. For the first time, wives had to give their husbands spending money. Some families just sank into poverty because neither husband nor wife could find work; others scratched out a living by growing their own food and collecting their own wood. Men turned to alcohol and spent what little pensions they had on *rakiya*. In many ways, the emergence of a more "orthodox" form of Islam in Madan also promoted the idea that existing gender relations would have to be arranged for the greater good of the community, a discourse that was very familiar and perhaps had appeal following the gender role reversals that accompanied the closure of GORUBSO. This new ideology was supported by a generous availability of Islamic aid from abroad. These were resources dedicated to helping Muslim communities find their way back to the "true" Islam, an Islam which imagined a different gender system than the one previously established in these rural cities during the communist era. Gender instability, at a time of political and economic tumult, may be one important, and often overlooked, factor in helping to explain why "orthodox" Islam began to take root in this region and not in other Pomak or Muslim communities throughout Bulgaria.

Furthermore, Islamic discourses of social justice[52] and community may resonate differently in societies shaped by social-democratic systems ver-

sus those once engineered by Marxist-Leninism. I also want to explore what happens to Islam when it enters a post-Marxist space, and how it is shaped by the historical realities of protocapitalism in a country that by 2008 had still not reached the standard of living it had once enjoyed under communism. In this interstitial Bulgarian limbo between two seemingly contradictory economic systems, it is important to look for continuities between the newly imported Islamic theologies and familiar, old communist ideologies. Both epistemologies share a moral challenge to the excesses of kleptocratic capitalism. Both place communities over individuals, and both share a totalizing metanarrative of social justice. This is not to say that Islam in Bulgaria has merely replaced Marxism, but only that its discourses may be picked up and mobilized by post-Marxist subjects in unique and interesting ways that demand further exploration.

And this would not be the first historical moment wherein Islam and Marxism find themselves in dialogue with each other. In examining the modern condition of Central Asian Muslims, the historian Adeeb Khalid reminds his readers to not forget the important continuities between these two seemingly opposed metanarratives, pointing out that even the early Muslim Brothers found much inspiration in the success of the Russian Revolution: "the political goals of Islamist movements owe a great deal, in their formulation, to modern revolutionary ideologies, and to Marxist-Leninism in particular. During the Cold War, Islamists tended to be rabidly anticommunist in their stance because communism was a rival ideology, one that rested on universal principles and was hostile to all religion besides. That stance should not blind us, however, to the fascination that Marxist-Leninism had for Islamists and the model it provided for successful political action."[53] In the Bulgarian context, the general cultural memory of life under communism cannot be ignored, especially since a growing number of Muslims have come to feel nostalgia for an economic system they believe to have offered more material security, despite its recognized political disadvantages. The dynamic interaction between these two ideologies provided a fascinating window onto the situation in Bulgaria in the dawning years of the twenty-first century.

The case of the Pomaks in the Central Rhodope demonstrates that the influence of "orthodox" Islam in this postsocialist country is not just another manifestation of a general European trend but has its own unique set of circumstances and justifications, different from those in the French, German, or British contexts. Thus, although social scientists and policymakers often want to find one or two generally applicable and empirically demonstrable reasons why traditional Muslim communities are pursuing new avenues in the practice of Islam, local political and economic contexts cannot be ignored when trying to determine how people find their faith in an era of rapid social change.

Understanding Faith in Context

I would like to make clear that I am not arguing that all spirituality is economically determined. I am, however, proposing that it would be erroneous to examine questions of faith and growing religiosity divorced from their social, political, historical, and economic contexts. It is perhaps important here to point out that I did not set out to study Islam, and indeed, beyond my own personal experience as the daughter of a "cultural" Muslim,[54] I came to the field with only a general knowledge of Islamic belief and practice. My initial intention was to begin research on the development of rural tourism in Bulgaria. The Rhodope was the ideal setting for this endeavor, with its natural beauty and geographic proximity to Greece. But one conversation would set me on the path to a very different project.

