

NEW MUSLIMS IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

MUSLIM MINORITIES

EDITORS

JØRGEN S. NIELSEN (UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM)

FELICE DASSETTO (UNIVERSITY OF LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE)

AMIRA SONBOL (GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, DC)

VOLUME 4



NEW MUSLIMS IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

The Experience of Scandinavian Converts

BY

ANNE SOFIE ROALD



BRILL
LEIDEN · BOSTON
2004

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Roald, Anne Sofie.

New Muslims in the European context : the experience of Scandinavian converts / by Anne Sofie Roald.

p. cm. — (Muslim minorities, ISSN 1570-7571 ; v. 4)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 90-04-13679-7

1. Muslim converts from Christianity—Scandinavia. 2. Islam—Scandinavia. 3. Muslim minorities—Scandinavia. 4. Scandinavia—Ethnic relations. 5. Multiculturalism—Scandinavia. I. Title. II. Series.

BP170.5.R63 2004

297.5'74'0948—dc22

2004045722

ISSN 1570-7571

ISBN 90 04 13679 7

© Copyright 2004 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

*Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Brill provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910 Danvers MA 01923, USA.
Fees are subject to change.*

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
Introduction	1
1. Majority society	17
2. Islamophobia	53
3. The road to Islam	79
4. Muslim convert trends	113
5. Analysis of convert literature	162
6. New Muslims in Scandinavian society	232
7. New Muslims' encounter with born Muslims	253
8. New Muslims as mediators between Muslim immigrant communities and major society	289
9. Towards a 'Danish', 'Swedish' or 'Norwegian' Islam?	305
10. Reflections	342
<i>Bibliography</i>	351
<i>Index</i>	361

PREFACE

This study looks at Muslim converts in Denmark, Sweden and Norway and deals primarily with the shaping of Islam in Scandinavia. I would claim however that this research is relevant to a greater geographical area than this. Western countries share similar traits, with an over-arching ideology based on human rights, equality and pluralism. The experiences of Muslim converts in Scandinavia do not therefore differ greatly from those of Muslim converts in other European countries, the United States, Latin America, or even New Zealand and Australia. These experiences are similar to those of second-generation Muslim immigrants; both are defined by the overlap and interaction between Western and Muslim society. This study therefore reflects a broad pattern of religious change. As individuals from majority society embrace a religion of the minority population, attitudes and ideas from majority society tend to enter minority communities.

In June 2001 I went on a study trip to Britain with colleagues from Lund University who were all participants in a research project on converts to various religions and world-views. I realised during this trip that although Muslim converts in Britain and Scandinavia share many similar experiences with regard to their personal conversion process, there are differences between the two groups when it comes to their respective roles in majority society. In this book, I have included some discussions about these differences in order to understand what factors are decisive in the shaping of a local expression of Islam in the various countries in Europe.

Most studies on converts tend to deal with why westerners convert to Islam. This study is mainly concerned with what part converts play in Muslim communities and in majority society after their conversion. It also investigates how Islam is shaped in new cultural contexts. The formation of a particular Danish, Swedish, Norwegian or even Scandinavian approach to Islam must be regarded as an inevitable outcome of the cultural encounter between the Islamic message and the particularities of the Scandinavian countries. Converts have to adjust their indigenous cultural traits to fit into the framework of Islam. This has happened throughout Islamic history, which

explains the different faces of Islam in different parts of the world, as well as the general compatibility of Islam with its local environment.

It is easy to forget that, just as Islam originated in the geographical area of the Middle East, so too did Christianity and even Judaism, whose followers are well integrated into Scandinavian majority society. It is thus not the origin of a religion that determines its relevance to a certain cultural context. Its compatibility with its environment depends rather on whether the social and political conditions for such a development are favourable or not.

I am of Norwegian origin and I embraced Islam in February 1982. At the time of my conversion I was a student of Religious Studies at Oslo University. I knew many Muslim immigrants at the time, as I was working part-time in a company that employed many Pakistani men. While revising for my exams I used to bring my books with me to read during the breaks. As I was reading the Koran and books on Islam, the Muslims at work became exhilarated and started to ask me home to visit their families. This was my first personal contact with Muslims. I also came to know some Muslim students and, during my discussions with them, became gradually more interested in Islam. As I embraced Islam I started a process that took me abruptly away from my culture of origin before eventually leading me back, to a realisation that I could be 'myself' within an Islamic frame. This process had as much to do with my relationship to the Muslim community, as it had to do with my own intellectual development.

To feel a foreigner in one's own society is a weird experience; the sense of being either misunderstood or regarded as an exotic oddity. In my dealings with converts I have experienced the frustration most of them feel with the alienation from their own society. During the conversion process some converts are forced to break with parents and former non-Muslim friends. For women this can be the result of marriage to immigrant Muslim men who often feel insecure in the new social context. Too often, their insecurity in this new environment appears as part of a dangerous or unhealthy reaction pattern. Some converts are rejected by their families who do not accept their choice of religion. A few break with their families and friends as a result of an intensification of new religious sentiments. Whatever the reason, such breaks are traumatic experiences for most converts. The disappearance of a familiar social network before a new network is fully established creates insecurity for many new Muslims.

As Muslim converts have felt misunderstood by majority society, they have often agreed to take part in media research, investigations and interviews. Their main desire has been to change the majority's view of Muslims and Islam in general. During the 1980s and the first part of the 1990s, this was particularly evident. I can hardly count the number of telephone calls I received from high-school pupils, students, journalists and researchers who wanted to write about Muslim converts. The interest in new Muslims peaked in the 1990s as awareness grew of the increasing number of Muslim converts. Many converts saw such interest as a chance to change the majority's view; but they were disappointed by most results. The researchers and journalists tended to misunderstand statements, or would explain them with comparisons to tangential fields, such as feminist theory. Converts did not recognise themselves or their own situation in most official writings.

In Scandinavia, an exception to this rule was Lena Larsen's thesis *Velkommen til en stor Familie: Islam og Konversjon i norsk kontekst* (Welcome to a Great Family: Islam and Conversion in a Norwegian Context), published in 1995. Herself a Norwegian convert to Islam, Larsen applies the model of Lewis Rambo, researcher on conversion, to Norwegian Muslim converts. Her thesis is a detailed description of the convert situation in Norway, grounded in conversion theory rather than feminist theory. In my view, Larsen's choice of theoretical foundation keeps her study faithful to the essential religious aspect of the converts' experiences.

The present study is the culmination of a cultural, religious, and intellectual journey that has lasted more than twenty years. It draws on academic literature, such as Larsen's thesis; on interview material collected in the late 1990s; on discussions with converts; and on my personal experiences with the convert community over the last twenty years.

Organisation of the book

In the introduction, the premise of the study is drawn up with a discussion of cultural change and how it has been an important phenomenon throughout Islamic history.

Chapter 1 presents a brief survey of the culture, history and society in the three Scandinavian societies: Denmark, Sweden and Norway. An account of the Muslim communities in Scandinavia is also provided.

Chapter 2 deals with the phenomenon of Islamophobia in a general sense and in Scandinavian society, discussing its causes as well as its expression in media, popular culture and society in general.

Chapter 3 deals with the converts' road to Islam. Why do Scandinavians convert to Islam? The conversion process is analysed in relation to the models of such researchers on conversion as Lewis Rambo and Frank K. Flinn.

Chapter 4 discusses Muslim convert trends in Scandinavia, which form part of a global pattern of Islamic trends. The 'rational' trend, the 'traditionalist' trend and the extreme movements, such as the *salafi* trend and the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* movement are discussed in particular.

Chapter 5 presents an analysis of literature that is read and written by converts.

Chapter 6 discusses Muslim converts' relationships with majority society. The discussion indicates how converts become both 'insider' and 'outsider' in their dealings with non-Muslim society.

Chapter 7 looks at how Muslim converts relate to immigrant Muslim communities and how this relationship is developing. A typology of the post-conversion process of converts is also provided.

Chapter 8 discusses how Muslim converts often become a bridge between majority society and Muslim communities. Being initially socialized into majority society, the converts' entry into the Muslim community affords them one foot in each cultural sphere.

Chapter 9 discusses whether converts are helping to construct a particular Danish, Swedish or Norwegian type of Islam. As the interpretation of the Islamic message tends to reflect the cultural traits of the host society, the issue of whether there is going to be an 'Islam' particular to the Scandinavian countries becomes important.

The transliteration of Arabic works as in the Encyclopaedia of Islam with the exception of two letters: instead of *ḳ* I use *q*, and instead of *dj* I use *j*. Even though Encyclopaedia of Islam recommends the use of *al-* and *'l-* for definite article I have chosen to use *al-* and *-l* only. Arabic and Urdu names used by converts and persons living in western countries are not transliterated. Some words, such as 'sharia', 'hadith', and 'jihad', which to a certain extent have entered the English vocabulary, are not transliterated.

In the bibliography, authors with Arabic names that begin with definite articles such as 'al-' are listed according to their main surnames (for example, 'al-Ghazālī' is included under 'G'). In the index, however, these authors are listed under 'al-'.

As for the translation of the Koran, I have mainly used Muhammad Asad's translation, although in some places I have made my own translations based on that of Asad.

I have conducted all interviews with converts in one of the Scandinavian languages and all quotations are thus translated by me.

The following study indicates how Islamic ideas are adapted to the culture of Scandinavian countries. It will show how, in the ongoing conversion process, the cultural attitudes of Scandinavian converts have increasingly helped to shape a particular Islamic expression in Scandinavia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been able to accomplish this study with the help of friends, colleagues, and the financial support of the Bank of Sweden: Tercentenary Foundation and the Swedish Research Council.

First and foremost, my thanks go to my colleagues in the research group on converts to various religions and world-views at Lund University. Particularly, I thank Ulf Görman, the head of the group, for his guidance through the years of research. I also thank the participants, Yvonne Maria Werner, Curt Dahlgren, Inger Littberger, Anders Jarlert, Lars Ahlin, Erik Sidenwall, Thomas Stoor, Marcus Koskinen Hagman, Jonas Alwall, and Lena Löwendahl, for helpful remarks and suggestions. My thanks also go to my colleague Pieter Bevelander who helped me in analysing the results of the questionnaires.

I offer my special thanks to all respondents, informants, and interviewees in the three Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. They were always helpful and ready to contribute to the study and without them this study would never have been completed. Special thanks go to my friend and colleague, the Historian of Religion, Lena Larsen who trusted me by letting me use her MA-thesis about Muslim converts in Norway. My frequent discussions with her gave me many new ideas during the process of writing. I also thank my friend and colleague, the Human Ecologist, Pernilla Ouis, with whom I have had endless discussions about convert issues. Special thanks to the British convert Erica Timoney, who has read and commented the manuscript.

I express my thanks to Luke the Chaput who undertook the work of revising and editing the text for publication. My great concerns go to my family, particularly my children Hamza, Yaaser, and Sondos, for all they have to suffer when I am busy with my projects. Without their support I could never have accomplished this study.

Finally, although people have supported me and helped me, I am the only one responsible for any imperfections in this study.

Malmö, January 2004
Anne Sofie Roald

INTRODUCTION

Islam is like a crystal clear river of pure, sweet, cool water. It has no colour but it takes on the colour of the rocks over which it flows. If they are black it is black, if they are white it is white, if they are brown it is brown, if they are red it is red.

Unknown Islamic scholar
(Peter Sanders 2001)

There is a widespread acceptance that Christian as well as Jewish theology must change with the times. The acceptance of female priests in the Protestant and the Anglican churches and of female Rabbis in Reform Judaism is well established. There is a changed view of Homosexuality within the Protestant church. Even in the Catholic Church the proposal to allow priests to marry indicates the difficulties in recruiting clergymen in an increasingly secular society.

In contrast, it is hard for the non-Muslim populations of the Western world to grasp that Islamic perceptions and even theological conceptions might also be in a process of change. This reflects the social-psychological theory that in-groups tend to view their culture as being in a state of constant development and regard out-groups as rigid, immutable and traditionalistic.

I have observed that Scandinavian Muslim converts play a vital role in defining Islam in the new cultural context. Converts constitute a small percentage of the Muslim community; in Sweden and in Norway approximately 1.5%, in Denmark approximately 2.5%. Despite this modest number, converts provide the major part of Muslim contribution to the press and media. In order to understand the new Muslims' role in the development/evolution of Islamic ideas in Scandinavia I will look into the lives and work of Scandinavian converts to Islam. An important aspect of this study is to indicate the potential for change in the theology and practice of Islam as a result of the cultural encounter between born Muslims and converts. How do born Muslims' cultural traits influence Scandinavian Muslim converts? And do Scandinavian ideas and values have any impact on the Islamization of converts?

Culture

Due to the recent wave of migration from developing countries to Western industrial societies, social scientists have had to reconsider their traditional notions of culture. Studies of ethnic relations in immigrant areas in Western countries, show that the notion of culture as a mosaic and the world as an island kingdom of different cultures seem unfit to describe the cultural process in a multicultural and multireligious context.

The Norwegian Anthropologist, Thomas Hylland Eriksen in his book *Kulturella Veikryss* (Cultural Crossroads) explains that just as light can be viewed as either waves or particles, so culture can be described in two different, yet complementary ways. (Eriksen 1994: 21). Eriksen believes that on one hand, cultures can be regarded, using Alfred Kroeber's metaphor, as 'a coral reef'. 'A coral reef' Eriksen says, 'is built up by many layers of coral animals, but only the upper layer consists of living animals.' (Eriksen 1994: 21–22). Every new layer of animals is apparently free yet cannot separate itself from its ancestors. As Eriksen states 'It is rooted and under obligation to a past which it has not itself chosen' (Eriksen 1994: 22). A related view of culture observes that 'Culture is both maintained over time yet it changes continuously' (Eriksen 1994: 22). Such a process-oriented concept of culture would be suitable to describe contemporary cultural expressions in Western society were it not for the growth of immigrant communities, particularly in the big cities. Different coral reefs are demarcated and rarely meet, and so this metaphor is unfit to describe the mutual influence of foreign sub-cultures and the host society.

Eriksen, thus, introduces a complementary metaphor for culture: just as light can be perceived as electromagnetic waves, one can view culture rather like a complex electric field. This field is not demarcated but spreads out in different directions. The tension varies from place to place within the field, yet two places far away from each other can have the same tension (Eriksen 1994: 23). When one switches off the electricity the electric field disappears. Correspondingly, without human activities or communication there would be no culture.

Eriksen believes that the metaphors of culture as a 'coral reef' and as a complex 'electric field' reflect two different views of culture: that which groups together common elements, and that which facilitates communication. Eriksen prefers the latter concept of cul-

ture; in multicultural societies the construction of identity cannot be built solely on common experiences and roots. Through communication, people can construct a common identity that accepts differences (Eriksen 1994: 25). Building on this concept he sees contemporary society as marked by the 'implosion' of cultural differences, where the collision of cultures does not create further separation, but scatters fragments inwards, into the body of the colliding cultures. He says that 'The pieces of the world's cultural mosaic blow up into smaller pieces and the fragments end up in the most strange places. As a consequence they increasingly get mixed up with each other' (Eriksen 1994: 26).

As immigrants get settled in Western countries, Eriksen's concept of implosion seems to be an appropriate description of today's cultural blending. For instance, the development of 'Swedishness', 'Danishness' and 'Norwegianness' can easily be explained by the coral reef metaphor, yet without the concept of implosion it would be hard to explain how immigrant cultural traits have influenced or contributed to the current notion of 'Scandinavianness'. As Scandinavian society is marked on most levels by a segregation of the Scandinavians and the immigrant population, there are few contact points between majority society and the various ethnic and religious subcultures. The electric field metaphor therefore might not be ideal in explaining intercultural influences within Scandinavian society. 'Implosion', as something uncontrollable, indicates that change is inevitable within societies, despite a lack of encounters between majority society and the various subcultures. Those who have transcultural identities, such as Muslim converts, can move freely in majority society as well as in the various subcultural communities. Such groups epitomize this idea of implosion; they are both the result of and the force behind implusions.

Eriksen also discusses the globalization and creolization of culture. There is an understanding that, due to the pervasive spread of information technology, a type of Western localism has taken hold of great parts of the world (Featherstone 1990). However, there is also an agreement that in most places such globalization has resulted in a particularization rather than a homogenization of cultural expression (Featherstone and Lash 1999 [eds.]). One can therefore speak of a creolization of culture, where disparate cultural traits have been fused together. 'Creolization', as explained by the Swedish Anthropologist Ulf Hannerz, is a continuous flow of cultural influences

between the centre and periphery (Hannerz 1992). In the Western context, even when looking at Western localism as the standard and a largely one-way flow from the centre to the periphery, one can still talk of creolization, because immigrant communities on the periphery adapt cultural traits from majority society in the centre. However, according to Eriksen Creole societies are often regarded as those which, due to a long history of cultural mixing, have developed into a unique mixed form, as in the West Indies where African slaves lived with immigrants from the Indian subcontinent. He thus questions whether it is fitting to use the concept of creolization when discussing the new shape of Western society. He sees the same limitation in the notion of hybridization and syncretism; like creolization they both presuppose entities which are 'whole, integrated and indivisible' (Eriksen 1994: 36).

Although I partly agree with Eriksen's reluctance to apply these concepts to Western society, I tend to disagree with his view that the original cultures have to be regarded as 'whole, integrated and indivisible'. A creolization or hybridization of cultures does not necessarily imply that the original cultures are static. Edward Said states that 'All cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic' (Said 1993: xxix). One can furthermore presuppose that migration does not always involve a total break with the land of origin. This has been the case throughout history, and, I would argue, is particularly true of modern times. In this way, hybridization and creolization might prove suitable concepts when dealing with the relationship between Western Europeans and immigrants in European society. I find the idea of creolization particularly apt to describe cultural blending caused by immigrants settling in Western countries. As with the idea of implosion, it would be hard to explain how immigrant cultural traits have influenced or contributed to the current sense of 'Scandinavian-ness', without the concept of creolization. And, as before, it is those with transcultural identities, such as Muslim converts, who are integral to the process of creolization.

The German researcher Wolfgang Welsch chooses to talk in terms of 'transculturality', which implies a higher degree of exchange than the concept of Western multiculturalism (Welsch 1999: 194). Welsch sees transculturality on the one hand as 'a consequence of the *inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures* [Welsch's italics] . . . a number of ways of life and cultures which interpenetrate or emerge from

one another' (Welsch 1999: 197). On the other hand, Welsch believes that 'the old homogenizing and separatist ideas of culture have been surpassed through *cultures' external networking* [Welsch's italics]. Cultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other' (Welsch 1999: 197). Welsch denies that transculturality creates uniformity, rather he argues that 'as transculturality pushes forward, the mode of diversity is altered' (Welsch 1999: 203). He claims this new type of diversity is 'the diversity of different cultures and identities, each arising from transcultural permeations' (Welsch 1999: 203). Welsch believes that, as different groups or individuals draw upon different cultural sources, the transcultural networks will vary. He says that 'the transcultural webs are, in short, woven with different threads and in different manner' (Welsch 1999: 203). Eriksen does not speak explicitly in terms of transculturality. However, his discussion of mutual cultural exchange between various groups of European society and his observation, for instance, of distinctive German, French, Danish, and Dutch variations of cultural 'Turkishness' (Eriksen 1994: 31) corresponds with Welsch's notion of transcultural networks.

Welsch's concept of transculturality is dynamic and indicates a flow in the cultural encounters within accepted creolized societies as well as European society. 'The concept of transculturality', he says, 'sketches a different picture of the relationships between cultures; not one of isolation and of conflict, but one of entanglement, intermixing and commonness. It promotes not separation, but exchange and interaction.' (Welsch 1999: 205). Marta Cuesta, the Argentinian-Swedish researcher, used the Afro-Brazilian religion *candomblé* to illustrate the dynamics of the cultural and religious encounter in creolized societies. She states:

Viewing it [Candomblé] simply as an imported African religion overlooks the dynamic relation between Candomblé world and the wider Brazilian society, and makes it impossible to understand the meaning of Candomblé in contemporary society (Cuesta 1997: 19).

Recalling Hannerz' model of centre-periphery dynamics, in European society the cultural flow between European majority society and its subcultures is predominantly asymmetric. Immigrant groups (the periphery) tend to be more influenced by ideological issues such as gender relations, social and political freedoms and ecological issues, whilst majority society (the centre) seems to adapt only the more superficial cultural traits, such as cuisine, music and art. Thus, in

Malmö in the south of Sweden, for instance, where Palestinians and Lebanese live, the traditional Middle-Eastern *falafel* can be found just as easily as the hot dog (which, of course is no more Swedish than *falafel!*). It is much harder, though not impossible, for majority society to adapt intellectual or ideological ideas from its various sub-cultures.

The question one must raise is whether or not the Scandinavian Muslim converts along with other individuals with transcultural identities, second or third generation immigrants for instance, are in a position to translate and disseminate subcultural notions from the periphery to the centre. Conversely, is it true that individuals with transcultural identities are the main actors in the cultural flow from the centre to the periphery of modern European society? Individuals with transcultural identities are assimilated into both majority society and one or more ethnic or religious subcultures. They are therefore able to act freely within various cultural spheres. Moreover, on an implicit level, they can only translate or interpret cultural or religious ideas according to their own personal experiences, which means such factors as socialization, gender, class and previous religions also become actors in the translation process.

Formation of Islamic thought

Muslim history shows us how religious ideas and the interpretation of holy texts are influenced by previous cultural experiences. Attitudes in majority society have had a clear influence on the shaping of Muslim conceptions. During the three first centuries of Islam, there was a huge Muslim territorial expansion. As Islam spread, Islamic theology and legislation came to be influenced both by local cultural expressions and the different opinions of individual scholars. The theological struggle in early history between, for instance, the Mu'tazila and the Ash'arites, and the legal struggle between the traditionalists (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) and the scholars who promoted rationalism and subjectivity (*ahl ar-ra'y*), indicates how the Islamic sources came to be interpreted through different cultural and academic filters. Moreover, the establishment of the four Sunni schools of Islamic Law, Mālikī, Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, and Ḥanbalī, shows how scholarly differences in Islamic thought were accepted but how there was an underlying accord between the various legal directions.

This aspect of change was prominent in early Islamic history up until what has popularly been known as ‘the closure of the doors of *ijtihād* [an act of individual reasoning]’ between the tenth and twelfth century. From then on the frames for Islam were considered set. Although scholars still practised individual reasoning whenever new phenomena arose, former scholarly judgement came to occupy an almost divine status. In the mid-eighteenth century, however, the Islamic scholar Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1787) from the Arab Peninsula started to rethink Islamic tradition. In the nineteenth century, the *salafīyya* movement, consisting of Muslim intellectuals, started to question the traditional frames for Islamic thinking. The Muslim countries had been colonized by European countries, and the intellectual elite were starting to ask how such a thing could have happened: Where was the old glory of Muslim resistance to foreign supremacy? And what had become of the powerful Muslim warriors? One of the famous Muslim agitators of that time, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897), argued that Muslims had lost their power because they had turned away from Islam. His theory suggests on the one hand that Muslims’ practice of Islam was degenerating and on the other that Muslims might be practising a ‘wrong’ form of Islam. Both suggestions are inherent in the thinking of al-Afghānī and his followers. However, in Muslim intellectual circles it was the latter alternative which came to dominate the debate. The oft-quoted Koranic verse: ‘Verily, God does not change a people’s conditions unless they change their inner selves’ (K. 13: 11), indicates that human beings’ actions are responsible for their conditions of living. Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905), one of the disciples of al-Afghānī, proclaimed the concept of *khalīfatullāh* (the vicegerency of God on earth), where human beings are regarded as terrestrial representatives of God.¹ Thus, it was considered human beings’ relation to God and to the divine Law that determines the outcome of their lives.