In the summer of 2004, a woman from the town of Devin was describing the prospects for rural tourism development in a small village with a mixed population of Christians and Muslims. Things had been going quite well there, she said, "until they built the mosque." Apparently, a brand new mosque had been constructed in the center of the village, and many residents (both Christian and Muslim) were upset because they believed it had driven the tourists away into "quieter" villages. "Who wants to wake up at five o'clock in the morning to the hodzha shouting from the minaret?" she explained.

Once I started asking about them, I found that new mosques were appearing in many villages throughout the Rhodope, some of them quite impoverished. No one really cared where the money was coming from, because the local men were only too happy to have work for a few months while the mosques were under construction. In some villages, the local Christians were up in arms. In other villages, it was the hodzhas who tried to fight the new mosques once the local preachers realized that new imams from outside of their communities would staff them. In Trigrad, an innkeeper explained that the conflicts were being fueled by money from abroad. While the hodzhas supported themselves by collecting contributions from local Muslims, the imams were giving money away—promising jobs, education, and travel abroad to frustrated youth tired of poverty and unemployment. Older Muslims were suspicious of the new mosques and their seemingly endless resources, but the young were easily swayed. Families were being torn apart by conflicting allegiances to old and new, or "right" and "wrong," ways of being Muslim. This innkeeper placed great hope in the ability of a thriving local tourist industry to provide work for the young and bring her community together again.

It was around this time that the mayor of Madan announced that he would try to develop mining tourism to revive his city's ailing economy.

When I arrived there in June of 2005, there was indeed much talk about developing some kind of tourism in light of a new border checkpoint with Greece to be opened less than twenty kilometers to the south. But little was being done. There was also a gigantic new mosque, larger than any of the others I had seen in the Rhodope, and a significant number of women dressed in what I would later come to refer to as the "Arab style." I did in fact begin my fieldwork doing interviews with local officials about tourism and the potential use of EU funds, but the longer I stayed in Madan the more I realized that there was something unique going on in the region, a resurgence of Islam that would eventually put Madan, and the nearby cities of Rudozem and Smolyan, in the national spotlight when two teenage girls insisted on wearing their Islamic headscarves to public school in the summer of 2006. Thus, as is often the case with ethnography, where research questions are reshaped by the shifting contours and unpredictable rhythms of everyday life, I went into the field with the intention of studying one thing but emerged from it having studied something entirely different.

Research for this book was carried out between June 2005 and August 2008, a period during which I spent a cumulative total of thirteen months conducting fieldwork in both the Rhodope and the Bulgarian capital city of Sofia. In addition to participant observation and countless informal interviews with Muslim religious leaders and laypeople, I spoke with Bulgarian politicians, public officials, and members of local nongovernmental organizations concerned with protecting religious freedoms and the rights of ethnic minorities. Over the three years that I conducted this research, I also amassed a rare collection of publications produced by and for the Bulgarian Muslim community. These books, brochures, newsletters, and magazines were usually only for sale through the local mosques and very few of them could be found in bookstores or libraries. I was also an avid reader of several Bulgarian Muslim websites, particularly the Islam-bg website (before the government took it down in March 2007). It was in these publications that debates about defending traditional Islam from the incursions of the new interpretations played out, and that the justifications for new Islamic practices were promoted. Thorough discourse analysis of these sources enriched my participant observation. Finally, in order to attempt to make sense of the complicated web of foreign funding supporting local Muslim NGOs and to find connections between different Muslim organizations in the country, I made extensive use of Bulgarian public tax records and the legal documents used to register commercial firms and nonprofit organizations.

What emerges from this research is an in-depth case study of a cluster of Muslim cities and villages in the south-central part of the Rhodope Mountains. But in order to understand the wide spectrum of factors influencing

local events, I have also spent some time describing the national political and economic context of Bulgaria after the collapse of communism in 1989, as well as the rise of the international Islamic charitable establishment and its influence on Muslim communities in the Balkans following the Bosnian War.