The notion of change, therefore, was conspicuous to Muslim intellectual thought of the nineteenth century. The unfavourable conditions

¹ The contemporary scholar, Jafar Idris claims that ‘Abduh adapted this concept from the Sufi scholar, Muhyi al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240). The understanding of human being as God’s *khalīfa* has been rejected by many contemporary *salafīs*, as they see such an understanding as *shirk* (polytheism). In Idris’ view the concept of *khalīfatullāh* implies that God is absent (Idris 1990: 104–107), which according to the *salafī* view is impossible.

of Muslims were attributed to their having followed the wrong intellectual track; one of imitation (*taqlīd*) of previous Muslim scholars, particularly in legal matters, instead of constant review and revision of Islamic practice. Al-Afghānī stressed the ‘opening of the door of *ijtihād*’ as a contrast to the rigidity in legislation from around the twelfth century onwards. This idea of new *ijtihāds* might stem from the cultural encounters between Islam and the West. Al-Afghānī and ‘Abduh, who both visited Europe, admired European scientific and technological developments. They envisioned similar developments in the Muslim world. Their view on traditional Islam can be illustrated by an alleged saying of Muḥammad ‘Abduh during a visit to Europe: ‘In Europe there is Islam but no Muslims, whereas in the Muslim world there are Muslims but no Islam.’

It is also possible to regard the quest for new *ijtihāds* as a result of the cultural encounters between Shi‘a and Sunni Muslims. In Muslim society the two denominations have tended to be segregated. Although Muḥammad ‘Abduh was a Sunni scholar, al-Afghānī’s affiliation is rather obscure. Sunni Muslims tend to claim that he was a Sunni Muslim, whereas Shi‘a Muslims claim he belonged to the Shi‘a creed. Personally I believe that if he was not himself a Shi‘a scholar he was heavily influenced by Shi‘a scholars. Throughout history in the Shi‘a denomination, scholars, and particularly ayatollahs, have been performing *ijtihāds* in great numbers. In Sunni Islam, however, the act of overruling ancient *ijtihāds* with new *ijtihāds* has been pretty much taboo since the Islamic law was regarded as fixed and complete. Sunni Muslim societies have preferred to issue *fatwās* for new phenomena. Thus, al-Afghānī’s claim for new *ijtihāds* would be more suited to the Shi‘a creed. This apparent fusion of Shi‘a and Sunni thought might be seen as part of the globalization process, involving a creolization of individuals and cultural structures. Traditionally Sunnis have held most political and religious power and have not been greatly impacted by Shi‘a Islamic ideas. In this particular situation, therefore, the dynamics of the interaction between Sunni and Shi‘a groups has reversed and change has flowed from the periphery to the centre of Muslim society. If my suggestion that al-Afghānī was a Shi‘a is correct, it seems he would have had to hide his religious affiliation in order to have any impact on the Sunni system of ideas.

For the nineteenth-century reformers, Islam became a dynamic concept motivated by reinterpretations of the Islamic sources, the

Koran and the hadiths. The schools of Law and their legislative powers were seen as archaic and not always suited to the changing world. The notion of 'returning to the pure sources' was, to a certain degree, initiated by the reformers and integral to their thinking. As a result of the cultural encounter with Western society it was particularly in the social and political field that new ideas were formulated.

In the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century a similar trend of change is visible. One example is how the women's liberation movement has influenced both Muslim women and Islamic scholars, such as Muḥammad al-Ghazālī and Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī. Al-Ghazālī was discussing the matter of female leadership in 1989, at roughly the same time as was Muslim feminist Fatima Mernissi. His conclusion was that a nation wants the most suitable leader, whether they be male or female (al-Ghazālī 1989: 48). One could argue that al-Ghazālī's book was published two years after Mernissi's and might have been written as a reaction to her's. In my view, this is unlikely. Mernissi's book came out in French and English and was not translated into Arabic until 1993. Furthermore, al-Ghazālī's book is more a reaction towards the *salafi's* attitudes towards women in general rather than a response to or support for Western feminism.

Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī's lectures and writings are also marked by an attitude of progress and a rapprochement with Western socio-political thought. In his numerous television appearances he promotes Western democracy which, up to the beginning of the 1990s, was rejected by most Islamists. In keeping with the Islamic concept of *shūrā* (consultation), he advocates Muslim political participation in Western society.

Both al-Ghazālī's and al-Qaradāwī's approximation of Western thought can be regarded as part of the globalization of Western localism, in which various Western cultural expressions are imported into non-Western societies.

The 'global flows'

The Islamic scholars' change of attitudes is reflected in the words of Catholic theologian, Robert J. Schreiter: 'Theology stands today between the global and the local,' and 'The global is not the same as the old universal or perennial theologies' (Schreiter 1997: iv). Thus Schreiter has observed that the universal Christian theologies were

in fact *local* theologies, which ‘extended the results of their reflections beyond their own context to other settings, usually without an awareness of the rootedness of their theologies within their own contexts’ (Schreiter 1997: 2). Schreiter’s criticism seems to echo the universalization of the Law of the four Islamic schools, which were all rooted in geographically and historically local contexts. Schreiter points implicitly to a global process in early history which spread universal theologies and to the fact that theology in general is a reading of holy texts through cultural filters.

In order for Schreiter to speak in terms of religion as a global system he introduces the concept ‘global theological flows’ (Schreiter 1997: 15) which, he says, is best understood in relation to Peter Beyer’s concept of an ‘antisystemic global movement’ (Schreiter 1997: 16). Schreiter regards these ‘flows’ as theological discourses that ‘while not uniform or systemic, represent a series of linked, mutually intelligible discourses that address the contradictions or failures of global systems’ (Schreiter 1997: 16). Schreiter lists the linked, mutually intelligible theological discourses or ‘flows’ as: theologies of liberation, feminism, ecology and human rights. But whereas Schreiter puts these theological discourses on an equal footing with similar discourses in other cultural and social settings, I regard them as explicit responses to the general process of globalization.

‘Systems’ or ‘components’ of meaning?

In the modern world, trust in authorities and traditional values, such as organized religions and social institutions is waning. In 1990, a study by the EVSS (the European Value System Study) covering subjects such as religion, morality, family, work and politics, showed a prominent trend of individualisation within European society. Loek Halman has observed that traditional, church-oriented religiosity is diminishing in northern Europe and Scandinavia. Similarly, he states that in Scandinavia and northern Europe in general people ‘have less confidence in authoritative institutions’ than in southern Europe (Halman 1994: 70). It is interesting to note that the lack of trust in authoritative institutions does not extend to democratic institutions; northern Europeans and Scandinavians indicated a higher trust than southern Europeans in such institutions.

The two Swedish sociologists of religion Lars Ahlin and Curt Dahlgren point to the modern example of the New Age movement, that is on the increase in Scandinavian society, as an individualistic religious expression (Ahlin and Dahlgren 1999: 157). They see the individualistic emphasis of the New Age approach as reflecting ‘the modern development towards a higher degree of individualism’ (Ahlin and Dahlgren 1999: 158). Thus New Age is seen as ‘an indicator of the general change in modern society’ (Ahlin and Dahlgren 1999: 158). Ahlin and Dahlgren refer to how, in the sociology of religion, there has been an assumption of human beings’ universal need for ‘coherent systems of meaning’. The two researchers refute this common assumption, however, preferring instead to speak of the human need ‘to use components of meaning that can be used in a more pragmatic way’ (Ahlin and Dahlgren 1999: 163). Although not explicitly stated by the two researchers, the New Age movement is an example of a form of religiosity that picks and chooses ‘components of meaning’. Ahlin and Dahlgren suggest that modern religiosity in Sweden can be described, using Reginald Bibby’s term, as ‘the unfocused religious orientation’ which is ‘a non-interest in whole entities but a reliance on fragmentary bits-and-pieces of belief from established systems’ (Ahlin and Dahlgren 1999: 164). They argue that many Swedes today actually have eclectic ‘systems of meaning’. This eclecticism extends to Scandinavians in general and is probably a result of the growing lack of trust in Scandinavia’s authoritative institutions. It is this conclusion which I find to be of especial interest in a study of Scandinavian converts to Islam. Do Scandinavian converts accept the whole package of the Islamic ‘system of meaning’ in one institutional form? Or do they pick out ‘components of meaning’, thus creating a ‘Scandinavian Islam’?

The concepts of ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islam’

In the Western context the concept ‘Muslim’ has not been regarded as particularly problematic; everybody with a Muslim background has generally been considered Muslim. There is a similar situation for Jews. Even a non-believing Jew, who does not follow the Judaic precepts would be classified as a Jew. When it comes to Christianity, however, there is a reluctance to regard persons in the Christian

cultural sphere as Christians if they are not actively practising the religion, in the sense of following rituals and accepting dogmas.

Any reference to 'Muslims' seems to embrace all Muslims with a Muslim background as well as those individuals from non-Muslim backgrounds who have embraced Islam. Within the former group there are, however, many individuals who are non-believers and do not practise the Islamic religious rituals. These individuals are nevertheless regarded as being Muslims. During my dealings with Muslims from all corners of the world I have come to understand the necessity of being aware of the various degrees of 'Muslim-ness'.

Amongst those with a Muslim background there are different understandings of the concept 'Muslim'. Some believe that only those who adhere to the Islamic rituals, such as praying, fasting, adhering to the moral behavioural and sexual codes and keeping to the dietary rules can be considered Muslims. Others believe that every person who expresses the two witnesses of faith ('I witness that there is no deity, but God, and I witness that Muḥammad is the Prophet of God') can be considered a Muslim. The former position reflects an understanding of religion which is collective, where a person is judged according to his/hers actions; the latter position reflects an understanding of religion which is personal, where the judgement is based, according to belief, on a person's self-definition. The two positions indicate a change in the function of religion. Formerly, religion had the function of keeping groups together; nowadays this function has become less important. With the development of civil citizenship as the main factor of national belonging, the function of religion as a gathering factor in group dynamics has diminished.

In this study I will use the concepts 'Muslim' and 'born Muslim' when I speak specifically of Muslims coming from Muslim backgrounds. Although the concept 'Muslim' is problematic, due to lack of more appropriate concepts I prefer to stick to it.

The concept 'Islam' is also problematic. It has previously been used to denote an established system of thought and practice. With the increased realization of the manifold expressions and ideations of Islam many researchers have come to be more careful in using the concept (see for instance Wadud 2000; Otterbeck 2000). Wadud says:

No distinction is made between the 'Islam' defined through cultural nuance and a wide range of Muslim practices, the 'Islam' legitimated by authorities (usually male) of the intellectual legacy, or the 'Islam'

that reflects the primary sources. Is ‘Islam’ what Muslims do, what governments establish, what the intellectual legacy articulated, or what the primacy sources imply? (Wadud 2000: 4).

In view of these reflections I will take care to use the concept ‘Islam’ sparingly and only in general terms where necessary.

Conceptualization

This study will discuss the role of Muslim converts in the Muslim community and in majority society. It will also look at the contribution of Scandinavian converts to the ongoing process of Islamic change. First of all however, it is important to look at the concept of ‘conversion’ in order to understand what it means in the Islamic context. The word ‘conversion’ comes from the Latin *convertere* and means ‘to revolve, turn around’ or ‘head in a different direction’ (Flinn 1999: 52). In the Islamic context there are various terms denoting the process of becoming a Muslim. The most common Arab term is the Koranic word *aslama*, from the root *s-l-m*, which is translated as ‘surrender’ or ‘commit to the will of God’ (Wehr 1974: 425). This term is also used in general for Muslims who practise the Islamic precepts. Another Arab term used is the word *ʿitāniqa* of the root *ʿ-n-q*, which means to ‘embrace a religion’ (Wehr 1974: 649; see also Larsen 1995: 128–129). A third Arab term is the word *iqṭanʿa* from the root *q-n-ʿ*, which means either ‘being content’ or ‘to be convinced’ (Wehr 1974: 793). Arab-speaking Muslims tend to use this word to denote that one becomes Muslim by inner conviction and not for circumstantial reasons, in order to marry a Muslim, for instance.

Among English-speaking Muslims the term ‘convert’ has lately been replaced by the term ‘revert’. This implies that a Muslim has returned to the original state of mankind and submitted to the laws of God (for a further discussion, see Chapter Three). Lena Larsen has discussed this idea in view of the Arabic term *tawba* (repentance), which she sees as the Koranic term for conversion. She claims that, whilst *tawba* has both a past and future perspective (‘One turns to the original state in order to follow the right path’ (*ṣirāṭ al-muṣṭaqīm*) (Larsen 1995: 129), the concept ‘revert’ is retrogressive only.

According to Larsen, converts tend to be called ‘new Muslims’ in the Muslim community. I have observed that many converts themselves prefer this term. One of the converts in this investigation

explained that the term ‘convert’ has an alienating effect on ethnic-Scandinavian Muslims. He prefers the term ‘new Muslim’ as he feels that ‘convert’ connotes ethnic-Scandinavian Muslims being less ‘Muslim’ than born Muslims. The discussion of the term ‘convert’ as against the term ‘new Muslim’ echoes the discourse on immigrants in Scandinavian society: what terminology is most suitable, ‘immigrant’ or ‘new Scandinavian’? The term ‘immigrant’ is regarded as functioning in an exclusive way, whilst the terms ‘new Swede’, ‘new Dane’ or ‘new Norwegian’ are more inclusive.

The concept of ‘convert’ is suitable as an analytical tool; however it does have certain connotations to Christianity and might not always be apt to convey the embracing of Islam. In this study therefore I will also use the concept ‘new Muslim’ which introduces a broader understanding of conversion to Islam and differentiates it from conversion to Christianity. I will alternate between the two concepts ‘convert’ and ‘new Muslim’ to show that conversion to Islam reflects respectively both a general pattern of conversion and a pattern particular to the Islamic sphere.

Methodology

I build this study on Scandinavian Muslim converts, or new Muslims, on both qualitative and quantitative investigations. Shi‘a and Sunni Muslims are represented as both respondents and interviewees. I have discussed elsewhere the importance for readers to be aware of the limitations of research and its various methodological aspects (Roald 2001a: 67–78).

Questionnaires

I handed out 130 questionnaires, of which 116 respondents (19 (16%) men and 97 (84%) women) answered. Of the respondents, 21 individuals had 9 years’ schooling, 12 were apprentices, 22 had finished secondary school and 61 had received higher education. Of these 61, 6 individuals were in the process of finishing or had already finished postgraduate studies.

Some of the questionnaires were sent by e-mail to participants in Muslim cyber discussion groups. The questionnaire was sent to each person only after having asked him or her to take part in the inves-

tigation. I also asked these persons for the e-mail addresses of other converts and followed the same procedure with the new contacts. I also distributed the questionnaire to converts in various Muslim organisations in Scandinavia. I sent questionnaires to a key person in each organisation and asked that person to distribute them. Since joining the research group on conversion at Lund University in 1999, I have attended various international conferences in the United States, in Europe and in the Arab world, which have been attended by converts from all over the world. Although this study is specifically about Scandinavian converts, I sometimes refer to the experience of converts from other parts of the world where I find it relevant.

The questionnaires were distributed in organisations affiliated to different Islamic trends. The respondents' affiliations varied from Sufism, the *salafī* trend and the *ikhwān* trend (affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood), to non-organisational adherence. It is important to note that most of the respondents claimed they neither followed any of the Islamic School of Law nor adhered to any of the Islamic orientations or trends. From their answers, however, I sensed that many of them were influenced by one or more established branches of Islam. This refusal to follow or belonging to a certain branch or School of Law is of interest. On the one hand, it points to the converts' independence from Muslim socio-cultural systems and reflects Ahlin and Dahlgren's theory that modern religiosity picks and chooses components of meaning. On the other hand, the refusal to follow a particular Islamic branch or School of Law reflects a dissonance between these systems and everyday life in the Western world. This has to be regarded in light of Scandinavians' lack of trust in authoritative systems, evident from the European Value Systems Study (see Chapter One for further discussion on the EVSS study).

The questionnaire contained 61 questions; both multiple choice and open-ended questions. The questionnaire particularly stressed personal background, reasons for conversion and developments after conversion. Some of the questions also investigated lifestyles and world views before conversion, as well as Islamic affiliation after conversion. I also asked whether the respondents had gone through religious or social crises with regards to their relationship to the Muslim community and to non-Muslim society; the development of Islamic ideas; and their practise of Islam, in terms of prayer, fasting and adherence to the moral codes etc.

Interviews

I conducted interviews with 32 (23 (72%) women and 9 (28%) men) respondents to the questionnaire. Of these, 3 individuals had not completed secondary school, 6 had completed secondary school, 8 were university students, 5 had a university degree, 6 had college education, and 4 were postgraduate students. I have observed that many Muslim converts, not only in Scandinavia but in Europe and the United States as well, are highly educated. The high amount of educated individuals in this study, thus, reflects a common trend within the convert community in Western countries.

The interviewees came from either Denmark (6 individuals), Sweden (16) or Norway (10). In the study I do not mention the country of the interviewees, as the convert community in each country is fairly transparent and most within the community would be able to recognise the interviewees.

In the interviews I used the questionnaire as a starting point and tried to get a more profound insight into the original answers given. Some of the interviews were conducted via e-mail.

I estimate that the apparent disproportion of men and women in the study reflects the actual situation in Scandinavia, where women seem to constitute the majority of Muslim converts.

In addition, I have been a participant observer in many convert meetings and conferences in Scandinavia. As I converted to Islam in 1982, I have more than 20 years' experience of the convert community in Scandinavia.

Having established the theoretical and methodological base for this study, I will, in Chapter One of this study, look into the main historical and social issues of Scandinavian society and the Muslim presence within it.

CHAPTER ONE

MAJORITY SOCIETY

Behold, those whom the angels gather in death while they are still sinning against themselves, [the angels] will ask: 'In which condition were you living?' They will answer: 'We were oppressed on earth.' [The angels] will say: 'Was, then, God's earth not wide enough for you in order to migrate?'

(Koran 4: 97)

In many previous studies on Muslims in Western countries, analysis has been restricted to the Muslim community in isolation. However, there is now an increasing awareness of the role of majority society in the shaping and reshaping of immigrant identities (see for instance Fuglerud 2001; Gullestad 2002). In this chapter I will therefore look more closely into the mainstream ideas and attitudes of the three Scandinavian countries, Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

The Islamic presence in Scandinavia is new and, as Scandinavia had little previous contact with the Muslim world, this new presence has caused concern. From an outsider's perspective Scandinavia tends to be regarded as an entity. Peter Gundelach, professor of sociology at Copenhagen University, has discussed why Scandinavians often feel a close affinity to one another, which transcends national borders. He believes, firstly, that there are great cultural similarities between the Scandinavian countries, stemming from shared cultural symbols, such as language. Secondly, he sees that Scandinavian countries have similar social institutions, such as the welfare state. Thirdly, Gundelach points at cross-border organisations, such as the Nordic Council, which has played a role in creating a particular Scandinavian identity (Gundelach 2001).

There are, however, counter arguments to this idea of a common Scandinavian identity and Gundelach refers to the study by sociologist Norbert Elias on how individual national traits are influenced by the particular national wars and the process of the formation of the states. Gundelach shows how the formation of separate states caused a disintegration of the Scandinavian region, following a

liberation process which was long and fraught with conflicts (Gunterlach 2001; see also Elias 1996). Gunterlach therefore believes it is difficult to define the relations between the Scandinavian countries.

In the European Value Systems Study (the EVSS study), the Scandinavian countries (including Iceland and Finland) were found to have elements of both heterogeneity and homogeneity in their notional value systems. According to one group of social scientists:

Outsiders often regard the Nordic people as culturally homogeneous, whereas the Nordic people themselves tend to stress the differences among them in values and moods. At the same time, they often feel closer to each other than to people outside Scandinavia (Pettersson and Riis 1994: 7).

Loek Halman, a social scientist involved in the project, has discussed whether Scandinavian values are unique in the European context. He concludes that there are both similarities and differences in the social-value orientation of the Scandinavian countries and other European countries. He thus sees it as difficult 'to distinguish a typical Scandinavian value pattern, although some similar orientations appear in the Nordic countries' (Halman 1994: 79).

One such similarity is church attendance in Scandinavia, which 'is not accompanied by a strong commitment to the church' (Halman 1994: 79) in any of the countries. When it comes to belief, however, the Scandinavian countries have different approaches, although a common factor is the lack of traditional beliefs in all of them. One particular trait that Halman found to be typical in the Scandinavian countries is the idea that the Church should not enter into discussions about personal moral issues, such as homosexuality, abortion and extramarital affairs, or socio-political issues, such as unemployment, third world problems, racial discrimination and ecology. This said, some priests and bishops do take an official stand against what they regard as injustice. In Sweden for instance, in an Easter sermon 2002 bishop Martin Lind condemned Israel's treatment of the Palestinians as racist (*Svenska Dagbladet* 31/3-2002). His comments were met with harsh criticism, particularly from the political authorities. The EVSS study's finding that the Scandinavian Church should no longer participate in official debate is interesting in light of Scandinavia's liberal stance on homosexuality, abortion, extramarital affairs, etc. As the Church has been restricted in its role as moral critic and religious counsellor, non-religious, liberal forces

have been given free rein to promote their conceptions in wider society.

Halman notes that the Church's waning influence in social matters has caused an 'individualization and institutional differentiation' of society (Halman 1994: 65). He explains that 'individualization implies that traditional, collectively shared meaning systems have disappeared and that religious feelings are increasingly based on individual choices and preferences' (Halman 1994: 65–66). Halman sees this decline in institutional religiosity as 'secularization', whereas the Swedish sociologist of religion Göran Gustavsson refers to the weakening of religious institutions in society as 'religious change' (Gustavsson 1994: 14). Halman further notes that, in northern Europe, the belief in a kind of spirit or life force is much more widespread than the belief in a personal God. However, Halman adds that this particular idea is not specific to the Scandinavian countries. Halman has further observed that in Denmark and in Sweden people are less religious than in Norway (Halman 1994: 80).

When it comes to family relations, Halman shows how Scandinavian countries differ from the rest of Europe. He notes that 'individualization, the main process of modernization, has proceeded at a quicker tempo in these countries than in other countries' (Halman 1994: 73). He adds that changes in behaviour spread from the Scandinavian countries over the rest of Europe with a varying time delay. 'Marriage rates decreased first in the Scandinavian countries, then in the other European countries. The increase in divorces occurred first in Scandinavia, followed by the rest of Europe', he says (Halman 1994: 70).

However, in contrast to the changes in family relationships, Halman points out that Scandinavian countries do not distinguish themselves from other European countries when it comes to personal (particularly sexual) behaviour. He claims that a climate of tolerance concerning various alternative (particularly sexual) behaviours seems typical of the Scandinavian countries. He states however that this permissiveness should not be confused with unfettered liberty, as permissiveness is accompanied by strict rules, particularly regarding adultery and sex under 18 (Halman 1994: 80).

Halman's differentiation between personal permissiveness and unrestrained freedom reflects the difference between private and social morality. Pettersson and Riis note that 'Nordic countries tend to demonstrate a specific profile in moral values, i.e. strictness on social morality and permissiveness in private' (Pettersson and Riis 1994: 8).

Social morality seems therefore to be linked to the offence towards others; sexual frivolity in cases of adultery and under-age sex, for instance, both involve third parties, be they partners or parents.

Equality/similarity

In Europe in general the concept of ‘equality’ has been an important issue in the cultural encounter between majority society and minority communities. Marianne Gullestad, a Norwegian anthropologist has discussed this concept of ‘equality’ or ‘similarity’ (*likhet*) in her book *Det norske sett med nye øyne* (The Norwegian as seen through new eyes). According to Gullestad, ‘egalitarian individualism’ is a common trait in the Western world. However, Norway and the northern countries in general have distinctive features (Gullestad 2002: 82). Gullestad has conducted extensive fieldwork in Norway, where she claims that the logic of equality is that ‘individuals in many informal social interactions must consider themselves as equal in order to feel of equal value’ (Gullestad 2002: 82). She continues to say that individuals tend to draw attention to the things they have in common, while disregarding the ways in which they differ. Equality in this form of logic, she states, becomes more like a conformity or alignment of views. Gullestad believes that in this logic of equality difference comes to be considered a defect: ‘The one who is different, lacks something essential’ (Gullestad 2002: 83). She states that ‘Differences are not only considered problematic in so far they exist, rather they are created in order to reinforce equality and inner belonging in a group’ (Gullestad 2002: 84). Gullestad’s conclusion is that ‘both “Norwegians” and “immigrants” are homogenized by the discursive praxis of equality’ (Gullestad 2002: 116). She further believes that discrimination between social groups in Europe is no longer built on the discourse of race, but rather on imagined incompatible cultural differences (Gullestad 2002: 117).

Gullestad’s study is set in a Norwegian context, though one may apply her findings to a Scandinavian context. Although no such study has been conducted in Sweden and Denmark, it is plausible to believe that similar traits are to be found in these countries.

Gender Policy

To illustrate the development of feminist ideas in Scandinavia, I will concentrate on Sweden, which is a good indicator of similar developments in the other two Scandinavian countries. The equal opportunity policy in Sweden must be regarded in view of Ehn's and Löfgren's notion of the Swedish 'cultural struggle' (Ehn and Löfgren 1982), in which the dominating class used various strategies in order to maintain cultural hegemony. According to Ehn and Löfgren, this cultural struggle resulted in a 'bourgeoisement' of the working class. American scholar Joyce Gelb claims that Sweden has a history of incorporating certain subcultural notions into government policy and refers to it as a country of 'feminism without feminists' (Gelb 1989: 137–177). She points at how the ideas behind protest movements in Sweden have been absorbed by the state and partly institutionalized. She sees this phenomenon as an authoritarian problem-solving strategy to avoid great controversies between the state and civil society in general. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the Swedish Prime Minister has declared himself a feminist (Sydsvenska Dagbladet 25/4–2002). In light of Gelb's argument and Ehn and Löfgren's observations, it seems that conflicts in Sweden have been avoided by a political institutionalization or incorporation of select parts of conflicting ideologies. In this way, the remaining protest comes from the most extreme parts of the opposition movement that are usually small groups and easy to control. Andrew Jamison, a researcher at Lund University in Sweden, has observed a similar process of selective institutionalization in the environmental movement (Jamison 2001).

It was in the 1960s that the concept *jämställdhet* first appeared in Sweden. *Jämställdhet* can be understood as equal opportunity or status, especially between the sexes. In the mid-1970s, the Social Democrats officially recommended the use of this term which, according to historians Christina Florin and Bengt Nilsson, heralded a governmental reform program for equal opportunities for men and women in Swedish society (Florin and Nilsson 1999: 14–15). In Sweden the implementation of a new gender order started as a political project effecting policy changes and new legislation. It was a new order instigated by the authorities, which the public was obliged to follow. This process of equalising gender opportunities in society reflects the cultural struggle in early-twentieth century Sweden between the

bourgeoisie and the working class, which resulted in a bourgeoisie-ment of Swedish society in general.

Another important factor in the development of women's role in wider society was Peter Berger's and Thomas Luckmann's theory of reality as socially constructed, established in the late sixties (Berger and Luckmann 1967). This theory formed a basis for the rejection of traditional gender roles, which came to be seen as part of a socially constructed reality and not the result of biological differences. Berger and Luckman's theory revolutionized gender research and gave feminists, as well as political authorities who favoured equal opportunity policies, scientific arguments to promote equal status on all levels of society. With the rise of the feminist movement and an increase of women into Western society's labour force, the social construction theory replaced biological arguments in the 'scientification' of gender roles.

One last factor worth considering in the promotion of gender equality is the establishment of the NGO The Swedish Association for Sex Education (RFSU) in 1933. The organisation regards itself as a pioneer for 'sexual and reproductive health and rights' (www.rfsu.se). It has played a part in legislative changes that have promoted women's entry into the labour market and women's freedom of choices, such as compulsory sex education in schools (1955), and the right to sell contraceptives without a licence. The organisation also played a part in the struggle for women's right to free abortion up to the 18th week of pregnancy (www.rfsu.se). The sexual revolution, as seen with the coming of 'the pill' in the early sixties and the right to free abortion, has to be regarded as a main factor in the liberation of women who were now able to master their own reproductive patterns. Thus the work of the RFSU should not be underestimated in the discussion of the Swedish *jämställdhet*.

Although the Scandinavian equal gender policy has resulted in women taking on a greater share in official life, it is important to note that they are most actively involved at the lower levels of society. According to a report by the company Grant Thornton in 2002, Norway, Denmark and Sweden have quite a low percentage of women in management or on boards of directors. Whereas Ireland, which tops the list, had at least one woman on 72% of its boards of directors Norway managed only 52%; Sweden, 51%; and Denmark, 47%. Danish researcher Hanne Søgård Hansen, who conducted the research, put the Scandinavian countries' low scores down to a par-

ticular family pattern pervasive in Scandinavia: frequent divorces, working grandparents and few families who have domestic helpers. This is in contrast to Ireland, where divorces are less common, most grandparents are at home and are able to help with childcare, and there is a higher proportion of families with domestic helpers (Aftenposten 13/3–2002).

Religion and state

The three Scandinavian countries differ from other countries in Europe in that, up until the year 2000, they all had a Lutheran Protestant State Church. On the 1st of January 2000, the state and Church were separated in Sweden, and even in Norway discussions about a similar separation had started.

During the 19th century the Scandinavian countries, having been almost uniformly Protestant societies, went through a process of secularization or religious change, which resulted in a new ethic built on a Lutheran-bourgeois liberal ideology. The common value system became less confessional and more politically and ideologically motivated (Werner 2000: 113). The three countries had quite a liberal approach to free-religious choice, and from the nineteenth century onwards the Catholic Church established itself as a strong religious minority denomination in the whole of Scandinavia. It was however Denmark that had the most liberal legislation on religious freedom, its 1849 constitution guaranteeing freedom of religion. Norway and Sweden on the other hand had more restrictive legislation, with Dissenter laws that were passed in Sweden in 1860 and in Norway in 1891. However, as the Swedish historian Yvonne Werner has observed, the legislation on freedom of religion in both Norway and Sweden operated on a communal basis, whereas in Denmark the freedom of religion was granted on an individual basis. This meant that the Catholic church, which had been the largest immigrant minority group in Scandinavia up until at least the last part of twentieth century, was acknowledged as a religious community in Sweden and Norway, but in Denmark, although the separate Catholic communities were acknowledged by the state, Catholic clergymen were not accepted as interlocutors for the state (Werner 2000: 109).

It is interesting to look more closely into this situation, particularly in Sweden and Denmark, as discrimination towards religious

minorities in these two countries has developed in opposite directions during the last 150 years. Werner describes how in Denmark the Catholics enjoyed religious freedom on an individual level, whereas in Sweden the Holy See was accepted solely on a collective basis. On an individual level in Sweden, Catholics were discriminated against much more than in Denmark (Werner 2000: 109–110). In Denmark Catholics were free to establish their own educational institutions, whereas in Sweden they were prevented from doing so. In Sweden Catholics were excluded from certain educational institutions, such as teaching and nursing colleges. Werner sees the difference between the two countries in terms of the individual versus the collective principle of religious freedom. In Sweden the Catholic Church was acknowledged as an institution and the idea of state and Church as equal partners conflicted with the Swedish-Lutheran bourgeois liberal ideology. As a consequence, the Catholics in Sweden were heavily discriminated against; the concept of ‘the Catholic danger’ becoming a recurring theme in the media. This discrimination continued up to the 1960s and 1970s and the last restriction on establishing contemplative convents in Sweden disappeared as recently as 1977 (Werner 2000: 116). Werner points out that the issue of convents was one of the reasons that Sweden hesitated to accept the demands of the Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Justice. Similarly, the demand that the state is obliged to respect parents’ right to arrange their children’s education according to their religious belief was a problem linked to Swedish Catholics. It was not until 1983 that a decision on state grants to private schools was taken in Sweden (Werner 2000: 116).

Since the 1970s, there has been a marked change in the respective developments of discrimination in Denmark and Sweden. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Catholic minority was treated rather harshly by the Swedish media and Catholics were discriminated against by employers. In Denmark, on the other hand, Catholics were treated less harshly and there was no particular exclusion from professional work. In the contemporary debate, however, where the Muslim community has taken over the role of the Catholics, the opposite trends are evident: the Swedish media tends to be careful with how they portray Muslims and Islam, whereas in Denmark there are few restrictions on how the media deals with this issue (see also Werner 2000: 102). In politics Danish parties have tried to exclude Muslim members due to claims of their holding certain ‘unaccept-

able' views, as in the case of the young Danish-Pakistani Muslim Mona Sheikh, a member of the liberal Radical Left party. In an interview with a newspaper, Sheikh had said that she felt the establishment of a Muslim political party would be 'an enrichment for the party system and a chance for Muslims to make it clear that there is no division between Muslims and non-Muslims' (Berlingske Tidene 30/10–2001). Although Sheikh explicitly stated that she was satisfied with her membership to The Radical Left, and that she would not join a Muslim political party the local party chairman expressed that it was time for the party to introduce 'paragraphs of protection' as 'we cannot tolerate everything' (Berlingske Tidene 30/10–2001). This example echoes some of the afore-mentioned Swedish restrictions on Catholics in the early-twentieth century.

When it comes to religious education and instruction, the three Scandinavian countries have slightly different systems. Norway's change to the optional nature of religious education in autumn 1997 provoked massive resistance from both the atheistic Humanistic-Ethical Association and the Muslim community. Previously persons with no faith or non-Christian faiths could be exempted from the religious classes; the changes only allowed exemption from the confessional aspect, i.e. prayer and hymn singing. The subject of religious education in Norway changed its official name from 'knowledge of [Protestant] Christianity' to 'knowledge of [Protestant] Christianity with instruction of religions and outlooks on life' (*Kristendoms-kunnskap med religion—og livssynsorientering*). Even in the amended name, however, the emphasis on Protestant Christianity is obvious. According to the guidelines three-fifths of the time should be devoted to Christianity, one-fifth to other religions and outlooks on life, and one-fifth to ethics and philosophy. In Sweden there is a similar apportionment, particularly in the lower grades, although this is not reflected in the name and guidelines of the subject, which is called simply 'Religious Education' (*religionsundervisning*). Moreover, in Sweden individuals cannot be exempted from the religious education classes.

In Denmark, the first country to introduce freedom of religion, the religious education subject is still called 'knowledge of [Protestant] Christianity' and has a strong confessional bias. However, this bias is less marked than in Norway prior to the changes of 1997 and it is possible for children to be exempted from the religious classes. The 1999 school regulation says that 'the central area of knowledge

should be the Danish people's church's evangelic-Lutheran Christianity' (Dansk Skolelov § 6, 1999). The same paragraph, however, also states that 'foreign religions' (*fremmede religioner*) should also be taught, as well as 'other outlooks on life' at the higher levels of the Danish school system.

Muslim communities

The composition of Muslim communities, their patterns of living and the degree of hostility between them and majority society vary in the three countries, although the educational background of Muslims is quite similar. In contrast to many other Western countries, where Muslims often pursue postgraduate studies, Muslims in Scandinavia are, generally speaking, less well educated. Although there are some Muslim groups that boast a high rate of well-educated individuals, the general picture is that Muslims in Scandinavia have achieved a low level of education. This has to do, firstly, with the labour immigrant wave that consisted largely of unskilled workers, and, secondly, with the issue of language. Highly educated Muslim immigrants and refugees tended to go to English- or French-speaking countries where they did not have to learn a new language in order to get a job and get integrated into society. There are, however, individuals from three main refugee groups in particular who came to Scandinavia with higher education. The first of these are the Iranians, who arrived as refugees in the eighties, having run away from the Islamic religious leadership. Thus they are, on the whole, 'cultural' or 'ethnic' Muslims, rather than Muslims in a religious sense (Sander 1991: 68–69). The same is true for parts of the second group, the Iraqis, many of whom studied for higher degrees in the Eastern bloc countries. Within the Bosnian community in Scandinavia there are also many highly educated individuals.

As for mosques, Sweden with four, one Shi'a and three Sunni, has the greatest number of purpose-built mosques in Scandinavia. The first was built in Malmö, in the south of Sweden, and completed in 1984. In Denmark there is one purpose-built Ahmadiyya mosque, and in Norway The World Islamic Mission, a Pakistani *Brelwi organisation*, completed the country's first and only purpose-built mosque in 1995.

It is difficult to estimate the number of Muslims in Scandinavia. As there are no statistics on religious affiliation, the estimation has to be based on immigrants from the various Muslim countries and their descendants. By subtracting the average percentage of non-Muslims in these countries one can deduce an approximate number of Muslims in Scandinavia. It is difficult to judge from the numbers presented by Muslim institutions; some Muslims will belong to more than one association or mosque, others will not belong to any. It is similarly difficult to estimate the number of converts; no official registration of converts has been conducted by the Scandinavian authorities or the Muslim institutions. Conversion to Islam can also be a matter of secrecy and there are converts who would not be known as such outside their social circles. The numbers of Muslims suggested below are thus only approximations, and the numbers of converts are derived from intuitive guesses rather than statistical data.

Below I will describe the patterns of Muslim communities in Scandinavia and point at some particular features of each of the three countries in order to understand the dynamics between the states and their Muslim populations.

Sweden

Of the three Scandinavian countries, it was Sweden that first came into close contact with Muslims and the Muslim world (the first known conversion to Islam was in the late-seventeenth century (Larsen 1995: 39)). In the eighteenth century, as Sweden dwindled as a world power and the Ottoman empire was in decline, the two powers formed an alliance to keep the rising Russian empire in check. This alliance, coupled with the fact that the Swedish king Carl XII lived under the protection of the Ottoman caliph from 1709 to 1714 made the Swedes interested in the Muslim world. These links also paved the way for the Swedes to grant freedom of worship to Muslims (Svanberg 1994: 393). During the eighteenth century many dissertations about Islam were written at Swedish universities (Hjärpe 1999: 9). The academic interest in Islam in Swedish universities continued and in the twentieth century famous psychologists of religion, such as Tor Andrae (d. 1947) and Geo Widengren, showed profound interest in Sufism.

It was not until the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century that more Swedes started to look to Islam for personal spiritual guidance. The diplomat Gustaf Noring (d. 1937) converted to Islam in 1884. Another famous Swede, the painter Ivan Aguéli (d. 1917), who was one of the forerunners of modernism in Swedish art, also converted to Islam. Aguéli was a religious seeker with anarchist sympathies. In 1894 there are indications in letters to a friend that he had started to look more closely into the Islamic creed but it was probably not until 1898 that he converted to Islam (Gerholm 1988: 265–266). Aguéli's interest, like many Swedes in the first half of the twentieth century, was in the Sufi tradition. The Indian Sufi sheikh, Inyat Khan, who started the Sufi movement in Europe and the United States, visited Sweden in 1925. It was particularly women from the upper-middle class who were interested in Khan's message. The movement is still active but there is no leader and most of the members are old (Westerlund 1999: 93).

In the second half of the twentieth century it is the cultural encounter between Swedes and Muslim immigrants that has caused westerners to turn to Islam. The last Swedish census that recorded religious affiliations was in 1930, when 15 persons declared themselves Muslims (Karlsson and Svanberg 1995). The Muslim immigrants started to come to Sweden just after World War II when Turkish-speaking Tartars came from Finland and Estonia. The Tartars established the first Islamic congregation in 1948. At the beginning of the 1960s the first wave of Muslim labour immigrants entered Sweden consisting mainly of young Turkish, Yugoslavian, Albanian and Pakistani men who came as industrial workers for the blooming Swedish industry. With the legal restrictions on labour immigration in 1967, the pattern of immigration changed into one of chain immigration, as immigrants married partners from their homelands.

Along with this new pattern of immigration, the liberal nature of Swedish refugee politics convinced many different Muslim refugee groups to come to Sweden. The biggest of these were the Iranians and the Bosnians, followed by the Turks and the Arabic-speaking groups (Iraqis, Lebanese, Palestinians, Syrians), Albanians and Somalis. The South-East Asians constitute a small group, in contrast to Norway and Denmark, where the Pakistanis in particular form a substantial community. Within Muslim society in Sweden many of the prevailing religio-political directions are represented: in the Arab community the Muslim Brotherhood, the *salafī* trend, the *habashī* movement

and liberal Islamists with no affiliation are active; in the Turkish community the Milli Görüş, Sulaymançılar, and the Nurçu are the main movements; in the Somali community the *salafî* trend is strong because many Somali scholars are educated in Islamic institutions in Saudi Arabia.

It is difficult to give an exact measure of how many Muslims are living in Sweden today. Researchers estimate 2–300,000, Muslim leaders estimate up to 400,000 persons. As for Swedish Muslim converts, I would guess 2–5000 individuals. The Swedish population is estimated at nearly 9 million (1999), which makes the Muslim population between 2.2% and 4.4% of Sweden's total population.

The response towards the Muslim community from ethnic Swedes is varied. On the one hand, the government and the authorities in general have been positive in the sense that the Muslim refugees have been 'taken care of' (*omhändertagna*): housing and daily needs are provided for by the social security system and the Swedish language is taught free of charge. On the other hand, it is the very idea of the authorities' unconditional provision for the Muslim population that incenses many ethnic Swedes. The letters-to-the-editor columns of various Swedish newspapers often talk in terms of immigrants in general and Muslims in particular who live 'good lives' at the expense of 'hard-working Swedes'. Retired Swedes are often most upset, due probably to their feeling deprived of the fruits of the Swedish welfare programme, which have recently been shrinking.

'The People's Home'

The policy of the Swedish state towards immigrants in general and Muslims in particular has been one of paternalistic support and, although the material needs of immigrants are taken care of, full integration into major society has been difficult. In 1974, the government granted the freedom for 'members of linguistic minorities domiciled in Sweden' to choose between 'retaining and developing their original cultural identity' and 'assuming a Swedish cultural identity' (SOU, *Investigation of Immigrants* 3, 1974. See also Sander 1997: 288). However, this gesture of multiculturalism seems to be in opposition to the Swedish reality, with its segregation of ethnic Swedes and immigrants in most aspects of social life.

Mauricio Rojas is a researcher who has tried to find reasons for the segregated nature of contemporary Swedish society. He is an economic historian, originally from South America, who has lived in Sweden since 1974. He is one of the few active immigrant voices in the integration debate in Sweden. It is often hard to discover or unveil the unconscious or un verbalized structures in one's own cognition and so Rojas' approach, although perhaps more political than academic, provides a valuable 'outsider' perspective.

Rojas' book *The Rise and Fall of the Swedish Model* (1998), discusses the Swedish concept of 'the People's Home' (*folkhemmet*) that prevailed in twentieth-century Sweden. According to Rojas, the idea of the People's Home, a consequence of the vast modernization process in Sweden from 1870 to 1950, provided a bridge between old times and modernity. Sweden was a society of peasants up until the great industrialization of Sweden in the late-nineteenth century and the relationship between the state and the farmers was the main structure in society. Rojas sees 'the remarkable combination of *popular liberty* and *central control* which characterizes the relationship between the state and the people [my italics]' as a distinctive theme of Swedish history (Rojas 1998: 9–10). It is this two-tiered approach to governance that Rojas identifies as forming the two ideologically contradictory positions in the People's Home of modern Sweden: the Swedes are either 'subjects under the thumb of the social state or citizens emancipated by a strong society. The common link is the tension between freedom and submission that runs clearly across 500 years of Swedish history' (Rojas 1998: 10).

It was in the 1920s that the Social Democratic Party founded its social project 'the Good Home', which was later developed into the People's Home. On one hand, the dream of the People's Home was built on the dream of a welfare society with equal opportunity for all. On the other hand, it was founded on the notion of 'functionalism' as an ideal, where 'life and society could be broken down into a number of basic functions which in turn could then be made the basis of planned action' (Rojas 1998: 10). However, as Rojas shows, this dream of a 'planned society' presupposed 'an ethnically homogeneous population, a strong national state, an expanding industrial economy and a technological and an organizational development of the kind epitomized by Fordism' (Rojas 1998: 90). These were, according to Rojas, all factors which existed at some points in Swedish history but which have all changed as Sweden has moved from an

industrial to a post-industrial society. The ideology of the People's Home, with equal opportunities and an equal pattern of behaviour for all still lingers, however, in a society where the material and physical conditions have changed. As Rojas puts it: 'The foundations of our stately home have been remorselessly undermined, but the home still stands, it exists in the form of increasingly anachronistic institutions, structures, attitudes and nostalgic dreams' (Rojas 1998: 90).

As for gender issues, Sweden's strong policy of equal opportunities has had an obvious effect in society. It is a policy that started at the top of the hierarchy. During the nineties, the Social Democratic governments had a slogan for their governmental composition, 'Every second, a woman!', with the result that recent governments have comprised approximately 50% women. The policy of gender equality has started to infiltrate society at large and it even seems to have influenced Muslim communities in Sweden.

Åke Sander's discussion of the problems of immigrant integration in Sweden, due to a prevailing idea of conformity in Swedish society, resembles that of Rojas. Sander does not make explicit reference to the People's Home, but he emphasizes the Swedish notions of equality and uniformity, which both have their roots in the Social Democratic dream. Sander sees the problem of integrating Muslim immigrants as huge and, in his view, it is not the Muslims who do not want to integrate, but the Swedish structure that does not allow them to do so. As Sander has observed, Sweden has been built on the notion of 'One nation. One people. One religion' (Sander 1997: 272). He sees the segregated Muslims of Swedish society as casualties of the ideal of 'a common culture and religion, including common manners, norms and value system, as well as a common way of thinking in general' (Sander 1997: 273). He further argues that the state's proclaimed 'multiculturalism', of which equality, freedom of choice, and partnership are vital ingredients, is understood differently by Swedish non-Muslims and Muslims. Swedes in general understand multiculturalism to mean 'equality between universal individuals regardless of culture, ethnicity, race, religion and gender' (Sander 1997: 274). Muslims tend to interpret multiculturalism as an equal right to the freedom of choice, which becomes a request for special rights pertaining to religion, ethnicity and cultural expressions. The People's Home notion of equality and equal opportunities has cultivated the idea of uniformity or homogeneity. A common expression

used to criticize immigrant adherence to traditional or religious practices is ‘when in Rome, do as the Romans do’. It is particularly this concept of uniformity that prevents the integration of many immigrants. For instance, the chances of women with headscarves getting work are slim; many employers think that sales and reception clerks or cashiers with headscarves would offend ethnic Swedish customers. Similarly, employers are also reluctant to employ persons with a dark complexion, as they are afraid the customers will disappear.

It is interesting to view the concept of the People’s Home in relation to the feeling of nationalism. Although there is a pride in Sweden of the Swedish welfare model and the Swedish system in contrast to alternative models, compared to Denmark and Norway there is remarkably little national sentiment of the type Michael Billig calls ‘banal nationalism’ (Billig 1995). In Sweden, although one tends to prefer Swedish products, as well as regarding Swedish medical care and the social system as superior, there are few visible national symbols, such as the national flag. In Denmark and Norway the flag is a strong national symbol that is used on many occasions: it is hoisted high on Sundays in allotment gardens (Gundelach 2001), and in Norway it is waved exuberantly on the 17th May, Norway’s national liberation day. In Sweden there is a caution in using the Swedish flag; some even say that racists have taken it over as one of the immigrant-hostile parties, the Swedish Democrats, has the Swedish flag as its main symbol. Hoisting the flag in Sweden, therefore, acquired a racist undertone. One main reason for the differences between the countries in their relationship to their national flags, and therefore to nationalism, is the German occupation of Norway and Denmark in the 1940s. Sweden was one of the few European countries not to be occupied. Elias’ thesis that a nation’s habitus is shaped partly by its wars seems relevant in light of the different expressions of ‘banal nationalism’ in the three Scandinavian countries (Elias 1996).