In chapter 1, we meet Silvi's husband, Iordan and explore the ways that ordinary Bulgarian-speaking Muslims lived during the communist period. In order to understand why "orthodox" Islam has taken root among the Pomaks but not among the ethnic Turks of Bulgaria, it is essential to examine in detail the continually contested history of the Pomaks as an ethnic group. Understanding this history also helps to make sense of the communists' efforts to modernize the Pomaks and to return them to the Bulgarian national fold. The rural-industrialization program that built cities like Madan and nearby Rudozem was part of a larger plan to limit the lingering influence of Islam.

Chapter 2 begins with a walk through the Mining Museum, and here the tale of GORUBSO, Bulgaria's lead-zinc–producing behemoth, is retold, in addition to how the proletarianization of the previously peasant labor force reshaped local definitions of appropriate masculinity and femininity to meet the needs of rapid modernization and rural industrialization. The long and tortured demise of GORUBSO and how the miners became pawns in a power struggle between Bulgaria's new political elites is explored. The rise and fall of the lead-zinc mining enterprise is unique to this region, and new "orthodox" Islamic discourses began to take root in these communities around the same time that local social and economic relations were turned upside-down by the massive unemployment that followed GORUBSO's implosion.

The devastating effects of the privatization and liquidation of the lead-zinc mines on the individual lives of the men, women, and children of Madan is the subject of chapter 3. At exactly the historical moment when previously well-off families were plunged into unexpected poverty, religious workers from around the world who promised both aid and salvation targeted Bulgarians. In this chapter, we meet a host of individuals from Madan, including Donka, a woman working two jobs and making just enough to buy six loaves of bread to fill the stomachs of her unemployed, alcoholic husband and her two teenage sons. During this period, many were struggling to survive the demise of communism and its ideological commitments to protect the working classes. Some of them, like a young Muslim woman named Hana, reached out to new interpretations of Islam that brought comfort and happiness into their lives.

Chapter 4 briefly takes us away from Madan to explore the wider social, political, and economic context within which recent events in Bulgaria are embedded. I examine the changes that occurred in Bulgaria after 1989 and

hone in on the internal structures and power dynamics of Bulgaria's Muslim denomination. I look at the rivalries over the leadership of the Muslim community and how different factions emerged in the 1990s. This history of the Muslim leadership will be essential to understanding how foreign Islamic aid became so influential in the Bulgarian-speaking Muslim communities in and around Madan, Smolyan, and Rudozem.

Chapter 5 begins with a lecture I attended in Madan—"Islam: Pluralism and Dialogue"—sponsored by a local Muslim nongovernmental organization that was a proponent of what many locals called the "new ways." Here, I investigate the influence on the Balkans of "orthodox" Islamic aid after the outbreak of the Bosnian War in 1992. Specifically, I explore how rifts in the Muslim community created a competition for resources, which opened the doors to Saudi and Kuwaiti funds and the "orthodox" version of Islam promoted by both charities and individuals from these states. This chapter is essential to understanding how local Muslim reformers were able to harness resources from international Islamic charities, resources that allowed them to promote their message through an increasing number of publications and public events aimed at displacing Bulgaria's traditional forms of Islam.

The wealthy shopkeeper Higyar helped me focus specifically on the issue of headscarves and the changing gender expectations in Madan and the surrounding areas. In chapter 6, I examine the arguments of the women who follow the "new ways" despite a history of relative gender equality in the region produced by decades of communist rule. Islamic publications promoting new forms of dress and behavior for women help demonstrate the kinds of discourse deployed by those who would promote "purer" forms of Islam among the Pomaks in Madan and the surrounding regions. Here we can see the replacement of traditional Islam with "orthodox" Islam most obviously, as locally defined ideas about the proper place of women in society are reshaped by imported Islamic discourses.