Religion: Religious belief or religious practice?

Freedom of religion was not introduced in Sweden until 1951. Before that time there were legal restrictions on persons of faiths other than Protestant Christianity. Up to the end of the 19th century it was, for instance, possible to expel dissidents from the ‘Right Faith’ (Sander 1991: 63).

It seems many of the obstacles that Muslims face in the cultural encounter with Swedish society have to do with the definition of religion. As Swedish society is built on a secular world view, where religion has no part to play in official life, it is felt religion and religious expression should be a private matter kept on a personal level. The notion of Sweden as a secular society is well established and might be one reason for the hostility towards the religious force of Muslims in Swedish society.

The Law of Freedom of Religion reflects the 'privatization' of religion, declaring a person has the right to freely practise his/her religion as far as 's/he does not disturb the peace of society or cause public offence'. Thus, for instance, a male Sikh who wears a turban or a knife in the public space as part of his religious obligation, transfers his religion into the public domain, which is not acceptable according to the Swedish standard. Similarly, Muslims and Jews who need meat slaughtered in a *halāl* or *kosher* way upset the public's sensibilities, as such methods of slaughtering animals are forbidden according to Swedish legislation.¹ Therefore, the problem of religious practice becomes one of expression: how far can one go to practise one's religion before it is regarded a public offence?² Moreover, many Swedish researchers have raised the question of whether the Swedish Law of Religious Freedom is not a freedom *to* religion but a freedom *from* religion (See for instance Karlsson and Svanberg 1997).

The strong Swedish ideals of equal opportunities and gender equality led to the establishment of the Ombudsman for Equal Opportunities (*jämställdhetsombudsman*) in 1980. The notion of gender equality affected attitudes to the female Islamic dress; covered Muslim women are seen as being subjugated to patriarchal authority structures as well as male relatives. The Swedish reaction to women's headscarves has

¹ Sweden is one of three European countries where the ritual slaughter of animals is forbidden. The two other countries are Switzerland and Norway. There is a discussion going on in Sweden whether the reason for the ban was purely anti-Semitic or whether it was due to the protection of animal rights. The ban was introduced in Swedish Law in 1938, whereas Norway introduced the law in the mid-1920s. Recently ritual slaughter has been accepted if the animals are drugged before slaughter. Muslims, however, disagree on whether the meat of drugged animals is acceptable to eat or not. In the late 1990s, this discussion has faded away. The great majority of Muslims in Sweden accept such meat and *halāl* meat is no longer a big issue in the contemporary debate.

² This question was raised by a Muslim researcher in one of the big newspapers in Sweden in relation to Article 18 in the Declaration of Human Rights (Ouis 1998)

been immense and often emotive. A local populist right-wing party in Malmö, a town in the south of Sweden with a relatively high Muslim population, has raised the issue that the Muslim headscarf is a public offence. The case started in the late 1990s when a representative of the party proposed the prohibition of headscarves during a local government budget debate. The representative's argument was that if headscarves were forbidden in Malmö Muslims would move out and the expenses for social allowances would decrease. At a later point in the debate he introduced the second argument that women with headscarves cause public offence. This was apparently built on the Law of Religious Freedom. At the time the party's proposals were depicted as ridiculous in the media. It is obvious, however, that the Law of Religious Freedom can be interpreted in this way in tense situations; external signs of religious affiliation can come to be regarded as causing public offence.

This contrasts with the Law against Ethnic Discrimination of 1994, which defines 'ethnic discrimination' as the unfair treatment of a person or group due to race, colour of the skin, national or ethnic origin or confession of faith. It is interesting to note that the phrase 'confession of faith' (*trostbekännelse*) is used, rather than 'religious affiliation' (*trostillhörighet*). In my view such a formulation points to the understanding of religion in terms of faith rather than praxis, and thus reflects the Protestant Christian understanding of religion. The Law against Ethnic Discrimination might be regarded as having more influence than the Law of Freedom of Religion in that the Swedish authorities established a specific ombudsman for ethnic discrimination in 1988.

Segregation of Living

A specific effect of the Swedish immigration policy is the high-density immigrant suburbs, where few ethnic Swedes live, in the three biggest towns. This is in contrast to other Scandinavian and European countries where Muslims often live in their own quarters or ghettos in the inner cities and become part of the inner cities' economy, with immigrant businesses even trading with ethnic Danes and Norwegians. The segregation in Sweden might be regarded as a form of 'banal nationalism', with ethnic Swedes having little or no contact with the immigrant communities. What is peculiar for Sweden

is that the inner cities comprise almost exclusively expensive housing; the suburbs consist of concrete blocks with several families on every floor. Although it is obvious that the segregation of living (or the 'enclavization' of society) is not a conscious policy of the Swedish authorities, it is a policy as far as nothing has been done to stop it. The consequence of this policy is that few pupils have a proper knowledge of the Swedish language in some suburb schools. In some classes there might only be one or two pupils from Swedish families; in others there are no ethnic Swedes at all.

There have been private schools in Sweden since the late-eighteenth century, but it was in the 1980s that private schools were first entitled to governmental financial support. Muslims, however, have had difficulties getting permission to establish their own schools. The first Muslim private school was opened in 1993 and gradually the Swedish authorities have sanctioned more and more. Today Muslims in Sweden run more than ten schools. The schools are run by various branches of Islam, including the Shi'a, and the *ḥabashī* movement. There is great discussion in Swedish society of the advantages and disadvantages of such schools. Many non-Muslims feel these schools intensify segregation in Swedish society, because Muslim children are not given the right tools to understand Swedish social and cultural codes. Muslim intellectuals, however, argue that intense segregation already exists and that Muslim schools provide Muslim children with a higher degree of self-esteem than they would receive in state schools, where Islam and Muslim practice are usually portrayed in negative terms. The discussion continues and is a part of the general debate on immigrants' integration in Swedish society.

A critical feature of the immigrant suburbs is the massive unemployment within them. Few immigrants have primary or even secondary contact with ethnic Swedes and are thus unable to speak the Swedish language properly or understand the cultural codes of Swedish society. These are both essential factors in the integration of immigrants into the labour market and society in general. The discussion on segregation has focused on the tendency for immigrants to feel secure in these areas, where they are with other individuals of the same ethnic or religious group. However, it is often overlooked that many immigrants tend to move away from these areas once they have freed themselves from welfare and established their own economic position.

Muslim leadership

The Muslim leadership in Sweden comprises the leaders of Muslim confederations and Muslim councils, who are supposed to work as the bridge between Muslims and Swedish society at an official level. The representatives who meet with the authorities are more often than not first-generation males who work and socialize within Muslim communities and have no broad contact with majority society. Moreover, these same first-generation males are often representatives in the various confederations and councils. This has created feelings, particularly among the second- and third-generation immigrants and Muslim women organisations, that the Muslim leadership is a hierarchical and patriarchal power structure that offers little scope for renewal.

On the local level, more often than not the various ethnic groups within Islam have their own congregations. The Muslim leaders therefore work ethnically, in the sense that the Palestinian imam serves the Palestinian congregation, the Turkish imam the Turkish congregation, the Kurdish imam the Kurdish congregation, etc. It has proved difficult to gather the various imams and thereby centralize Muslim expertise. As many imams come to Sweden expressly to serve an ethnic congregation, they rarely learn Swedish and tend to keep within their own ethnic group. Due to the ethnic variety of the Muslim immigrants in Sweden, this creates a problem of language; few imams can speak or read Swedish and they rarely have a common language in which to communicate.

Muslim leaders' lack of knowledge of the local language is only one part of the problem Muslims face in Sweden. Although, on the one hand, there are some ethnic-Swedish imams and also some well-educated and culturally aware Muslim immigrants acting as imams, on the other, there are many imams who have little knowledge of Swedish society. The latter's ability to address the problems within their congregation is therefore rarely of an acceptable quality: these imams have little external contact with majority society and tend to treat the problems of their congregation within the frame of their local Muslim community and the culture of their country of origin. Moreover, as such leaders tend to 'live in religious books' instead of in the Swedish reality, Muslims working and mixing in majority society find it difficult to relate these imams' problem-solving to real life. This is less true for the first-generation Muslims, who often share

the same frame of reference as these imams, than for second- and third-generation Muslims who have different degrees of involvement with majority society.

The boards of Muslim organisations are generally dominated by first-generation immigrants and men. The lack of female influence in these organisations has forced women to establish their own organisations and in Sweden local female activity has mushroomed. The notion of equal opportunities in the Swedish programme often tends to favour women's movements and activism. This is particularly true for Muslim women, who are regarded as being oppressed. Swedish authorities are thus eager to support their activities financially, which they see as facilitating Muslim women's integration into Swedish society. Moreover, unlike the male-dominated Muslim associations, which tend to be ethnically segregated, Muslim women's organisations are more cosmopolitan, consisting of Arabs, Pakistanis, Turks, etc. In some women's organisations Shi'a Muslims even work side by side with Sunni Muslims, which is rare in male-dominated organisations. Many Swedish converts are also active within Muslim women's organisations. Furthermore, these organisations have an active information programme for Swedish society, with lectures on Muslims and Islam targeted at Muslims and non-Muslims of all levels.

Even male converts tend not take part in the official Muslim leadership in Sweden. A couple are on the board of some of the confederations, however this has not worked very well and new confederations have been established headed by converts. Some organisations are also dominated by converts. One example is the Swedish Islamic Academy established in 2000.³ It is headed by Knut Bernström, a Swedish convert who has translated the Koran into the Swedish language. One of the main aims of this academy is to initiate an education programme for imams. The academy has pointed to the problems of imams coming from outside Sweden with little or no knowledge about Sweden. The members believe that, by educating imams from within Sweden, many Muslims' problems will be solved. As one of the board members of the Swedish Islamic Academy states: 'Muslims' main problem in Sweden is a lack of proper leadership.'

The constellation of the Muslim community in Sweden, coupled with particular features of the Swedish state policy, influences the

³ I am myself a member of the board in this organisation.

situation of Muslims in Sweden. The strong concept of equality, particularly in gender issues, has a strong impact on the Islamic discourse on gender in Sweden. Moreover, the perceptions of religion in Sweden, both on an official as well as a grass-roots level, affects Swedish converts' perception of Islam.

Denmark

The Muslim migration to Denmark started in 1967 and was a result of temporary retrenchment measures for immigrant workers taken by the German authorities. Migrants who had come to search for work in Germany turned to Scandinavia as an alternative. Up until 1973, when the Danish Parliament retracted the possibility to obtain work and residence permits, a number of Muslims from Yugoslavia, Turkey, Morocco and Pakistan came to Denmark to work (Bæk Simonsen 2001: 164). As in Sweden and Norway, this first wave of immigrants comprised young men whose aim was to earn money for a period of time before settling down in their homelands. With the curtailment of new work and residence permits, the Danish authorities decided to accept familial immigration only. Even at this stage, both the immigrants and the Danish authorities were thinking in terms of a transitory residence, the former with the dream of returning to their homelands having made their fortune in Denmark.

With the wave of refugees coming to Denmark in the 1980s and the continuous influx of familial immigrants, the number of Muslims is on the increase. According to the Danish researcher on Islam and Muslims in Denmark Jørgen Bæk Simonsen, in 2001 there were approximately 170,000 Muslims in Denmark, constituting 3% of Denmark's population of approximately 5.5 million (Bæk Simonsen 2001: 169). Approximately 66,000 immigrants come from countries where the main language is Arabic (personal communication with Bæk Simonsen 2001), whereas others come from countries such as Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bosnia.

Although there are immigrant suburbs of the big cities in Denmark, unlike Sweden there are large immigrant communities in the inner city areas as well. There is a large Turkish community in Denmark and the Turkish Embassy and Diyanet have control over most of the religious institutionalization among Turks in Denmark, the Turkish state appointing the community's imams. In the Pakistani commu-

nity in Denmark various religious directions are apparent, in particular the Tabligh-i-Jama‘at and Idara Minhaj ul-Qur’an organisations, which both having their roots in the Indian subcontinent. Although Bæk Simonsen believes that Minhaj ul-Qur’an has managed to form some sort of synthesis between Islam and the a-religious Danish society it is important to regard both these organisations within a Pakistani, rather than in a European or Danish, context. Both have centralized leadership and the organisational structure and much of the official theology have been shaped on the Indian subcontinent. There are many different directions within the Arabic-speaking community in Denmark, but the female converts married to Arabic-speaking men are particularly active in the organisation al-Waqf al-Skandināfiyya, headed by the Palestinian imam Aḥmad Abū Laban.

According to the Danish convert Abdul-Wahid Pedersen, there might be approximately 5000 converts in Denmark. In his view there have recently been more men converting than women, whereas in the 1980s the reverse was true. Abdul-Wahid was among the first converts in Denmark. He converted in 1982 and was part of a Danish group of approximately ten persons, mostly men, following the British Sufi sheikh ‘Abdul-Qadir al-Murabit, who at that time called himself ‘Abdul-Qadir al-Sufi. After two or three years most of the group broke with sheikh ‘Abdul-Qādir but continued their *dhikr* (Remembrance of God, i.e. reciting God’s name) sessions in the Sufi centre Dar al-Da‘wa and later in the Dar al-Koran centre. Although there are no specific Sufi activities at the moment, converts and second-generation immigrant Muslims, mainly men, belonging to the Naqshbandiyya ṭarīqa, have plans to start a weekly *dhikr* session in Copenhagen.

Larsen has also observed that there are three groups active in Denmark with only female converts: one group in Copenhagen and two groups in Århus (Larsen 1995: 45).

Religion

Religion and the Church in Denmark are very much linked to the revivalist movement ‘Grundtvigianism’ founded by Nikolaj Fredrik Severin Grundtvig (d. 1872). Grundtvig campaigned for freedom for schools and churches and raised the issue of legislated religious freedom in the Danish Constitution of 1849. He was also an outspoken

advocate of the freedom for individuals to turn to priests outside their own parish. Grundtvigianism promoted 'the happy Christianity' in contrast to the more strict understanding of Protestant Christianity promoted by the domestic mission in Denmark. Grundtvig's main ideas were, firstly, the importance of the congregation both in early and contemporary Christianity; secondly, that freedom of belief and thought are decisive for the authenticity of the Church and society; thirdly, that school and Church should be separated so that nobody should be forced to believe; fourthly, that the individual should be a human being first and foremost, then a Christian; fifthly, that 'the living word', as revealed in narratives, conversations and sermon, is true enlightenment (Andersen and Lindhardt (eds.) 1966). Grundtvig further stressed the importance of education of the people and in his spirit the folk high schools spread to the rest of Scandinavia. The link between Grundtvig and a strong national sentiment can be perceived in his idea of Christianity as linked to national culture: the living Christianity has to be 'public' and in the same sense 'national' (Alnæs 1998 vol. III: 451). The Danish state Church has, theologically and juridically speaking, been influenced by Grundtvigianism, which has even had a role to play in Sweden and Norway.

The Church in Denmark has had a similar relationship to the state as that in Sweden and Norway, although in matters of freedom of religion there have been certain differences (Lauha and Montgomery 2001: 47). The first Danish Constitution of 1849, which brought an end to the Danish autocracy, included the law of religious freedom for the individual. This law had an impact on relations between state and Church. Although the Church was financed by the state, religion acquired a non-confessional basis in Denmark, contrary to Sweden and Norway.

Similarly, the Danish State does not financially support religious organisations other than the state Church, again contrary to Sweden and Norway. Individuals who do not belong to the state Church are refunded a certain amount of their tax according to the amount of taxpayers' money given to the state Church. It was only in 2002 that the Danish Muslims established a Muslim confederations MLO (Muslimernes Landsorganisation) to present the Islamic message to majority society and to act as interlocutor with Danish authorities.

In Denmark there is no compulsory school attendance, instead compulsory education for all children up to 14 years. Due to this formulation of the law, conditions have been conducive for establishing private schools. In Denmark many Muslim organisations have

opened both Muslims and ethnic schools. As Muslim organisations do not obtain grants for religious activities, the Muslim schools that are funded by the Danish authorities arrange many Muslim activities.

Nation-state

The People's Home in Sweden, with its idea of welfare for all and its implications of homogeneity and uniformity has influenced not only Sweden's relation to the rest of Europe but also the relation between the nation state and immigrants. Although, as in Sweden, the Social Democratic Party has had a strong position in Denmark and the Danish social welfare policy is similar to that of Sweden, no concept like the People's Home has come into being.

During the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century open hostility towards immigrants has manifested itself in the political debate as well as in public discourse. In particular, hostility towards Muslims, a form of racism known as 'Islamophobia' (see Chapter Two), has come to the forefront of the debate. It is difficult to identify the causes behind these explicit prejudices against Muslims, but many intellectuals in Denmark have entered into a discussion of 'Danishness' and Denmark's relation to the outer world in order to find reasons for the particular socio-political climate at the turn of the century. This open hostility towards a religious minority is in contrast to the open-minded attitudes the Danish state and the Danes in general had towards the Catholics at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Niels Højlund, a well-known Danish intellectual, discusses in his book *Det evindelige forbehold* (The Eternal Reservation) (2000) the reasons why the Danes voted *for* entering into the European Community in 1972 but *against* the Maastrich treaty, which turned the EC into the European Union in 1992. He sees this shift as a result of the fact that, in 1972, the Danes anticipated the EC as being an economic community only. In 1992 they realised that the EU was going to be something much more than that and, for the first time, the Danes took the project of Europe seriously (Højlund 2000: 37). Højlund sees the turnaround in 1992 as linked to the Danish attitude towards foreigners (*fremmede*) i.e. immigrants. Furthermore, he regards the Danish attitude towards the EU in the 1990s as one of reservation in entering a system where Danish nationality would lose its importance. Højlund describes how, from the 17th century up to 1864, the Danes lost many important regions, such as Scania, Halland

and Blekinge to Sweden in 1660; Norway to Sweden in 1814; and Schlesvig, Holstein and Lauenborg to Prussia in 1864. Højlund believes that the last defeat in 1864 signifies the arousal of that particular mixed feeling of superiority and inferiority that has since marked the Danish attitude towards the rest of the world. Højlund's analysis corresponds with Elias' view that a national habitus results from wars and the process of the formation of the state; the Danish identity, as the losers of various wars, came to be marked by an introverted attitude.

From the 1870s onwards, Højlund says, the new and smaller Denmark was built on the ruins of the former empire and, up until the end of the Second World War, the 'sensible policy' made possible a 'Denmark for the people' (Højlund 2000: 25). But this success, according to Højlund, had its price: 'neutrality towards the rest of the world'. He discusses this neutrality as being:

... not a cool and wise neutrality like the Swiss, or a self-confident imperial neutrality like the Swedish, but an uneasy Lilliputian neutrality, which allowed itself to be pushed to just about anything, if only those bad boys in the neighbourhood would leave them in peace (Højlund 2000: 26 [translation mine]).

Højlund goes on to say that this neutrality is a mentality rather than a political attitude and it has mastered the Danish people from the 1870s to the 1992 referendum that refused the Maastrich treaty. Højlund's emphasis on historical factors as being decisive for contemporary attitudes and ideas is due to the fact that he believes 'history does not only exist as a conscious knowledge, as a reflected tradition,' but also as an unconscious premise, as an imprinting of mentality' (Højlund 2000: 28).

Højlund sees the problem of immigrants in Gruntvigian terms, i.e. 'public' or 'popular' (*folkelighed*). He rejects the way the authorities' claim that friction between the Danes and the immigrants are 'ethnic conflicts' or 'human rights problems' and sees it is a 'public problem' for all involved (Højlund 2000: 41). He mocks what he calls the 'scientific discourses' of the authorities, the politically correct terminology which does not even include the concept of a 'public' (Højlund 2000: 41). Højlund discusses reasons for the popularity of nationalists, such as Pia Kjærsgaard, the Danish nationalist politician, saying:

I have a feeling that the rise in the phenomena such as Pia Kjærsgaard and her People's Party, Jörg Haider and his freedom party or numer-

ous other similar movements deep down in the anonymous heart of the people all over Europe has something to do with the fact that people feel they are held in contempt by a power elite, who would not touch the word 'popular' [folkelighet] with a barge pole (Højlund 2000: 42 [translation mine]).

According to Højlund, the conflict between the Danes and immigrants from the 1990s onwards is thus on the popular level. This, combined with the fact that certain Danish historical experiences have rather shamed the Danes (Højlund 2000: 59), has fuelled the Danish people's frustration with the immigration policies. Højlund continues, saying that immigrant policy is not simply a human rights issue or a means of deciding juridical criteria for residence permits. 'Immigrant policies,' he says, 'reflects housing policy, labour market policy, social policy, marriage policy, etc.' (Højlund 2000: 62).

In looking at the conflict between Danes and immigrants in terms of social policies, Højlund's view coincides with researchers such as Tom Bryder, a Swedish political scientist and a researcher on Danish policy. In a discussion with Bryder, he states that a main point of conflict is the Danish social policy, which is seen by many Danes as unfair. In the inner city of Copenhagen there are few new housing projects, those there are are expensive and individuals living on social benefits are often the only ones who can afford to rent them. As many immigrants and refugees are unemployed and live on social benefits they form the majority in these new areas. In inner city Copenhagen, for instance, the old houses where many Danes live are without central heating, showers and washing facilities (see also *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 18/11–2001). Moreover, these houses are generally worn down, whereas the new housing projects, in the inner city and the suburbs, are nice and decent. The difference in standard of living is thus a main source of conflict between Danes and immigrants.

It is not by becoming more 'Danish' that Højlund believes the problem can be solved, rather he promotes a position where one both look back and forward at the same time. He uses Paul Ricoeur to indicate the position where a human being is in a field of tension between 'space of experience' and a 'horizon of expectations':

The experience should not kill the boldness, the curiosity or the exciting expectations of what is coming. But we should not be carried away by the expectation because then we will end up in the fantasy of unlimited possibility (Højlund 2000: 109 [translation mine]).

His pessimistic conclusion is:

If the space of experience is limited, becoming smaller and smaller, and if the horizon of expectation disappears totally, then the only thing that remains is the moment. And it is maybe there that we are just now (Højlund 2000: 109 [translation mine]).

During a discussion with Swedish journalist Bjarne Stenqvist, who has worked for periods in Denmark, he gave me his impression, as an outsider, that the Danes have a ‘closed national identity’; they prefer to be inward-looking rather than regard themselves as European citizens. He thus reinforced the Danish political scientist Hans Mouritzen’s view that Danes have a negative relation to the surrounding world. Helle Stenum, head of the Division for Minorities at the Association of Inter-Human Cooperation (Minoritetsafdelingen for Mellemlfolkelig Samvirke), backs up this notion: ‘Our understanding of others is not particularly inclusive,’ she states (Sydsvenska Dagbladet 6/11–01). Mouritzen states that the Danes lack a positive national identity, they have a negative relation to the surrounding world, they are antagonists to immigrants and refugees, they oppose the European communities and, fundamentally, they are negative towards the Swedes (Sydsvenska Dagbladet 18/11–2001). The case of many Danes’ attitude towards Swedes can be an example of the Danish relation to the outside world. The Swedish neutrality during the war reinforced the negative attitude in Denmark towards the Swedes. Mouritzen claims that relations between Sweden and Denmark are asymmetric. He believes that the Danes tend to define themselves in relation to the Swedes, using an ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality, where ‘us’ is regarded in positive terms and ‘them’ negative. The understanding of the Swedes is therefore negative in Denmark. The Danish Big Brother complex with regards to Sweden, due to its great economic growth from 1945 to the 1990s, increased this negative attitude (Mouritzen 1999: 55).

The popularity of nationalist parties started as early as 1972 when Mogens Glistrup established the Progressive Party (Fremskridspartiet), whose main concern was the cultivation of anti-immigrant propaganda. In 1995 Pia Kjærsgaard established the Danish People’s Party (Dansk Folkeparti) as an offshoot of Glistrup’s party. Although the Danish People’s Party has quite similar views to the Progressive Party when it comes to immigrant policies, the latter is much more extreme, one of its central policies being the extradition of all Muslims from

Denmark (Sydsvenska Dagbladet 10/11–01). Pia Kjærsgaard, on the other hand, does not explicitly state such intentions, rather she creates a wall between immigrants and Danes by constant reference to ‘the foreigners’ (*de fremmede*). Both parties root their ideology in the concept of ‘Danishness’. However, the ‘Danishness’ they promote is based on an idea of a Danish homogeneity that no longer exists, if indeed it ever did. Muslims in Denmark are their main target; according to their ideology, it seems impossible to be both Danish and Muslim, thus Muslims as well as immigrants are referred to as ‘the foreigners’ (www.danskfolkepartidk/dqcm/show.asp?parent=34288). It is interesting to look at the link between national belonging and religion in relation to Grundtvig’s idea of Christianity as linked to national culture. Klaus Rothstein, a Danish Jew, writes how Grundtvig promoted a ‘national fundamentalism, where Danishness ranked higher and was considered more dignified than any other nation or culture’ (Rothstein 2000: 56). Grundtvig’s concept of Danishness was very much linked to Protestant Christianity. Rothstein tells how Grundtvig, although he admired the ‘chosen people’ immensely, found it impossible to accept the Jewish writer Meir Aron Goldsmith, whose family had stayed in Denmark for 170 years, as a ‘Danish’ writer (Rothstein 2000: 56).

In the election campaign of autumn 2001 in Denmark, it was not only the anti-immigrant parties which had a xenophobic rhetoric but most of the other parties as well. This is not simply down to the events of September 11th; the terrorist attacks reinforced existing xenophobic ideas that had been growing since the 1990s. In the electoral campaign in 2001 it seems that the other parties have ended up in an undesirable position, where xenophobic forces have set up the conditions for the debate.

To give an example I want to refer to the main headline in *Politiken* in the beginning of November 2001, which read: ‘Explosive increase in immigrants’ (*Politiken* 1/11–2001). The newspaper presented statistics on the hypothetical number of immigrants in Denmark over the next twenty years if chain immigration continued and immigrants continued to marry partners from their homelands. The various political parties reacted with suggestions of new legislation to stop this form of immigration. One of the leading public figures of the biggest liberal party Venstre stated that the problem was not that Americans or Italians were migrating to Denmark, but that Turks, Pakistanis and Somalis were coming (Sydsvenska Dagbladet 10/11–2001).

The xenophobic atmosphere that has been part of the Danish debate since the 1970s, which culminated in the electoral campaign of autumn 2001, has to be regarded firstly in view of Højlund's analysis of the 'popular', where the common Danes want to feel themselves within the debate and not without. Secondly, we have to view the debate in view of what Mouritzen calls 'the Danes negative relation to the surrounding world' and his idea that Danes lack a positive national identity. Thirdly, the Danish xenophobia can be related to Højlund's idea of the tension between space of experience and horizon of expectation, where he believes that today 'the only thing which remains is the moment'.

A fourth aspect of importance is that in contrast to Sweden, in Denmark there is no *ombudsman* for discrimination issues; with no official control of discriminatory statements and actions media and political parties can freely express their ideas and attitudes.

Norway

As in Denmark, labour migration to Norway started in the late 1960s. The migration pattern in Norway resembles that of Sweden and Denmark, with the first wave of immigrants being 'guest workers'; the second wave refugees, in the 1980s and 1990s; and then a continuous chain immigration to reunite families. The settlement pattern in Norway resembles that of Denmark, with immigrants not only living in suburbs but also in the inner city areas.

In Norway there are approximately 4.3 million inhabitants and, according to Norwegian researcher Oddbjørn Leirvik, approximately 100,000 of them are Muslims (folk.uio.no/leirvik). As for converts, 500–1000 Norwegians have embraced Islam (personal communication with Lena Larsen). Not all are practising Muslims, as many, both men and women, convert in order to marry Muslims. As in Denmark and Sweden, most converts are women due mainly to the fact that many women marry immigrant men. In Sweden the biggest immigrant Muslim community comes from Iran, whereas the Muslim leadership consists of individuals from the Arab and the Turkish communities. In Norway, on the other hand, the Pakistani community is the biggest, but the Muslim leadership consists of most nationalities, and in the beginning of the twenty-first century with a Norwegian female convert as the head of the confederation *Islamsk Råd Norge* (Islamic Council Norway).

Religion

The state Church in Norway is Evangelic-Lutheran. According to the Constitution from 1814, the king, at least half of the government and even the professors at the Theological Faculty have to belong to the state Church (Constitution § 4 and § 12b). Norwegian Protestant Christianity was influenced by the revivalist movement led by Hans Nielsen Hauge (d. 1824), and by the ideas of Grundtvig. At the University of Oslo there are two competing theological faculties, a result of a conflict at the beginning of the twentieth century due to the liberal theology taught at the universities. In 1908, Menighetsfakultetet (The Faculty of the Parishes) was established and today most of the priests in Norway have been educated here.

In the 1970s, the Social Democratic Party, which has governed Norway from the 1930s and through most of the post-war era, promoted an articulated church policy. 'The open church' was on the agenda, which called for more female priests and even bishops. Leirvik believes that the Social Democratic Party's careful control of the Church stopped the internal church political groups vying for power and gave the Church a broader direction (Leirvik 1997: 157). In my view, however, the liberal wing within the Church has benefited more than the more conservative wings from being governed politically by the Social Democrats. The liberal wing within the Church is in line with the opinions of majority society, where equal opportunities between men and women as well as between heterosexuals and homosexuals are promoted. It is common to regard discursive trends within majority society as fair and just in contrast to those of minority groups. Leirvik, thus, sees the guiding of the Church by the Social Democrats towards open-mindedness as fair and just. It is, however, obvious that within the Norwegian state Church there has been a political struggle where the more conservative wings have lost out to the closer affiliates of the ruling political party.

In Norway, unlike Sweden, Muslims have managed to keep to one confederation. Although not every Muslim organisation has agreed to be part of the umbrella organisation IRN (Islamsk Råd Norge), approximately 50–75% of the organised Muslims in Norway are represented by it. The main task of IRN is to promote Muslim issues on the state level of Norwegian society. IRN emphasises integration but with Muslims being able 'to keep their identities and beliefs' (Vogt 2000: 166). IRN has had female representatives from its start, and women active in IRN claim that the men in the council have

always been careful to listen to both male and female voices (Vogt 2000: 166).

Just as in Sweden, registered Muslim associations are entitled to government financial support and, in 1995, 28 Muslim organisations were registered in Oslo alone. There are great similarities between the Norwegian and Danish patterns of immigration and the constellation of the immigrant communities. Many of the Islamic organisations in Denmark have counterparts in Norway. Pakistani organisations such as *Tabligh-i-Jama'at*, the Islamic Cultural Centre, run by individuals close to the organisation *Jama'at-i-Islami* in Pakistan, and *Idara Minhaj ul-Qur'an* are active in both countries. The three Pakistani organisations represent the two main reform movements from 19th and 20th century British India: the Deobandi and the Brelwi movements. The movements were, according to Kari Vogt, a Norwegian researcher on Islam, a response to British cultural and political domination (Vogt 2000: 23–30). The Deobandi movement is named after the town Deoband, where Muslim scholars established the first Islamic College in 1867. The idea behind the school was to integrate traditional Islamic teaching into the modernized school system. The Deobandi school achieved enormous popularity all over the Indian subcontinent and today there are even similar schools in Great Britain (Vogt 2000: 24). Both the *Tabligh-i-Jama'at* and the *Jama'at-i-Islami* have their roots in the Deobandi movement, whereas the *Idara Minhaj ul-Qur'an* has its root in the Brelwi movement. The Brelwi movement stems from the Sufi brotherhoods that have flourished on the Indian subcontinent since the 12th century. The movement is named after the town Bareilly, from where came Ahmad Riza Khan (d. 1921), a great reformer in the movement. The binding elements of this diverse movement are a combination of Sufi practice and law school affiliation. Although the Brelwi movement stresses the latter, the spiritual leader of the *Idara Minhaj ul-Qur'an*, Professor Muhammad Tahir ul-Qadri who lives in Lahore, promotes *ijtihad* in modern economic and political issues (Larsen 1995: 56).

With regards to Moroccan Muslim organisations, similarities between Norway and Denmark can be found. Whereas Moroccans in Sweden tend to go to the big mosques and are active in the main organisations, in Norway and Denmark they have their own Moroccan organisations, such as the Moroccan Workers' Association (Det

Marokkanske Arbeiderforeningen [Norway]/Den Marokkanske Forening [Denmark]), which has close relations with the Moroccan Embassy, and the Moroccan Religious Community (Den Marokkanske Trosamfunn [Norway]). The Moroccan community consists of both Berber-speaking and Arabic-speaking individuals and there is some tension between the two groups.

As for the Turkish community in Scandinavia, there are similar patterns in all three Scandinavian countries. Turkish immigrants can be divided into three main Islamic trends: associations linked to the Turkish state (Diyaret); independent Sufi groups, who stress the Koran and the Sunna of the Prophet; and groups linked to political parties in Turkey.

Shi'a organisations in the three countries also resemble each other. Most Shi'a Muslims in Scandinavia belong to the Twelver group and the organisational pattern of ethnic divisions resemble that of the Sunna Muslims.

Nationstate

Unlike Denmark and Sweden, Norway has not been an empire in recent history. Norway has, at different periods in history, been connected to both Denmark and Sweden, and a "Big Brother complex" therefore marks the Norwegian relation to the two countries. From the Reformation until 1814, Norway was unified with Denmark. The agreement was that, even though the two countries constituted a union, they should be ruled separately. However, Norway lost out as it was also agreed that the official language should be Danish and the higher officials were usually Danes. In 1814 Norway came under Swedish rule, due to the Danish involvement with Napoleon, but on the 17th of May a national convention agreed on a Norwegian constitution. Later in the same year Norway suffered a military loss to Sweden but was granted powers of inner self-governance. The 19th century is marked by a constant struggle for political independence from Sweden on the one hand and Danish cultural influences on the other.

Norway came to be the first parliament-ruled country in Scandinavia. In 1884 the Parliament became the main institution of governance and the Norwegians' struggle for independence intensified. It culminated in the Parliament's decision to dissolve the union with Sweden in

1905. In a later referendum, 99,9% of the votes accepted this decision and the union between Norway and Sweden was officially dissolved.

The process of the formation of the Norwegian state was marked by a struggle with Sweden, and the final liberation in 1905 heralded a sense of freedom and optimism for the building of the new state. The Norwegian identity at that time was, in contrast to the Danish identity, positive and forward-looking. At the end of the Second World War, the actions of the Norwegian members of the resistance movements assured Norway's status as a 'decent' political state. The Norwegian identity was again reinforced in positive terms and national pride and self-belief became the main factors in the construction of the national identity. This was in contrast to Sweden, whose official neutrality was seen in a new light after the War. In spite of this, however, the Norwegian big brother complex towards Sweden increased due to the growth of the strong Swedish economy in the post-war era. The strong national sentiments in Norway can thus be explained by Elias' concept of a nation's habitus being formed by the process of the formation of the state and the wars fought by a country. As Norway *won* independence and, in contrast to both Denmark and Sweden, has not lost important land in modern times, the Norwegian identity is one of optimism and self-belief. The liberation from German occupation reinforced such optimism. Sweden, on the other hand, lost the struggle for Norwegian control but, at the same time, grew economically in the post-war era, which compensated for previous defeats.

The intense national sentiment of 'banal nationalism' is strong in Norway. The flag is one strong symbol that is visible on many occasions. The cultural emphasis on Norwegian folklore, with the increase in the use of traditional costume (*bunad*), and the increased interest in medieval Norwegian history are other important factors in the Norwegian expression of 'banal nationalism'. My impression is that, in contrast to Denmark the Norwegian nationalistic sentiment that excludes other ethnic groups is less vocal in Norway.⁴ Norway has

⁴ I build my statements on travels and discussions with both Scandinavian Muslims and non-Muslims as well as having followed the media in the three Scandinavian countries during the late 1990s.

its immigrant-hostile political party, which has been growing during the 1990s; in the 2001 election it got as much as 14.7% of the votes. However, the distinction between the political debates in Denmark and Norway is that the other political parties in Norway are less outspoken on immigrant issues. Even the Norwegian newspapers and broadcasters are more moderate in their approach to immigrant issues than their Danish counterparts.

I do believe, however, there is a link between the expression of 'banal nationalism' and the reaction towards immigrants. In both Norway and Denmark, where 'banal nationalism' is strong, anti-immigrant feelings have flared up and inflamed relations between immigrants, particularly Muslims, and the Norwegians/Danes. Although this happens in Sweden also, the outbursts are less frequent and less severe. It is also significant that the immigrant-hostile political parties in Sweden are small and weak and have not had members of Parliament from the last few elections.

Reflections

Despite variations in the history of the three Scandinavian countries, there are, as Gundelach has observed, many common factors. The similarities are apparent particularly in the cultural and social spheres, such as languages, and the social institutions. However, when it comes to attitudes towards immigrants in general and Muslims in particular, the three countries vary, due mainly to historical and social differences between them.

The three countries differ when it comes to nationalistic tendencies. In Norway and Denmark 'banal nationalism' is strong, as indicated by the proud use of the flags and, particularly in Norway, the emphasis on other national symbols, such as folklore and national costume. In Sweden, however, there is a reluctance to use the flag and other national symbols. The Swedish 'banal nationalism' is more subdued and expressed in less visible forms, such as the emphasis on buying Swedish products and the strict segregation of living. That Sweden managed to stay out of the two World Wars has been given as a reason for their diluted form of nationalism.

It is possible to see similar trends in gender politics in the three Scandinavian countries. On a governmental level, Norway is one of the few countries in the world that has had a female Prime Minister;

Gro Harlem Brundtland headed the government for several years in the 1980s and 1990s. Both the Norwegian and the Danish governments typically have many female ministers, even though there is no comparable slogan to Sweden's 'Every second, a woman'. Although the concept of the People's Home has never been launched in Norway and Denmark, some of the same ideas can be found in Norway and Denmark, though perhaps less expressed than in Sweden. Thus, equal opportunities for men and women, and welfare for all are ideals common to all three countries. The claim of homogeneity and uniformity, however, is less expressed in Denmark and Norway than in Sweden.

The similarities in the three countries' social and cultural spheres make it possible to investigate new Muslims in the three countries without having to localize discussion of how converts live in the various countries. Converts in the three countries seem to differ mostly in their attitudes towards majority society. This is due first and foremost to differences in the approach of majority society in the three countries. As for attitudes towards the Muslim community and reasons for conversion, I have found there are no great differences between converts in the three countries.

In the next chapter I will explore further the differences in majority society's attitudes towards Islam and Muslims as expressed in the media and in popular sentiment in the three Scandinavian countries.

CHAPTER TWO

ISLAMOPHOBIA

Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He surely would have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you must all return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ (Koran 5: 48).

In order to indicate the experience of new Muslim encounters with majority society, I will discuss Scandinavian attitudes towards Islam and Muslims.

The term 'Islamophobia' alludes to a fear or phobia of the religion Islam and its followers. The concept 'Islamophobia' includes not only this fear, but a campaign which many Muslims feel is waged against Islam and Muslims. 'Islamophobia' might therefore be defined as a fear of Islam and Muslims that might activate an anti-Islamic campaign directed at Muslims.

The concept 'Islamophobia' is a relatively new one. There exist books in various languages that deal with the phenomenon in general, but do not refer to the concept. Examples are the two books by Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978) and *Covering Islam* (1981); and *The Next Threat: Western Perceptions of Islam* (1995), edited by the Dutch researcher Jochen Hippler and the German journalist Andrea Lueg. With the publication of Samuel Huntington's book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), the concept came to be articulated by intellectuals who had studied the descriptions of Islam and Muslims in Western media and popular discourse. Huntington's thesis is, briefly, that conflicts of the future will be grounded in cultural (and thereby religious) differences, as opposed to ideological or economic ones. Furthermore, he believes that even if the nation state continues to be the most powerful actor in world politics, the struggle will be between nations and groups of different

cultures. It is interesting to note that in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States Huntington's book climbed into the top 100 bestsellers' list of one of the country's biggest internet shops (www.amazon.com).

In Great Britain some research has been conducted into the concept 'Islamophobia'. In 1996 The Runnymede Trust appointed a commission to investigate Islamophobic expressions in the country. In 1997, the British Home Secretary launched the result of this investigation: the report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for us all*. The report was built on an extensive empirical inquiry among the Muslims in Great Britain. The intention was, on one hand, to provide counter-evidence for the common Islamophobic notion of Islam as a homogeneous system without internal development, diversity or dialogue; and, on the other hand, to indicate how Islamophobia is a danger not only to the Muslim population in Britain, but to the whole of British society. The report explains Islamophobia in detail and makes recommendations for measures to be taken on various societal levels, by government, teachers, jurists, journalists and also by religious and ethnic leaders.

The next step in the development towards an official acceptance of the concept and phenomenon of 'Islamophobia' occurred in January 2001, when expressions of Islamophobia were officially accepted as signs of intolerance, in line with racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, by the Stockholm International Forum on Combating Intolerance. Many governments had previously hesitated to link Islamophobia with other forms of intolerance. As a result of this forum's declaration one can expect the concept 'Islamophobia' will have a greater impact on the international arena in the near future.

Reasons for Islamophobia

Reasons for Islamophobia might be religious, cultural, political, racist and even economic. Many reasons have been put forward to explain the obvious conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in Western society. One of these is the scapegoat theory: groups of people need to physically or mentally oppress contrasting groups or individuals in order to build up group sentiment and adhesion (see for instance Hippler and Lueg 1995). The legitimization for this kind of tribal

conflict might be found in the dynamics between in-groups and out-groups (cf. Turner and Giles 1981). Examples are the pogroms against the Jews throughout history, where the Jews as a group were victimized as either a contrasting religious or socio-political group, according to the specific need of majority society at different points in history (see for instance Flannery 1965).

Religious Islamophobia might be built on the notion that Islamic ideas pose threats to worldviews in the Western world. This notion was strengthened in the aftermath of September 11th. From an outsider perspective one does not necessarily sense the theological development that is going on within various Islamic movements, a development that has its counterpart in Judaism and Christianity. An example of such a development is how Islam is regarded as a violent religion, or one that is hostile to women. This is in contrast to the fact that many Islamic groups and movements have experienced a change of attitude on these issues not distinctively different from changes in Judaism and Christianity.

Cultural Islamophobia might be built on an “us” and “them” perspective, where non-Muslims consider cultural traits and social structures in those parts of the world where Islam is prevalent as less acceptable than those of the West. This perspective is grounded in a social-psychological model developed by the sociologist Norbert Elias, amongst others, who argues that one tends to contrast ‘the other’s’ praxis with one’s own ideal. He has observed that an established group in society often tends to ‘attribute to the outsider group as a whole the ‘bad’ characteristics of that group’s ‘worst’ section — of its anomic minority’ (Elias 1994: xix). In contrast Elias says ‘the self-image of the established group tends to be modelled on its exemplary, most ‘nomic’ section — on the minority of its ‘best’ members’ (Elias 1994: xix). Majority group ideology and behaviour are thus regarded as superior to those of minority groups. Apart from judging oneself or one’s group according to an ideal standard and judging outsiders or outsider groups according to their actual practice or behaviour, individuals belonging both to the majority and the minority groups tend to ‘stereotype *themselves* as well as others in terms of their common attributes as group members’ (Turner and Giles 1981: 39).

In the cultural encounter between Muslims and Scandinavian society this is particularly true. Scandinavian society is a segregated society where ethnic Scandinavians often live and work segregated

from immigrants. Sweden is more segregated than Denmark and Norway with its huge 'immigrant suburbs', in contrast to the other two countries, where immigrants often inhabit areas in the inner cities (Roald 2002). Common to all three countries is a segregation with few points of contact between Muslims and non-Muslims. The official space is monopolized by majority society and few Muslims have their voices heard. Official discourse on Muslims, thus, is limited to non-Muslims' views and understandings. The lack of Muslim presence in the official space is due firstly to the fact that many Muslim immigrants in Scandinavia are poorly educated. Secondly, even many well-educated Muslim immigrants have difficulty expressing themselves in Scandinavian languages. Thirdly, individuals and groups with a certain world view tend to dominate the official space and it is difficult to get in a position to promote views which diverge too much from the common world view.

This social segregation is enhanced by popular opinion that continuously defines Muslims as outsiders and seizes upon the praxis of certain groups and individuals who are often those who are marginalized even within their own community. Thus, the child- and wife-abusing Muslim man becomes '*the* Muslim man' and the abused woman becomes '*the* Muslim woman'. In a class with many Muslim children, the one naughty boy becomes '*the* Muslim child'. The pattern of discipline in schools differs from that in many Muslim homes, where respect towards parents is prominent. At school, where mutual respect between teachers and pupils is encouraged, Muslim children tend to underestimate the discipline pattern. Thus, as many teachers in Scandinavia are women, the resultant lack of respect, particularly from Muslim teenaged boys, can be misconstrued as a lack of respect for women in general. This fits into the well-established Scandinavian perception of Islam as a religion hostile to women.

The abstraction and theorization of marginalized Muslim behaviour could be regarded in view of the current cultural encounter between immigrant Muslims and Western society. However, as such researchers as Albert Hourani (1980), Edward Said (1978), Maxime Rodinson (1974), John Esposito (1992), and Fred Halliday (1995) have indicated, the conflict between Islam and the West has its roots centuries ago when Islam first expanded into Europe, as well as the Crusades in the Middle Ages. Rodinson states that 'the Muslims were a threat to Western Christendom long before they became a problem' (Rodinson 1974: 9; also cited in Esposito 1992: 37), and Esposito writes:

Islam's early expansion and success constituted a challenge theologically, politically and culturally which proved a stumbling block to understanding and a threat to the Christian West. Both Islam and Christianity possessed a sense of universal message and mission that in retrospect were destined to lead to confrontation rather than mutual co-operation (Esposito 1992: 25).

Esposito speaks of the historical conflict between Christendom and Islam in theological terms, saying that 'each community believed that its covenant with God was the fulfilment of God's earlier revelation to a previous community that had gone astray' (Esposito 1992: 38). However he extends his analysis to cover political motives as well. He states that, as Christians had the upper hand in their relations with the Jews living as they were as small minority groups, the Jews were not regarded as a threat. The Muslim success, on the other hand, 'was experienced as a force which seemed to come out of nowhere to challenge the very existence and foundations of Christendom' (Esposito 1992: 38).

The conflict between the two forces culminated in the military expeditions of the Crusades that lasted from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. In a second period of conflict the Islamic force was superior to that of the Christians and in 1453 the Muslims conquered the Byzantine capital Constantinople and renamed it Istanbul.