In the concluding chapter, I will reexamine the larger theoretical question of why "orthodox" Islam, in particular, appealed to Bulgarian Muslims, and why it appealed to them at precisely this moment in their history. The Bulgarian case study can help us understand two overlapping geographies: Western Europe and Eastern Europe (or what is increasingly becoming known as "Eurasia"—the former communist world stretching from Eastern Europe to the Sea of Japan). Both of these geopolitical constructs were significantly impacted by the collapse of communism and the subsequent gutting of command economies, communist states, Marxist ideologies, and their explicit (if only theoretical) commitments to social equality. The immediate postsocialist period opened up an intellectual window onto how capitalism would be built in communist societies that had had no previous experience of it and how it might be modified by the

almost fifty-year (in the USSR, seventy-year) experiment with Marxist-Leninism.

As late as 1999, the philosopher Slavoj Žižek proposed that out of the ashes of communism would rise a new social and economic system, created by those who had lived under both capitalism and communism and intimately knew their advantages and disadvantages.[55] But by 2008, the hope for the emergence of what he had called a new "SECOND way" seemed occluded by the incorporation of many of the former communist states into the political project of the European Union. As the EU became more concerned with its internal relations with Muslim minorities, concerns for social equality were trumped by widespread worry about the failures of cultural assimilation.

Thus, it is very important to recognize that the changing practices of the Bulgarian-speaking Muslims are but one part of a larger trend that includes a general proliferation of Islamic literature and culture throughout the world, despite the worldwide increase in Islamophobia that has followed in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. I examine the possibility that these new forms of Islam are becoming the oppositional discourse of choice among those frustrated by their continued exclusion from the wealth and privileges generated for increasingly remote elites of global capitalism. I investigate what on the surface seem to be striking similarities between Muslim theology and Marxism in Bulgaria, with their communalist challenges to the logics of neoliberalism and individualism.

But the possibilities of a universalist Islam are different in Western Europe than they are in postsocialist contexts. In the absence of a secular ideology that addresses the inequalities and injustices of the way (Mafia) capitalism has been built in Bulgaria, religion, and specifically a denationalized form of universalist Islam, may provide people with a new kind of internationalist metanarrative that helps them challenge the pervasive immorality of a world based on the most ruthless interpretations of survival of the fittest and neoliberalism. Whatever promises capitalism and democracy held out in the early 1990s, they have been lost in the fetid cesspool of murder, racketeering, theft, embezzlement, corruption, money grubbing, and power grabbing by the country's unscrupulous political and economic elites, leading many to look back with fondness and nostalgia to the moral absolutes of the totalitarian past. Olivier Roy and Gilles Kepel both propose that Islam in the Western European context is being individualized, secularized, and democratized by its contact with liberal multicultural societies. If this is true in France, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom, then perhaps in the former communist world, and in Bulgaria specifically, Islam may become "postsocialized" by its contact with societies shaped by decades of communist rule. Latching on to new

Islamic discourse may provide men and women with the tools for a revived critique of capitalism, consumerism, and exploitative relations of production, a language of morality and abstinence to transcend the crass materialism of the free market.

One task of this book is to understand how Islam's contact with differing social, cultural, political, and economic influences shapes the inner contours of its own logic in unique and unexpected ways. This is not to relegate religion to its hackneyed status as the "opiate of the masses," only to point out that the masses are still there, with or without their opiates, and they coopt and subvert religious discourses in a wide variety of ways. In the current polarizing geopolitical climate that pits Islam against the West in an apocalyptic clash of civilizations, the much more complicated worldviews of ordinary people too often fall by the wayside.

In Madan, what really mattered to most people was how to mitigate the worst social blows dealt by the so-called invisible hand of the market. Since the "visible fist"[56] of the working class no longer had any clout, the only resource, at least for the time being, may have been the invisible finger of God.