The Islamic days of glory ended with a new confrontation with the West. As the colonial powers needed legitimization for the colonization of Muslim areas from the eighteenth century onwards, racist ideas and notions began to spread of Islam as a violent, barbaric religion, intent on war and hostile to women. Esposito shows how it was the Christian missionaries who 'became the foot soldiers of Europe's expansion and imperial hegemony in the Muslim world' (Esposito 1992: 48). He writes how the British spoke of the 'white man's burden' and the French of their 'mission to civilize' (Esposito 1992: 48). Thus colonization was not only a matter of material gain, but one of enforcing common Western ideas on the rest of the world.

Edward Said observes, in his famous book *Orientalism*, that the West created a discourse on 'the Orient' that was built on a power relationship between the two. As the West had knowledge of 'the Orient' and was the one who defined it, the West was able to control 'the Orient'. Furthermore this knowledge the West had of the 'Orient' was not the knowledge the 'Orient' had of itself (Said 1978). According to Said, the West had an ambiguous attitude towards 'the

Orient' and particularly to 'the Muslim Orient'. One attitude is that 'the Orient' represents a mystic attractiveness that is manifested in the images of attractive veiled women and the inscrutable, unpredictable desert. An example is Flaubert's Oriental experience, which, according to Said, 'is an almost uniform association between the Orient and sex' (Said 1978: 188). Also the European adventurers, such as Richard Burton, Gertrude Bell, T.E. Lawrence and William Thiesinger, who repeatedly travelled to the Arab world in search of adventure, had similar perceptions.

The other attitude is that of 'the Orient' as an order built on unnatural or abnormal ideas and behaviour. An example of this is Cromer's view of 'Orientals' as 'subject races', where the European 'is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic; he is by nature sceptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism' (Cromer cited in Said 1979: 38). In contrast to this, 'the Oriental' in Cromer's view seems to be the total opposite. He says:

The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises of which they may admit the truth. Endeavour to elicit a plain statement of facts from any ordinary Egyptian. His explanation will generally be lengthy, and wanting in lucidity. He will probably contradict himself half-a-dozen times before he has finished his story. He will often break down under the mildest process of cross-examination (Cromer cited in Said 1979: 38).

Today, this colonial, or rather orientalist attitude, towards Muslims in general has changed in form though not in content. No longer is it high quality literature which is the main proponent of orientalist attitudes, rather it is the popular media, films and book stall literature (see Berg 1998).

Hippler and Lueg have discussed the expression of political Islamophobia (though without explicit reference to the concept). The two authors call attention to how the media present images of threat from the East. In this picture, 'Islam is sometimes a "challenge", sometimes a threat' (Hippler and Lueg 1995: 1). They continue:

The threat might be a spiritual one, an Oriental counter-model to western civilisation; it might result in stopping the flow of oil, or in a cultural invasion by immigrants from Turkey or the Maghreb. It might lie in the Islamic atom bomb, in terrorism or in a threatened Islamic fundamentalist world revolution in the Iranian mould. Simple minds might even see it as a battle of Islam against Christianity, or against ‘unbelievers’. In Europe and the USA all these perceptions of threats exist, sometimes side by side and at other times separately. Sometimes they crop up suddenly and compete with each other, and at other times they are systematized and compounded, all depending on what is required or desired in a particular situation (Hippler and Lueg 1995: 1).

There is thus a notion of Islam as a threat to Western countries’ security on various levels. Huntington might be seen as the most prominent spokesman for the reality of such a threat (Huntington 1993; 1996). On the other hand reflective Western researchers, such as Esposito and Halliday, have discussed the credibility of this threat in more reasonable terms (Esposito 1992; Halliday 1995).

In his analysis, Esposito compares the evocative negative popular feeling towards Islam and Muslims with the strong anti-communist sentiment in the United States up to the fall of the Iron Curtain. He says:

There is a lesson to be learned from the failure of talented analysts who continued to warn of the dangers of a monolithic communist threat while the Soviet Union was in fact an economic basket case, breaking apart from within. Partial analysis that reinforces comfortable stereotypes and Western secular presuppositions must be transcended, if we are to avoid the ideological pitfalls and biases of a political analysis driven by an exaggerated threat (Esposito 1992: 174).

Esposito’s main idea is that diversity is the norm in Islamic politics, indicating that the Islamic political movements should not be regarded as a monolithic threat to Western society. He points at how many Islamic movements have been demanding an establishment of an Islamic state for years without any palpable results (Esposito 1992: 213–214). In Esposito’s view, the seeming popularity of Islamic movements in the electoral process in many Muslim countries is due to the fact that many of these movements have been ‘the most credible and effective alternative “game in town”’ (Esposito 1992: 214). He thus implicitly indicates that, in many Muslim countries, the established political parties supported by Western forces are less ‘credible’ for the indigenous Muslim population. This understatement presented by Esposito points at the conflict between the interests of the

West and those of the Muslim population, where Western support for certain Muslim rulers is more built on the maintenance of stability in the Muslim region than on a concern for the Muslim people (al-Nasrawi 1991). An example is the massive economic and agitational support of Saddam Hussein after the Iranian revolution in 1979, as Hussein's stand represented 'stability in the region' at that time. That Saddam Hussein was, as described by the Western media, a 'despot' and a 'tyrant' towards his people was not mentioned in the huge pro-Saddam and anti-Iranian propaganda of the 1980s.

Halliday sees four periods of conflicts between Islam and the non-Muslim West (Halliday 1995: 71). He lists the first three:

The rise of Islam in the late-seventh century which brought its armies into Sicily and well into France, the medieval wars of the Crusaders that ended only when the Ottomans were halted, in the seventeenth century at Vienna, and a third, beginning in the late-eighteenth century, when European states subjugated the Muslim world to their political and economic domination (Halliday 1995: 71).

The fourth period, which Halliday sees as yet unresolved, can be traced back to the Second World War, although he points to the early 1970s as the particular starting point for the new Muslim and non-Muslim interaction. He regards the greatest difference between the three former periods of conflict and the last as being Islamic nationalistic sentiment, which is prevalent in modern times. This has not only created a conflict with the Western world but with non-Muslim people in the Third World as well (Halliday 1995: 71–72).

Both Esposito and Halliday speaks of the political threat of Islam in terms of the threat Muslim nations might possibly be to the western political system. With the September 11th happenings in the United States terrorism as the extreme Muslims' weapons towards western hegemony has come to the forefront in the debate of the threat of Islam. This threat has, however, proved to be a threat towards *people* living in western countries, who happen to be 'in the wrong place at the wrong time', rather than a threat to the western political system or western governments which was the most common perception of this threat in the pre-September 11th era.

Political Islamophobia is mainly built on the idea of Islam as a threat, where Islam and Muslims represent a danger to the Western world on various levels of society.

Racist Islamophobia might be built on racist theories where certain ethnic groups considered as representatives for Islam are ranked lower than the majority community. In Sweden, for instance, it is people coming from countries where Arabic is the majority language who are linked to Islam and these individuals are thus regarded as 'lower beings'. In Norway, however, where the South Asian community is the biggest minority community, Pakistanis suffer a similar fate as the Arabic-speaking community in Sweden. For instance, the insult 'Paki' is a much-used term of abuse in Norway.

Economic Islamophobia tends to come to the surface in times of economic recession when unemployment and social expenses increase and immigrants, in particular Muslims, are often blamed.

Expressions of Islamophobia

Gullestad states that criticism of Muslims in the official space is part of a trend that exists in different forms across the whole of Europe (Gullestad 2002: 17). Modern images of Islam and Muslims and forms of Islamophobia vary in the European countries according to their specific economic and socio-political situations and the dominant immigrant communities within them. In Britain, for instance, the Indian and Pakistani communities dominate the official Islamic setting, thus the British tend to regard Islam in terms of the idiosyncrasies of these particular communities' practice. Similarly, in Germany, it is Turkish Islam that dominates and provides the frame of reference for the German understanding of Islam and Muslims. The Scandinavian countries vary within themselves. In Norway it is the Pakistani community that is the largest, whereas in Sweden it is the Middle Eastern Arabic-speaking Muslims who set the standard for the Swedish perceptions of Islam. In Denmark, on the other hand, a Muslim might be Turkish, Pakistani or Moroccan. Thus, although on a macro-level certain notions are pervasive throughout the Western world, on the micro-level particular images are created by particular Muslim practice as well as by particular cultural traits of majority society.

In Scandinavia, Islamophobia is, first and foremost, expressed through the media; explicitly in parts of the tabloid press and commercial TV channels and implicitly in the morning papers and national TV channels. The media's description of Islam and Muslims tends

to create — negative perceptions that filter into the encounter between Muslims and non-Muslims on various levels. The anti-Islamic campaign has many dimensions, each of which reflects the myth that Islam is a threat to the Western world. This myth is built on an idea of Islam as a homogeneous system, where it is not simply the political aspect of Islamic activism that comes to represent Islam and Muslims in general, but the most extreme and violent forms of this activism. Swedish researcher on the media Håkan Hvitfelt has conducted an investigation of Swedish news coverage of Islam during the years 1991–1995. He has observed that features on Islam are most often concerned with war, terrorism and persecution of ‘unbelievers’. Features discussing Muslims’ situation, religion and integration into Western society are less frequent. Hvitfelt believes therefore that it is not necessarily Islam that people are presented with, rather Islam comes to represent the unfamiliar or the unknown and might therefore be understood by non-Muslims in terms of hostility (Hvitfelt 1998).

In the aftermath of the terror attacks on the United States in autumn 2001, anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim expressions have increased. At first Muslims were collectively burdened with guilt in the official space and the Muslim community were demanded, at various levels of society, to officially express their rejection of the happenings. Although, in the first weeks after the attack, Muslim representatives were invited to participate in television and newspaper debates, Islamophobic expressions were more accepted, both on television and in newspapers. For instance, some newspaper articles allowed their arguments to slide in such a way that a small group of Muslim extremists came to stand out as a model for all followers of Islam (See for instance *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, 19/9–2001: 2). In discussions about the retaliation of the United States, which has brought up the bombing of various Muslim countries, Muslims believe that racist Islamophobia has increased and less value has been attached to Muslims than to Europeans or Americans.

The victimization of the Muslim woman

The conflict between Islam and the West, which seems to be largely a political conflict, often becomes, as described above, more one-dimensional as the political arguments are accentuated. However,

when the image of threat is transferred to a social level, the notion of Islam as a religion hostile to women emerges and this has become the main anti-Islamic argument in Scandinavian society. An example is how the bombing of Afghanistan was gradually dressed up as a war to liberate Afghan women, who were forced to cover their bodies fully and wear face-veils. The victimization of the Muslim woman is expressed in terms that suggest Muslim women in general are oppressed. The consequence of such a view, that Muslim men in general are women- and child-abusers, is rarely explicitly expressed, but it is implied.

In the Western world the academic and the popular publication of books and articles about Muslim women and Islamic gender relations had already started on a modest scale at the time of colonialism. Publication accelerated in the 1980s after the Iranian revolution, and culminated at the beginning of the third millennium. The huge book production from the 1980s onwards indicates a political concern; research funding is to a great extent built on political decisions. However, this production also indicates a public interest; editors on various levels accept articles or books which are of special concern. These articles and books deal both with Muslim women in general, Muslim women in Muslim societies and Muslim women in Western society (See for instance Moghadam 1990; Spellberg 1994). At first, the authors were mainly non-Muslims, but, as Muslim women started to pursue higher education in Western universities, Muslim women writing about themselves or about Islam and gender issues increased. One example is Leila Ahmad's book *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992), another is *Arab Women in the Field* (1988), edited by S. Altorki and C.F. El-Solh. The latter book is particularly interesting as female Arab researchers living and working in Western societies returned to their countries of origin to conduct fieldwork among women there. I understand the latter approach as a remedy to the outsider perspective, as non-Muslim women tend to write and define Muslim women according to their own value hierarchy and conceptions. The Malay anthropologist Wazir Jahan Karim confirms this in the book *'Male' and 'Female' in Developing South East Asia*, which she edited. She is critical of the way Western researchers perceive Malay women, saying:

The popular view that women are not the same as men and do different things does not generate a discourse that they are inferior to or less important than men, at least not before they are told that they are

by modernists, advocating Western models of change and development (Karim 1995: xiv).

According to Karim it is the distinction between 'sameness' and 'equality' which reflects the South East Asian mode of thinking, as 'biology, physique and psychology are factors that make women different from men but in no way inferior to them' (Karim 1995: xiv).

Fatme Göcek and Shiva Balaghi are also critical of studies of the Third World, which 'often contain orientalist elements that treat social processes in cultures and societies other than [their own] as static or at best, derivative'. (Göcek and Balaghi [eds] 1994: 5). They claim that these studies tend to emphasize tradition in a way that establishes the idea of the tradition's immutability, since 'in order to justify its own hegemony, the Western gaze needs to portray tradition in the Middle East as an immutable force' (Göcek and Balaghi [eds] 1994: 5).

The above observation is confirmed in sociologist Bryan Turner's study *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalization*. In this book he discusses how orientalism has arisen in the social sciences (Turner 1994). He points at four main factors, one of which is the idea of social stagnation in the oriental societies (Turner 1994).

The Muslim response to the interest in the issue of Muslim women and the status of women in Islam was, from the start, apologetic. Muslims counter-attacked, promoting the idea that Islam gives women their proper rights, whereas the Western world exploits women on various levels (see Muḥammad Quṭb's *Misunderstandings of Islam* written in the 1960s) (Quṭb 1983: 181–183). Ḥammūdah 'Abdulātī proposes similar ideas in his book *Introduction to Islam* from the 1970s. In the chapter on women's position in Islam, 'Abdulātī expresses that the women issue 'is not a problem', rather had it not been for the 'pressure from foreign cultures and foreign influence the issue would never had been raised' ('Abdulātī 1990: 217–218). He continues by pointing at the rights of women and their equal status with men ('Abdulātī 1990: 219–227).

Quṭb's and 'Abdulātī's writings are defences of the Islamic faith and its social message, whereas non-Muslims' criticism of Islam, to a great extent, is a response to the actual situation of Muslim women in the Muslim world as well as in Muslim communities in Western countries. The difference of approach between actors within the various socio-religious spheres thus, makes them arrive to different conclusions.

Popular literature

There are researchers who tend to be biased in their research on Muslims in general and on Islam in particular (Huntington 1996; Sivan 1992). However, it is popular literature, film and television production and the media that are the main proponents of the negative images of Islam and Muslims. The Swedish ethnologist Magnus Berg has discussed what he calls 'the popular orientalism's world view' (Berg 1998). In his study he develops his ideas from Said's study on orientalism, arguing that popular orientalism, as expressed in popular books and films, has less to do with 'the Orientals' or the Orient itself, than it has to do with Westerners' search for identity. He states:

The popular orientalism seems not to deal with the Orient. The popular orientalism's Orient is a fantasy world, to which the Westerners travel in order to search for identity. It seems to be this search for identity that is the essential. The Orient is a matter of secondary importance; an interior shaped to facilitate the search for identity; a room in which the Western drama can be played and lived out in its extreme form (Berg 1998: 156 [translation mine]).

Berg came to this conclusion having scrutinized the idea of 'the Islamic threat' as it is particularly expressed in American films. He looks at films that show the 'white Western man' defeating 'the Islamic threat'. A prominent example is the film *True Lies* from 1994, starring Arnold Swarzenegger and Jamie Lee Curtis, where 'the Islamic threat' is manifested in the violent movement 'Red Jihad'. I want to draw attention to how the director of the film, James Cameron, has managed to combine the threats into one: communism and Islam. This he did during a period at the beginning of the nineties, when there still was some confusion as to whether communism had any life left in it, or whether Islam had arisen as the new enemy.

In Berg's view, this film shows, on the one hand, the pervasive changes in gender roles in Western society in the late-twentieth century, as the female character in the end is incorporated into 'the male system' on 'male premises'. On the other hand, the film shows the purposeful, controlled Western manliness' conquest over the capricious, fanatical, aggressive manliness of the 'Oriental'. However, Berg also points to how the film indicates a profound insecurity in male and female roles.

Berg does not explicitly link his idea of the Orient as the place of the West's search for identity to the problem of how the change in gender roles in Western society has created insecurity, particularly for men and notions of manliness. Neither does he discuss whether the Western portrayal of male 'Orientals' provides a means to live out an unconscious inclination of aggressiveness/or affection. However Berg implicitly states this idea in quoting Julia Kristeva earlier in his book:

The archaic narcissistic 'I' /.../ projecting outwards what it inwardly experiences as dangerous or unpleasant... thus creates an unfamiliar, alarming and demonic double. /.../ an image of a wicked double on whom it transfers that part of the destructive which it cannot control (Berg 1998: 20 from Kristeva 1991: 192 [translation mine]).

This argument is closely linked to Lueg's idea that 'the cliché of the oppressed Islamic woman serves the purpose of distracting us from things that are wrong in our society. These defects appear more acceptable if someone else's experience is even worse' (Lueg 1995: 20). Lueg further analyses how the notion of someone else's misery might create a feeling of one's own superiority, and she links it to the West's feeling of superiority over Muslim countries. She quotes Anne-Kathrin Reulecke:

In the mass media, the stylization of the 'oppressed woman behind the veil' [functions] as a symbol of the 'medieval backwardness' of Islamic states, and provides fodder for the outlined discourse on the superiority of the West (Reulecke in Hippler and Lueg 1995: 20).

Lueg and Reulecke, thus, in a similar way to Berg, look at Western perceptions and the Western attack on Islam in terms of an inner-Western discourse, not as an endeavour to improve the situation of Muslims. Lueg actually points to the fact that in feminist journals for instance, Muslim women are rarely allowed to speak for themselves. 'Islamic women', she says, 'are mainly this: victims' (Lueg 1995: 18).

It is telling that both Berg and Lueg refer to Betty Mahmoody's famous book *Not Without my Daughter* (1988) and its impact on the perception of the Muslim woman as oppressed (Lueg 1995: 19; Berg 1998: 59ff). One might say that the notion of 'the oppressed Muslim woman' culminated in the enormous positive reception of this book all over the Western world. Lueg reports that the book sold ten times as many copies in Germany as in the United States (Lueg

1995: 19). Although Mahmoody's book is actually a story of *one* Iranian man, Moody, and how he drove his wife to kidnap her daughter and bring her out of Iran, the consequence of the story is still a generalization of the despotic 'Oriental' husband and the oppressed Muslim woman. This is interesting in view of the strong female characters amongst Moody's Iranian relatives in the book. It seems that the Western reader relates to and interprets select characteristics of the story; in this context the Muslim woman as victim, not the strong Iranian women in the book.

Geraldine Brooks is another author who has travelled in the Middle East and writes her impressions of her meetings with Muslim women. However, her book *Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women* is no more than an impressionistic description of her own encounters with women of other religions and countries such as Iran, Iraq, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates. It is interesting to note that Brooks is herself a Jew, a fact that she acknowledges in the text, (Brooks 1995: 105) but she does not provide any information on whether her informants were aware of her religious affiliation. Moreover, she does not reflect in the book on the role her Jewishness plays on her impressions of Muslim women's situations. Taking into account the hostility between the Jewish state, Israel and the Muslim world, which tends to influence most relations between Muslims and Jews in the modern world, it seems that such a discussion is crucial for an accurate interpretation of her research results.

Brooks' book is entertaining and witty; however, her amusing satirical style is seductive and hides the fact that she has obviously chosen and picked out examples that confirm her rather negative attitudes toward Islam and Muslim practice. An example is in the historical section when she deals with the happenings after the death of the Prophet. She refers to how some women in the Arabian region of Hadramaut celebrated his death by taking to the streets and joyfully beating the tambourines. She writes:

Who knows what motivated the women to make their rousing and reckless celebration? To them, at least, it must have seemed that Muḥammad's new religion had made their lives more burdensome, less free. And much worse was coming. Repression of women was about to be legislated into the religion on a large scale by Abū Bakr's successor as caliph, the violent misogynist Omar (Brooks 1995: 88).

In this passage she bases her discussion on Islamophobic prejudices and these prejudices prevents her therefore from conducting a balanced

discussion of the historical event. Brooks does not explicitly mention whether the women in question are prostitutes or 'loose-living' but it seems that she regards them in these terms, particularly as she does not challenge Abū Bakr's reference to 'the whores of Hadramaut' (see Brooks 1995: 88). Brooks can thus implicitly be seen to equate the right to perform prostitution with women's rights in general, making the reader regard 'the burden' Islam puts on these women with the prohibition of prostitution as a denial of women's right.

To balance the discussion event one might suggest that these women might not have been prostitutes — only Abū Bakr's words suggest they were. It is however, not an uncommon phenomenon to label 'rebellious' women as 'whores'. Another aspect is that these women's rebellion does not have to be linked to women's rights. Brook's assumptions in this regard form an anachronistic interpretation of historical happenings. It is just as possible that their rebellion reflects the issue of power; who should rule the Hadramaut region and to whom should one plead allegiance? It might even be a matter of economics, a revolt against the taxes Muslim tribes had to pay to the central Muslim authority. Either way, Brooks' particular interpretation offers the reader a negative view of Islam in general.

Yet another example of her contempt for Arabs and Muslims is the story of her meeting with Queen Noor and King Hussein of Jordan (Brooks 1995: 119–141). Her attitude to the king and the queen as well as the development in Jordan is quite positive. As her narrative goes on, however, it becomes apparent that the author attributes all positive development in Jordan to Queen Noor's influence over her husband. It is as though it is the Western man/woman who is best equipped to succeed. To reinforce the idea of Queen Noor as the driving force of change in Jordan, Brooks starts the chapter titled *A Queen* with the story about the Queen of Sheeba in the Koran, which says:

I found a woman to reign over them, who is provided with everything requisite for a prince, and hath a magnificent throne (Koran 27:23) (Brooks 1995: 119).

In this chapter, thus, Brooks' heritage from the scholars of orientalism is most palpable and obvious.

Media

Popular literature plays a role in shaping people's perceptions of Islam and Muslims, but it is the media, newspapers, magazines and television that are generally seen as the greater exponents of the myths that Islam is a threat and the Muslim woman is a victim. In her book on the Norwegian intellectual elite's discourse on 'Norwegian' and immigrant issues, Gullestad discusses how the media often shape processes 'where prejudices are reinforced rather than analysed' (Gullestad 2002: 33).

The Scandinavian countries are segregated, in the sense that ethnic communities have little interaction with each other. According to a national survey conducted in 1995, 85% of ethnic Danes have no interaction with individuals from ethnic communities (Hussain 2000: 116). The Danish sociologist Mustafa Hussain sees the media as the main mediator between Danish majority society and ethnic communities. He states:

[Due] to the lack of personal experience with minorities, the themes and topics that become the centre of public awareness on ethnic minorities are retrieved from news discourses. These scripts or models help construct an active opinion or set of attitudes for most people in the majority population. The media thus provide a predefinition of minority problems from which people build their own attitudes (Hussain 2000: 110).

Hussain states however that media discourses are not 'reproduced in social communication as a direct imitation or repetition of media texts' (Hussain 2000: 110) as the media alone is not able to change basic values or shared beliefs in society. What he suggests is:

[Through] a discursive production and diffusion of negative images of minorities, and through manipulative strategies of persuasion, selection, repetition and emphasis, the media do exert a substantial influence on both the public and on politicians, leading them to react to the ethnic reality that the media construct in news discourses (Hussain 2000: 110).

The media coverage of immigrant, Muslim and Islamic issues in the Scandinavian countries varies, but nearly all media coverage of immigrants is presented in terms of Islam and Muslims. In the Scandinavian countries, the immigrant *per se* is Muslim, regardless of nationality. This stereotyping is confirmed by a study conducted by Hussain in

1996. He notes how his interviewees tended to speak in terms of Muslims and Islam even when the questions posed were about 'immigrant culture' in general (Hussain 2000: 109). Hussain further shows how even in the television news 'the concept of 'immigrants' was juxtaposed or equated with Muslims' (Hussain 2000: 105). Thus, for instance, in Norway it is the Pakistani Muslim, and to a lesser extent the Turkish Muslim, who is *the* immigrant, whereas *the* immigrant in Sweden is the Arab Muslim (Roald 2002). Below, I will discuss Norwegian and Danish reportage in relation to that of the Swedish media.

Denmark

I have been living in Sweden for many years and I have therefore got used to a certain manner in which the media present immigrants and immigrant issues. As with other countries' media, Swedish television channels and newspapers tend to concentrate on problematic rather than positive cases. Thus 'ethnic crimes' are reported on a large scale, whereas well-integrated and successful immigrants rarely receive attention. Moreover, if there is reportage or news coverage of positive events connected to the immigrant community, there is rarely any public response. However, in spite of this I will claim that the Swedish media maintain quite a decent perspective in their coverage of Muslims, Islam and immigrants in general. I would probably not see the Swedish media in this way if I had not compared them to the Danish and Norwegian media and started to follow all three countries' media in 1998. The first time I became aware of the great difference was while travelling by air from Copenhagen on the 15th of February of that year. It shocked me to read the Danish newspapers available on the aeroplane. One of the well-established newspapers, *Berlinske Tidende*, contained no less than three articles about Islam and Muslims in Denmark. All the three articles contained implicit and explicit Islamophobic statements that I have not seen in Swedish newspapers since at least 1990.

Jan Hjarnø, a Danish researcher on migration and ethnic studies, also notes the hard climate for Muslims in the Danish official debate. He has observed how Danish attitudes towards immigrants have changed and how the ethnic, religious and cultural 'otherness' of immigrants and refugees has become an important issue in the pub-

lic debate (Hjarnø 1996: 294). He further states that ‘the main targets of criticism are Islam and Muslims’ (Hjarnø 1996: 294). He gives an example of a headline from 1994 in one of the largest Danish newspapers that read: ‘Only a fool does not fear Islam’ (Hjarnø 1996: 294). Hjarnø also mentions how the Liberal Party’s spokesman on naturalization in the Danish Parliament wrote an article in a well-established newspaper under the headline: ‘Muslims are a problem’. In the article he writes:

Researchers in religion have drawn attention to the fact that Islam is 600 years younger than Christianity. They point to the horrors that took place in Christian Europe 600 years ago in forms of wars, genocide, etc. In other words, we have only to wait 600 years and Muslims will be as rational as we normally are (except of course for Hitler, Stalin, Zhirinovskiy and other similar charmers). (*Politiken* 28/2–1994, Section 2:2 in Hjarnø 1996: 294).

The spokesman further states:

It is a huge problem that there are Muslims in Denmark who support the sale of brides and forced marriages (also of minors); circumcision of women; polygamy; and other types of oppression of women; assault on children; medieval socialization of children; punishment for crimes, and many other things which are against Danish Law or, at least, against current morality in Denmark. Muslims try to practise their medieval ideas in Denmark.

I believe we must take these facts into account when we decide granting asylum in Denmark and whom we shall expel under the Aliens legislation, because they [Muslims] represent a danger to the security of Denmark or commit serious crimes. Even more so when we decide who shall be granted Danish citizenship. We must not forget to show consideration to the Danes (*Politiken* 28/2–1994, Section 2:2 in Hjarnø 1996: 294).

The Liberal Party’s spokesman’s indication of Islam as a threat and the victimization of Muslim women, points at the strength of these arguments in Danish society.

The Danish media’s treatment of ‘Islam’ and Muslims compared to, for instance, that of the Swedish media must be regarded in view of the findings of the European Union centre for supervision of racism and xenophobia (EUMC). In their report from May 2000, when it comes to attitudes to minority religions, Denmark stands out as the most intolerant country in the European Union. In the investigation 17,000 European Union citizens were asked about their attitudes. In Denmark more than 30% of the respondents expressed

fear due to the presence of non-Christians in the country (*Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 21/12–2000).

In Hussain's study, he discovered that the media considers minorities 'a problem for "us", the Danes or for Danish society' (Hussain 2000: 107). He also notes that immigrants are rarely presented with their own voice in reportage and news coverage. Whereas pressure groups or politicians with an anti-Islamic attitude are given space in the media, members of ethnic communities rarely participate in the media's ethnic debate. It is important to draw attention to the fact that Hussain found that Danish national television was the worst culprit for framing ethnic minorities in negative terms. Over a three-month period in 1996 more than 80% of public service television news on ethnic affairs had a negative portrayal (Hussain 2000: 107).

Since I started to follow up Danish, Norwegian and Swedish coverage of immigrant issues, I have discovered how the Danish newspapers tend to be more bold when it comes to printing the names and nationalities of immigrant criminals. A change in terminology has introduced the term 'new-Danes' instead of 'immigrant'. However, newspaper articles that start with the term 'new-Dane', often revert to using term 'immigrant' later in the article (See for instance B.T. 20/10–2000; 23/10–2000). Although the term 'Muslim' is usually avoided in general crime reports, reference to nationalities and sometimes first name implies a Muslim affiliation. By contrast, crimes committed by ethnic Danes are reported without mention of nationality, religion or adherence to a religious world view.

From the mid-1990s, a freelance journalist, Bjarne Stenqvist, has been arranging courses on immigration in general and Muslims in particular for journalists working on Swedish newspapers. In some newspapers, such as *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, I have observed that few articles could be characterized as promoting a hostile image of Islam or Muslims after involvement in the course. The only exceptions might be letters to the press or contributions by the public, which, in keeping with freedom of press, might convey hostile attitudes towards Islam and Muslims. Still, articles that stereotype Muslims *are* found in Swedish newspapers, although to a much lesser extent than in Danish newspapers.

Norway

In Norway, as in Denmark, the media, many newspapers and television channels have conveyed more negative attitudes about Islam and Muslims than in Sweden. In general, issues tend to arise and dominate the official debate for a while, before giving way to the next issue. Examples are: forced marriage cases, where girls are forced by their parents to marry a man of the parents' choice; female circumcision; and abuse cases. An outstanding case is from October 2000, when one of the national television channels, TV 2, used a young Somali woman with a hidden camera to ask advice from various local imams about her parents' wish that she be circumcised. Some of the imams in the programme advised her to obey her parents and her discussions with the imams were screened on national television provoking an outrage involving various official actors. Although some of the converts I spoke to about this said that the issue is of importance and must be discussed, they blamed the journalist in question for behaving unethically; she not only harmed the imams involved but also Muslims as a collective group. One female convert expressed how, in the streets and on the underground in the days immediately following the TV programme, she felt a massive hostility from people around her, despite the fact that she too condemns the practice of female circumcision. It is interesting that in Sweden a similar thing happened in autumn 2001. A journalist on national television co-operated with a woman from Ghana who went with a hidden camera to various imams and priests from countries where circumcision is common, telling them that her husband wanted her to circumcise their small girl. In Swedish legislation, female circumcision in all its forms was made illegal from the 1st of July 2001. A scandal was caused when two imams and one Egyptian Coptic priest on the programme seemed to help the Ghanaian woman contact persons who could perform the circumcision. The imams and the priest were reported to the police. The Swedish anthropologist, Sara Johnsdotter, investigated the TV reportage and discovered certain falsifications that seem to have arisen during the editing process (Johnsdotter 2002).

In spite of Johnsdotter's observation, it is interesting to note that the Swedish programme was much less provocative and took more care not to single out the Muslim group for blame. By also showing the Coptic priest's point of view the matter became less an

Islamic issue and more one of cultural structures in certain countries.

Another difference between the Swedish and the Norwegian media is highlighted by the case of Fadime Sahindal. Fadime Sahindal was a 26-year-old Kurdish woman who came to Sweden as a little girl from her family village in Turkey. In the late 1990s Fadime came to know a boy whose father was Iranian and mother Swedish. When they decided to live together, Fadime's family, particularly the men, started to threaten her. They wanted her to marry a man from their own ethnic group. Fadime's boyfriend died in a car accident the same day they were to move into the new flat. Fadime went to the court, accusing her father and brother of having threatened her. The media covered the case thoroughly. The father felt, as did people close to the family, that according to Kurdish tradition, his daughter had dishonoured him. In January 2002, according to his own confessions, he shot and killed her while she was on a secret visit to her sister's place in her home town in Sweden. The Swedish media hyped up the case, but interestingly enough, with few exceptions (see for instance Carl Rudbeck's editorial in *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 28/1–2002, and Brännpunkt, *Svenska Dagbladet* 23/1–2002) it was less Islam that was blamed than Kurdish cultural traits. Even Fadime herself in an appeal to the Parliament in November 2001 never mentioned the term 'Islam'; rather she talked about how Kurdish traditions limit the freedom of women to make their own choices.

However, whilst the Swedish media tended to be careful in their criticism of Islam in this matter, the Norwegian media started a campaign in the aftermath of Fadime's murder that broached the issue of Muslim women's rights in marriage. According to traditional Islamic legislation a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim man, whereas a Muslim man can marry women belonging to the People of the Book, i.e. Christians and Jews. The Norwegian media claimed that it is against the Human Rights' Declaration that Muslim women are not allowed to marry outside their religion. Moreover, the issue of forced marriage blew up again and local and regional Muslim leaders were interviewed daily on television and in newspapers, where their views were presented. On the 3rd February, *Dagbladet*, one of the biggest newspapers in Norway, disclosed the details of a tape on which a young woman with a hidden microphone conducts discussions with certain imams. The imams, who hardly knew Norwegian, having spent several years in the country, spoke about

the Norwegians and Norwegian society in a negative and prejudiced way. A new scandal broke out.

As most immigrant families who force their daughters to marry tend to prefer marriage between first cousins, the political parties in Norway demanded a prohibition of marriage between two first cousins. This was in order to prevent families forcing girls to marry against their will. In Denmark, a similar proposal has been met with a positive response by the Parliament as well as by the public. It is interesting to note that Norwegian criticism of the Danish election campaign and the new government's stress on de-prioritizing immigrant issues, such as racism and human rights, was silenced in the aftermath of the murder of Swedish-Kurd Fadime.

The Public

Although the media tends to convey hostile and condescending images of immigrants in general and Muslims in particular, it is in the public space that many Muslims feel attacked. Hostility towards Muslims is generated cyclically, where hostile and condescending images are presented in magazines, popular books, newspapers and television, as a consequence of which the public tend to react towards the Muslim individuals in a similarly hostile or condescending way. Through the media's creation of negative images of 'the other', the 'we' acquire a sense of superiority both socially and intellectually, generating a need for further such presentations. Thus, the presentation of Muslims in a certain way becomes part of the supply and demand of the market.

Hussain has observed that when positive images of ethnic communities are portrayed the public rarely react, whereas the reaction to negative reportage is enormous. In one of the Danish newspapers, *Ekstrabladet*, 13th October 1996, there were a series of articles on 'Women in Islam' where Muslim women were allowed to talk about their situation. According to Hussain, the women 'contradicted the stereotyped image put upon them' and blamed Danish society for having a prejudiced view (Hussain 2000: 113). No debates arose in the aftermath of this series. In contrast, Hussain shows how a great number of 'letters to the editor' from the public arrive after a negative reportage on immigrant issues (Hussain 2000: 107).

The condescending attitude of the public towards Muslims is felt on various levels. For instance, when films of circumcision were screened in Norway and Sweden, Muslims experienced an increase in racist expression. In Sweden, Norway and Denmark there was a negative public reaction towards Muslims after the murder of Fadime. It is interesting that this was the case even in Sweden, where the media explicitly portrayed the tragedy as a cultural Kurdish issue rather than an Islamic one. With regards to the tape where certain imams expressed their prejudices against Norwegians, it is interesting to note the reflections made by B.K. Bore in the newspaper *Dagbladet* the 4th of February 2002. The headline was: 'Isn't it wonderful to have someone to hate?' and the article refers to the fact that more than 20,000 internet users clicked into the newspaper's web page to read the transcription of the tape. According to Bore this number is unusually high, especially on a Sunday, a day when few readers read the web newspaper. His reflections are interesting as he states sarcastically:

It is not difficult to be upset by the attitudes many of the imams express — both on and off the record. In many ways they are the perfect enemy. They have attitudes we ourselves have got rid of. They speak bad Norwegian, if they speak the language at all. They have power. They are men. They are old. And they have funny hats on their head. All in all, a group of old fellows, whose stock exchange rates are deservedly rather low. (*Dagbladet* 4/2-2002 [translation mine]).

The public interest in the case of the imams indicates a reaction to the Muslim issue which can be regarded as Islamophobic. One wonders whether reportage about a well-integrated and fully functional Muslim family in Norway would have caused similar interest in the Norwegian public.

A further example is how a Swedish anthropologist who gives lectures on Muslims in Sweden finds that many of the questions journalists ask her are highly offensive to Muslims. Once a journalist, for instance, asked her whether Muslim women take the opportunity to get divorced from their husbands when they arrive in Sweden. I see the question as condescending not only to Muslim men, who are implicitly accused of being incompetent in dealing with women, but also to Muslim women, implying as it does that they might be 'rescued' from their husbands by the Swedish system. This condescending attitude complements the image of the 'oppressed Muslim

woman', who is neither capable of knowing what is best for her and her children, nor able to deal with her husband in 'a proper way'. Even Muslim converts have expressed how they encounter continuously such condescending and didactic attitudes from majority society in the Scandinavian countries, despite their being born and raised in Scandinavian society.

Reflections

Islamophobia is present in Scandinavia although its expressions vary according to environments within each country. Islamophobia in Europe and the United States might, in addition to the reasons discussed above, be a result of the Muslim attempt to keep their faith and abstain from assimilation into majority society. In the globalization process, where Western particularism tends to spread all over the world, there is an implicit claim of adaptation that many Muslims refuse to accept. Globalization processes of previous times, such as Hellenism, which developed from a globalization of Greek particularism and came to be a decisive factor in the annihilation of the traditional religions, actually laid the foundation of the new world-embracing religion, Christianity. Of the 'old' religions, practically the only one that survived was Judaism. The survival of Judaism might be attributed to the fact that the Jews lived and acted in segregated areas, refusing to be part of the 'melting pot'. The strong religious and cultural bond promoted by the Jewish ideal might be regarded as the main reason that Jews could withstand the pressure of the fast-growing Christianity.

The situation of Muslim communities in Europe, particularly Scandinavia might be regarded in view of the Jewish situation in early history. Many Muslims refuse to adapt to the norms of majority society, particularly when it comes to individualism and the individual's freedom of choice. Many Muslims in Europe come from rural areas and have difficulty adapting to modern life in their host society. This, in addition to the segregation pattern in Scandinavian society, makes many Muslims live and act in different areas of life than do the bulk of majority society. On the other hand, however, those Muslims who have a wish to integrate encounter obstacles, such as having difficulties on the labour market. Just as many assimilated Jews came to suffer from the Enlightenment onwards, according

to many converts in this study, Muslims who want to be part of society tend still to be regarded as outsiders.

Muslims feel Islamophobia is a problem of having one's religious and cultural traits regarded in degrading terms. A Muslim immigrant living in Denmark said, 'How could I ever feel at home in a society that looks down on me and everything I stand for?' In Great Britain the phenomenon of Islamophobia has been taken seriously, as the report presented by The Runnymede Trust indicates, even though there has been serious race riots in some northern towns. In Scandinavia it is particularly the Swedish media that has managed some kind of balance in their reporting of immigrant issues. Representatives of the Swedish media acknowledge the responsibility of the media in generating Islamophobic expressions, whereas in Norway and Denmark this responsibility seems not to have been fully accepted.

As I have discussed expressions of Islamophobia in Scandinavian society, I now turn to a discussion on why Scandinavians embrace Islam.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ROAD TO ISLAM

A man came running from the farthest end of the city, exclaiming: 'O my people! Follow these message-bearers. Follow those who ask no reward of you and they be themselves rightly guided'

(Koran 36: 20–21).

Lewis Rambo has an important position in research on conversion. Researchers tend to use his elaboration of the seven stages of conversion, which, according to Rambo, can be applied to various religions. However, I have observed that, when it comes to conversion to Islam, the model has to be modified. Some of the stages might be suitable for analytic purposes, but Rambo's in-depth description of these stages is perhaps more suitable to the Christian than the Islamic context. I believe the differences between the conversion processes in the two religions have to do with whether the conversion happens within a majority- or a minority-context. Rambo and most other researchers on conversion rarely take this aspect into consideration, which might be one reason why the general theories of conversion often do not apply to an Islamic context. Studies on conversion to Christianity are often based on research material gathered in places where Christianity is the majority religion and thus favoured in the majority discourse. Studies on conversion to Islam, however, are most often conducted in Western society where Islamic values are part of a minority discourse not accepted by the majority. The Islamic conversion process thus, involves many more than religious and psychological aspects, and particularly the social aspect constitutes an essential perspective for a proper comprehension of the factors involved in the conversion process. Below I will discuss the results of the collected empirical material on conversion to Islam. I will relate my findings to Rambo's model as well as to that of Frank K. Flinn.

Rambo has observed that historical studies on conversion demonstrate that 'conversion (even within a specific tradition) may be different in different times and places' (Rambo 1993: 12). As for

conversion to Islam, this becomes obvious by looking into for instance William Bulliet's historical study (1979) as well as Peter Hardy's study of Muslims in India (1972). Bulliet speaks of conversion to Islam in binary terms: 'individual conversion' versus 'adhesion' (pragmatic communal conversion). Hardy confirms the view that, historically speaking, communal conversions were often built on pragmatism, arguing that on the Indian subcontinent conversion was, first and foremost, a change of fellowship rather than a change of conduct or inner life (Hardy 1972: 8), although a change of conduct often followed. In early Islamic history, conversion to Islam in general seems to have denoted a 'change of fellowship'. The early Ridda wars (the wars of Abū Bakr, the first Caliph, against apostasy) indicate how this 'change of fellowship' was a prominent aspect of early conversion to Islam. With the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, many of the Bedouin tribes decided to leave the fold of Islam, their commitment having been a socio-political one to the person Muḥammad rather than to the creed of Islam.

Later Islamization of ethnic groups came through war and trade. However, 'change of fellowship' still seems to have been a prominent factor even at a later historical stage. For instance, in South East Asia, researchers claim that Malay rulers started to convert to Islam in the thirteenth century, and by the fifteenth century Islam had spread to the whole population (Nakahara 1984: 6; Johns 1993). However, although rulers seem to have been among the first to convert, thus bringing their subjects into the new religion, researchers have observed how the Sufi trade guilds played an important part in the Islamization of the Malay population (al-Atas 1986: 7; Johns 1993). In Africa, there seems to have been a similar pattern of Islamization, although in Africa Islam also spread by war and territorial expansion (Svanberg and Westerlund 1994).

In modern times, with increased individualization, conversion to a religion has been marked by individual choices. This is confirmed by the observation of Ahlin and Dahlgren: in the 'de-traditionalised' post-war Western society, 'confidence in and membership of collective institutions have gradually declined' (Ahlin and Dahlgren 1999: 155–157). This observation indicates that the phenomena of collective conversion and profound group coherence are now things of the past; the faith communities are losing their hold on the individual.

Literature

In this particular chapter I refer to literature about Muslim converts in addition to my own field data and to the field data of the Swedish student Margaretha Östling.¹ Firstly, I refer to the scientific study by Norwegian convert, Lena Larsen, of Norwegian new Muslims. In this study Larsen gives the personal account of the conversion process of six Norwegian new Muslims. Of the six interviewees only one is a male convert.

By way of reference, I refer to four other books on converts to Islam from other parts of the world. The first book of interest is that of American counsellor Carol L. Anway's *Daughters of Another Path: Experiences of American Women Choosing Islam* (1995). This book is an investigation into reasons for conversion as well as a study of female converts' relations to their parents and in-laws. This study is an empirical study and the author devotes most of the book to letting the Muslim female converts speak for themselves.

The second book contains converts' own testimonies. The book is called *The Sun is rising in the West: New Muslims tell about their journey to Islam* (1999), and it is edited by Muzaffar Haleem, who writes it with American convert Betty (Batul) Bowman. In this study, the author conducts interviews with 22 American converts. In addition, there are 7 convert narratives taken from the Internet. Of these, five have an American background, one is Bruneian with a Chinese background and one comes from Sweden. Of the 29 persons in total, 19 (66%) are women and 10 (34%) are men.

The third book is written by Ali Köse and is called *Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts* (1996). This book is built on the interviews of 70 British converts to Islam, 50 men and 20 women. Of the 70 interviewees, 23 persons were involved in Sufism.

The fourth book is a study by American researcher Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam* (1992). This study contains a discussion on conversion to Islam built on 12 questionnaire respondents and 60 separate convert stories collected from newsletters, periodicals, booklets and books. Of these 72 persons, 50 (69%) were men and 22 (31%) were women.

¹ I express my gratitude to Östling for providing me with her interview material; 10 interviews conducted in the early 1990's.

Male and female converts

Larry Poston, unlike many other researchers, concludes that more men than women convert to Islam. He bases his conclusion on his own study and reasons that the traditional Muslim setting is, as he says, 'characterized by male orientation and domination'. Furthermore, he points at the subordinate role of Muslim women in Islamic society and religious practice, arguing that 'the stereotypical image of the Muslim male emphasizes his virility and masculinity, and this may well be a source of appeal to Western men' (Poston 1992: 163–164). Although Poston's words describe a traditional Muslim understanding of Islam and Western stereotyping of Muslims, his analysis tends to be biased: to suggest that male converts choose Islam because it promotes male virility and masculinity is tendentious in my view. I would have liked Poston to define what he means by 'masculinity' and why and how 'Muslim masculinity' should be attractive to American and European men. His analysis becomes more far-fetched when one considers it is based on inaccurate figures. As indicated by the studies of Larsen, Anyway, and Haleem and supported by my own investigation, there is a higher rate of women who convert to Islam in Western countries than men. Poston's study is built more on written testimonies than personal interviews or fieldwork, and therefore he has not been in touch with converts and convert life. He also mentions how he tried to get in contact with converts but failed to get any response. His failure indicates the difficulties non-Muslim researchers face in their interaction with Muslims in general and Muslim converts in particular. Köse's study might, to a certain extent, confirm Poston's claim, however, I believe that, as a man looking for individuals for personal interviews, he would have more difficulty getting Muslim female interviewees than would a female researcher. The opposite, that female researchers would have difficulties getting male converts, can also be argued. Larsen, who is a female researcher, has interviewed mostly women. Anyway's book deals only with women. However, in the book written by Haleem, who is a man but who has cooperated with a female convert, there is still nearly two times as many female converts than males. In my discussions with the responsible persons in the New Muslim Project in Great Britain, they claim that there are approximately 50% male converts involved in the project. In Scandinavia, however, without having any exact numbers, I have the

impression that at present time women are in majority among the converts. However, I also discovered that in the last decade of the twentieth century and in the twenty-first century there is a tendency of an increasing amount of Scandinavian men converting to Islam.

I find it remarkable that Poston does not discuss the methodological implications of relying solely on written material. Neither does he mention the possibility of error from not combining his literature study with fieldwork. Furthermore, I believe Poston's findings reflect the fact that much of his material comes from the early or mid-twentieth century. Poston actually points out that 33% of the European male converts in his study attribute their conversion to wartime experiences that brought them into close contact with Muslim cultures (Poston 1992: 164). The important point is that Poston does not discuss the historical context of his material, neither does he look at the importance of the great migration wave of Muslims as a reason for more and more women to convert in contemporary America and Europe.

Models of conversion

As a background for the discussion on why individuals convert to Islam, I will give an outline of Lewis Rambo's model of conversion. Lewis Rambo's book *Understanding Religious Conversion* (1993) has come to be regarded as the quintessential study of conversion. He builds his research on previous research and his development of the various stages of conversion has been understood by many recent researchers to be of universal validity (Poston 1992; Köse 1996). Rambo defines conversions as 'a process of change', which takes place in 'a process of time' (Rambo 1993: 5). He further sees conversion as contextual and states that 'factors in the conversion process are multiple, interactive, and cumulative' (Rambo 1993: 5). Rambo refers to a stage model that he elaborates from the 1965 model of John Lofland and Rodney Stark (Rambo 1993: 17). Rambo explains the appropriateness of a stage model:

Conversion is a process of change over time, generally exhibiting a sequence of processes, although there is sometimes a spiralling effect — a going back and forth between stages. A stage may be seen as a particular element or period during that process of change. Each stage

has a cluster of themes, patterns, and processes that characterize it (Rambo 1993: 16–17).

It is of interest to note that Rambo wrote an article in 1999 with another researcher, Charles E. Farhadian, in which his theory of conversion is modified. In this article it is added that ‘stages are not to be seen as always occurring in the same order’ (Rambo and Farhadian 1999: 24). With this addition, I believe that Rambo’s stage model of conversion becomes more applicable to some non-Christian religions. Rambo’s stage model, which he describes as a ‘process-oriented’ model, consists of seven stages: (a) context, (b) crisis, (c) quest, (d) encounter, (e) interaction, (f) commitment and (g) consequences.

In Rambo’s terminology ‘context’ is the specific social frame that moulds the process and structure of the conversion. His distinction between ‘macro-’ and ‘micro-’ context denotes the broader social system versus the narrow social context of the individual. Rambo sees ‘crisis’ then ‘quest’ as stages that precede the process of conversion, before the ‘encounter’ and the ‘interaction’ with a spokesperson for the particular faith or world view. In the stage of ‘commitment’, the individual accepts the new faith. It seems to be Rambo’s stage of ‘consequences’ that is of specific interest to the present study, for it is here the new Muslims’ role in the Muslim community in Scandinavia and in majority society is investigated. In Rambo’s view the consequences of conversion are both complex and multi-faceted. He expresses that ‘the consequences of conversion are determined in part by the nature and the duration of the conversion, and the response to conversion in a person’s or a group’s context’ (Rambo 1993: 145). As there are various experiences of conversion, some dramatic and some less intense, these might influence happenings in the aftermath of the conversion.

Frank K. Flinn is another researcher on conversion. In his article, ‘Conversion: Evangelicalism or the Pentecostal and Charismatic Experience’, he discusses the various aspects of conversion: the cognitive, religious, moral and emotional aspects. He claims that one has to look at all these aspects as a whole (Flinn 1999: 52). He claims that, in previous research on conversion, usually only one aspect, the psychological, had been accentuated. In Flinn’s view, William James was the first to promote the psychological model for understanding the social aspects of conversion (Flinn 1999: 53). As research has continued from where James left off, the conversion

process has tended to be regarded mainly from a psychological point of view.

Flinn draws up two models of interpreting conversion and argues that 'both have to do with arguments about the nature of the human soul' (Flinn 1999: 54). The first model interprets conversion as 'a sudden event and an escape from time' often in relation to a crisis. This model builds on the views of Plato and neo-Platonic Augustine, saying, 'The soul is something like a spiritual eye which attains perfection by turning away from the images and shadows of temporal life towards the eternal and unchanging realities' (Flinn 1999: 54). The other model sees conversion as a 'turn towards the next stage in the cycle of growth' and is 'a process of ordered stages'. This model follows the Aristotelean belief that 'the soul is the principle of growth in all living things by which they attain completion and fruition' (Flinn 1999: 54). Flinn regards both these models as applicable, depending on the circumstances, and the knowledge one has of the background to the individual's conversion process.

Flinn's conclusion is that conversion is both 'a momentous event and a stage on life's way' (Flinn 1999: 55), and both 'a state and a dialectical movement' (Flinn 1999: 56). He further breaks this movement down into three elements: (a) separation, (b) state of suspension and (c) a turning toward.

The first element, 'separation', is marked by a spiritual dissonance, which is expressed in a psychological, emotional, intellectual, theological, moral, sociological, and political ways (Flinn 1999: 57). All these factors are active in the process of conversion, according to Flinn, and one cannot reduce the analysis to just one aspect. He says:

The turning away that initiates the conversion experience is one species of a genus which, in general terms, may be called a change in world view, a paradigm shift or the discovery of an unforeseen horizon. . . . Turning away is an about-face resulting from fundamental conflicts which are overcome only by an intellectual, moral, religious or social conversion to a new set of ideas and behavioural norms that will make sense of the whole (Flinn 1999: 58).

Flinn names the second element, 'suspension', but it could just as well be called 'the liminal phase', since Flinn describes this moment with reference to Van Gennep's notion of the 'liminal phase' in rites of passages in tribal societies. Flinn refers also to the research of Jean Piaget, who speaks of transitional states between phases of

learning in terms of ‘cognitive disequilibrium’. Lawrence Kohlberg talks about a ‘cognitive conflict’ between moral stages, whereas Thomas Kuhn discusses ‘the unsettling perception of an anomaly preceding a paradigm shift’. Flinn says:

Each of us experience this phenomenon when we know that our old patterns of construing and knowing no longer work but when we do not yet sense the wider horizon in which the parts hold together again (Flinn 1999: 60).

Flinn describes the experience of the ‘turning towards’ phase in James’ terms of commitment, revitalization, renewal, regeneration, a sense of sanctification, holiness or blessedness (Flinn 1999: 60).

As the two first stages are inward-looking, the third is outwardly expressive in the sense, as Flinn says, ‘that the convert dedicates himself or herself to new ideals, new codes of behaviour, new spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting and meditation, works of charity or evangelization’ (Flinn 1999: 61). The third phase is also one of innovation where there is the potential for the creation of new directions within a religion. Flinn believes that one should not underestimate the innovative aspect of conversion. He argues, ‘What a new discovery is to scientific theory, conversion is to religion. It unsettles the perception of sacred reality, not only for individuals but also for entire civilizations’ (Flinn 1999: 61). As for conversion to Islam in Europe, I believe that as Europeans convert to Islam they bring their traditions with them into the new religion. Just as the Muslim migrant community is differentiated according to traditional practices, so the European traditions might provide a frame of reference through which to interpret the Islamic sources, thus the new Muslims act as a revolutionary force.

Below, Muslim converts’ experiences will be analysed in relation to the models of conversion of Rambo and Flinn.

Converts or ‘reverts’

Another aspect of conversion to Islam, particularly in English-language literature is that of new Muslims claiming to be ‘reverts’ rather than converts. It is interesting to note that the aspect of ‘reversion’ is not present in Anway’s book that deals with American female converts. In Muzaffar Haleem’s book, however, 4 out of 30 convert nar-

ratives contain the aspect of reversion. Lita Salbi, one of the American ladies interviewed in the book, says, 'I was a Muslim the day I was born, but I became aware of Islam in 1982' (Haleem 1999: 21). Paul O. Barlett, another American convert, stresses the matter of reversion, saying, 'I had returned to the state in which I had been born. I had returned to Islam' (Haleem 1999: 49). Faruq Abd al Haqq explains:

People often ask me why I became a Muslim. I answer by saying that I didn't, because I've always been one. There was no great conversion. I haven't changed my thinking, but only deepened it since I made the *shahāda* [confession of faith] a decade ago (Haleem 1999: 94).

This way of interpreting their own conversion process might be regarded in view of the Aristotelean model of conversion where the individual turns 'towards the next stage in the cycle of growth' in the belief that 'the soul is the principle of growth in all living things by which they attain completion and fruition' (Flinn 1999: 54).

This aspect of reversion has to be regarded in view of Islamist ideology, expressed through the apologetic literature, which was widely distributed in the seventies and the eighties. The Swedish researcher in Islamic Studies, Christer Hedin, has investigated this literature and found the idea of Islam as 'the natural religion' to be a particularly prominent theme. In his study he refers to an article from 1976 by Palestinian-American Ismail al-Farūqī in which he states that 'Islam is *din al-fitra (religio naturalis)*' (al-Farūqī 1976: 395; also quoted in Hedin 1988: 94). The natural status for human beings is thus that of a Muslim, in terms of submitting oneself to the laws of God. This idea of Islam as 'the natural religion', the religion which is compatible with essential human nature, is probably a consequence of the modernist idea of 'one single truth' which many intellectual Muslims encountered at universities in Western countries. Islamic ideas were legitimized by subjecting the Islamic message to rational thinking and looking at the 'one single truth' in terms of the religious message rather than the secular state of being. Al-Farūqī was one of the leading Islamist leaders in Western countries and his thinking has had a major influence on present Islamic thought, not only in Europe and the United States but also in the Muslim world.

Convert narratives

Flinn refers to Josiah Royce who claims that ‘conversion to faith is a spiritual reality that takes place within communities of interpretations’ (Flinn 1999: 53; see Royce 1968). In his view, the interpretation of intense experiences depends on the interpretative aspects of a wider group’s beliefs. Flinn refers to Saul’s experience on the road to Damascus as an illustration of Royce’s idea. He points to the fact that Saul’s vision was not interpreted by Saul himself, but rather by Ananias, a disciple in Damascus, who did so in the context of the traditions of interpretation in the congregation of Damascus (Flinn 1999: 53).

Many convert narratives tend to follow a certain course linked to the specific emphasis in their respective religious traditions. This has been observed by Werner in her readings of stories narrated by converts to Catholicism (Werner 1999: 292–316). The Swedish researcher, Inger Littberger, has stated that there exist in the Christian tradition of conversion² narratives that function as paradigms and examples for others to follow. She refers to *The Confessions* by Augustin, in which Augustin’s conversion experience in the eighth book reflects that of Antonius (Littberger unpublished: 1).

That convert narratives within a specific religious tradition tend to follow a certain course might result from converts writing down their experiences and other converts, by reading the account, adopting the experience as their own (as indicated by Littberger). I would argue that the construction of such convert narratives is processed on an unconscious level. As one reads a narrative, one internalizes the structure and experiences it as one’s own. Another possible interpretation pattern is that, as the pattern of conversion becomes well known, individuals reading the stories might precipitate a similar situation as though acting out a role-play. This seems to be the case with the British convert to Catholicism, John Henry Newman, and his convert narrative, which is regarded as a model convert narra-

² Littberger uses the Swedish term *omvändelse*. In the Swedish language two terms are used in the translation of the English word ‘conversion’: *konversion* and *omvändelse*. Although *omvändelse* covers converting from one religion or one world view to another, it can also refer to what Rambos terms ‘intensification’, meaning ‘the revitalized commitment to a faith with which the convert has had previous affiliation, formal or informal’ (Rambo 1993: 13).

tives for converts to Catholicism (Werner 1999: 292–316). The psychologist of religion, Anton Geels, discovered how most of his respondents who had gone through a religious experience had longed for it before it took place (Geels 1999). Thus, in psychological terms, it is possible to see a religious experience as an unconscious role-play built on a well-known, patterned experience.

Another aspect of convert narratives is the distinct interpretative patterns that tend to emerge as the convert looks retrospectively at his/her pre-Islam and post-conversion experiences. In this way, pre-Islam experiences tend to be portrayed in negative terms and post-commitment experiences in positive terms. As the interviewees are taking their present mental state as their starting point, the remembrance of bygone times might become a reconstruction of reality built on recent experiences, rather than an accurate recollection.

I have observed certain common features in Muslim convert narratives. Moreover, I have discovered that convert narratives tend to change with the passing of time and the development of the individual. As time passes, personal interests change, and it is the interest of the moment that is often what new Muslims refer to when asked about reasons for having converted. An intellectual female new Muslim who converted in the early eighties, tells how, at the early time of her conversion, she would refer to the aspect of social justice in Islam. This was, according to her, linked to the fact that, prior to her conversion, she had been an advocate of the socialist movement. Furthermore, she states that at an early stage she became a reader of Islamic political authors, such as the Islamists Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966), Ḥasan al-Banna' (d. 1949), Muḥammad Quṭb and Abū 'Ala al-Mawdūdī (d. 1979), who all stress the concept of social justice. Her concern for this particular aspect thus came to the forefront of her consciousness. This woman expresses a feeling of continuity between 'the old' and 'the new' that was prominent in her conversion narrative. Later on, however, she started to give other reasons when people asked her. In one period, for instance, she would say that it was the Islamic spiritual message that attracted her, and during another period she would talk about the 'logical message' of Islam. It is important to note that her degree in humanities might be a reason for the reflective aspect of change in her conversion narrative.

This change of emphasis in convert narratives is confirmed by the story of British convert, Gai Eaton. Eaton embraced Islam in the

early fifties while visiting Egypt. However, he did not strictly keep to the Islamic precepts until a much later date. In the early sixties he was sent as a diplomat to Madras in India. One day he went into a small mosque where three old men sat talking. He writes:

Seeing me, one of them motioned me with his hand to climb the minaret. I cannot imagine why he did so. Perhaps he knew something that I did not know? I climbed the rough steps and, from the top of the minaret, looked out on the dry landscape of the Deccan. Quite spontaneously, without thinking what I was doing, I raised my hands and said: 'Lord, here I am. Do with me, as you will!' (Eaton 1994: 15).

By indicating that the old man possessed a certain divine wisdom or acted as a tool for the Divine, Eaton provides a supernatural interpretation of his 'way to God'. This conforms to much research on conversion, where converts see divine interference as an important factor in their religious development. Eaton's interpretation of his conversion from Muslim to devout believer corresponds with Flinn's idea of the theological aspect of the separation phase of the conversion process, when conversion tends to be described in other-worldly terms. On another level, Eaton's experience of the transformation from one stage to another might be related to Flinn's notion of leaving the state of suspension and reaching the state of commitment: the stage of 'turning towards'. Moreover, Eaton's experience of his conversion as a sudden event coincide with Flinn's description of the model of conversion where conversion is interpreted as 'a sudden event and an escape from time' (Flinn 1999: 54).

Eaton claims that it was less the conversion itself but rather this particular moment, interpreted as a supernatural happening, which became the turning point of his life (Eaton 1994: 15). He adds, however: 'My diary does not entirely bear out this claim. It was more a way station on a long journey.' Eaton's reflections point at how the convert narrative tends to change over time. The discrepancy between his reflection in his diary, which was probably written at the same period as the happening itself, and his reflection at a later stage when he starts to write his convert narrative in retrospect, indicates how the narrative tends to change according to time and personal development.

What can be deduced from the female convert's reflection and Eaton's narrative is that, in retrospect, as the convert develops, s/he interprets events in different ways according to changing interests and preoccupations. Moreover, Eaton views his spiritual development

after conversion in terms of a journey with 'way stations'. This reflects Flinn's model of interpreting conversion, where 'the soul is the principle of growth' and conversion is seen as a 'turning toward the next stage in the cycle of growth' (Flinn 1999: 54). Thus, in the case of Eaton it seems that his 'reconstruction' of the conversion event reflects one particular model of conversion, whereas his diary probably written at the same time as the event happened, indicates another model of conversion. I will claim that such a reconstruction of events is typical for converts to various religions and conversion models might be based on reconstructed stories rather than 'what actually happened'.

This change of emphasis in the convert narratives is not only a matter of ever-developing interests, it is also a matter of response to the person one is talking to. The Swedish researcher in Islamic Studies, Jan Hjärpe, has observed that there are often three levels of consciousness in respondents' answers to questions of faith.³ He claims that, in discussion, it is important to be aware of the various levels of argument that a respondent might decide to use. It might be difficult to distinguish between the motivating, the legitimating and what might simply be apologetic arguments in a respondent's statements. Respondents' answers depend to a great extent on who the researcher is and how they view him/her. This is another important element in how to understand and analyse convert narratives.

Reasons for conversion

In research on conversion there has been a general desire to look into reasons for conversions, which has tended to stress the emotional aspects. Many researchers on the psychology of religion have therefore looked into the matter of conversion, trying to discover underlying psychological factors to explain the phenomenon.

Bad childhood experiences

Anti Oksanen is a psychologist of religion who has, in his study of conversion, pointed at some decisive factors that are essential for conversion to occur (Oksanen 1994). One suggestion is that conversion

³ Seminar in Islamology at Lund University 1991–1999. See also Roald 2001a.

is more likely to occur in individuals with histories of insecure parental attachment, i.e. childhood experiences where one or both parents have been harsh, rejecting, weak, overpowering or unavailable (Oksanen 1994: 159–160). Köse refers to the findings of the researchers J. Allison (1969), L. Salzman (1953), A. Deutsch (1975) and C. Ullman (1989), who have all discussed the impact of developments in childhood and adolescence on the conversion experience. The Freudian influence on these research results seems obvious. These researchers regard particularly stressful relations with the father as a motivating factor for individuals who convert within or to another religion. As regards converts to Islam, Köse observed that less than one third of his respondents reported stressful relations with their father (Köse 1996: 34). Köse found, however, that 43 of his 70 respondents had an absent or withdrawn father during childhood. He claims that there is a link between the lack of a father figure and rebellion towards society. It is interesting to note that Köse concludes, ‘These findings do not necessarily suggest that all who have absent or withdrawn fathers will be religious converts. It may only suggest that difficulties in relating to the father may be one of the antecedents of religious conversion’ (Köse 1996: 36).

Of my respondents, 76 said they had been brought up in a family with their biological mother and father, whereas 38 had either lived with one biological parent only or with a natural parent and a step-parent. One respondent lived in a foster home and another was an adopted child. 9 of the respondents had lost one of their parents between the ages 9–13 and 23 had parents who were divorced. 52 described their childhood as happy, 36 described it as good. 19 regarded their childhood as bad and 9 had experienced abuse in some form or another. One person did not tick off this question. In the qualitative interviews, I found that only 5 of 32 interviewees described their relationship with their parents, particularly their father, as especially stressful. Taking into account the divorce statistics and the figures of single-parent families, not only in Scandinavia but in the Western world in general, my findings show quite a low rate of insecure childhood attachment relationships among new Muslims and, therefore, contradict the research of Oksanen, as well as that of Salzman, Deutsch, Allison and Ullman. Moreover, with the high rate of Scandinavians who have either had stressful parental relations or divorced parents, Oksanen’s findings should indicate a much

higher percentage of converts to Islam or other religions in Scandinavian society.⁴

Crisis

Oksanen's findings that crisis or tension is essential before conversion, supported by arguments from Rambo's study (Oksanen 1994: 99), is questionable in a Muslim context. Poston, for instance, remarks that in most cases of conversion he investigated, few reported crisis, desperation or hopelessness as being driving factors for converting to Islam. In my own study, only 8 respondents attributed their conversion to a religious crisis. 11 reported a social crisis, such as a death of a family member or close friend, abuse or divorce. 8 had suffered depression. Only 27, constituting 24% of the 114 respondents who answered the question, reported a crisis or a depression prior to conversion, and it is therefore difficult to get a correlation with the findings of Rambo and Oksanen, that crisis is essential to conversion. Of the 8 respondents who had suffered a religious crisis, 6 were married with a Muslim, had Muslim partners or close Muslim friends prior to the conversion. Only two of the 8 did not have any contact with Muslims prior to the conversion. Of the 11 respondents who suffered a social crisis prior to the conversion 6 were married, had partners or parents who were Muslims, whereas 4 had Muslim friends at the time of the crisis. Only one of these 11 respondents had no personal contact with Muslims prior to the conversion. Of the 8 who had suffered from depression, 5 had Muslim partners or Muslims in the immediate family, 2 had close friends, whereas only 1 had no contact with Muslims prior to conversion. The 4 who turned to Islam without any prior contact with Muslims were all, according to their own statements, 'seekers of religious truth'. 18 other respondents also reported having gone through a crisis, but for all of them the crisis was linked directly to the issue

⁴ It is interesting to note that one of the converts in my investigation referred to a book she had read called *Det är aldrig för sent att få en lycklig barndom* (It is never too late to get a happy childhood), by the Finnish author, Ben Furion. Many psychological theories indicate a correlation between a bad childhood and adult crime or an unhappy adulthood. According to the interviewee, this book claims that one can live a decent and happy grown-up life despite a bad childhood.

of Islam. 11 of these 18 were either married or lived with a Muslim. One Norwegian woman who was married to a Muslim man prior to her conversion describes her crisis as a consequence of her husband's pressure on her to become a Muslim. She regarded Islam as dangerous, but at the same time she felt attracted to it. Even immediately after she embraced Islam she was confused and felt insecure about her choice. Various women spoke of a crisis after the conversion. Their husbands who had previously not practised the Islamic precepts suddenly started to follow the Islamic precepts *in toto* and expected the same from them. As their husbands often were quite ignorant about Islamic rules, regulations and ideas, they had 'difficulties in distinguishing between culture and Islam', according to most of these women.

The aspect of crisis *before* conversion is not an important aspect of conversion to Islam. Many researchers of conversion have regarded crisis as perhaps the most prominent trait of the conversion process. I had follow-up interviews with 2 individuals who reported a religious crisis prior to conversion, with 2 who had reported a social crisis, and with 2 who had suffered depression. All of these were either married to a Muslim or had a Muslim partner before they converted. I discovered that all 6 talked about their crisis *before* the conversion in terms of having felt pressed to embrace Islam by their partners. The 5 respondents I chose to speak with who had reported a crisis *after* the conversion, however, spoke in terms of having reacted towards a cultural understanding that the religion degraded women's position in the marital relationship. The crisis is thus not a spur to conversion, as in Rambo's model, but rather due to social pressure in one way or another as a consequence of conversion.

Rambo has declared the aspect of crisis as a crucial stage of the conversion process as well as the pre-conversion period. In his initial research, which is presented in his book from 1993, the stages are presented in a rigid, linear order. I would claim that Rambo's idea of crisis is not particularly apt to explain new Muslim conversion. Although he modified his model in 1999 and claimed that all stages are usually present in the conversion process but not necessarily ordered, it seems that the stage of 'crisis' in Rambo's model is different to the stage of 'crisis' in the context of the Muslim convert. In Rambo's model, the stage of crisis seems to be a triggering factor, whereas in the Islamic context, the stage of crisis is usually a *consequence* of converting to Islam. This impression is reinforced by

the revised edition of Rambo's model from 1999. In his explanation of the 'encounter' stage he says:

The encounter stage describes the contact between the potential convert and the advocate/proselytizer. It should be noted that this initial contact can precipitate the converting process, triggering a crisis and fostering a quest for new solutions (Rambo and Farhadian 1999: 28).

In this statement, Rambo and Farhadian point only at a pre-conversion crisis, which they see as essential for the conversion process. It is also interesting to note that the examples Rambo and Farhadian draw in the description of the stage of crisis are all linked to conversion to Christianity (1999: 25–27), whereas, in the description of other stages, they draw examples from conversions to other religions. This reinforces my claim that the stage of a pre-conversion crisis is more apt for the Christian context than the Islamic one. I further believe that the stage of crisis leading to a conversion is linked to the aspect of Christianity being the majority religion in Western society. As a crisis occurs it is more feasible for a person to look for a solution within the established frame of references which means either an intensifying of one's religion or a change of denomination within the same religion, than it would be to turn to a religion which probably would cause more problems for the person in terms of the Islamophobic expressions in Western society.

Encounter

In Larsen's study of converts in Norway, she observed that most new Muslims had come into contact with Islamic ideas through marriage or partnership (Larsen 1996: 137; 143). In her view, it is through marriage that Islamic traditions and law first appear to non-Muslims, a harmonious notion of Islam that contrasts with that common to the usual media images and rumour-mongering. Larsen further points at the fact that most marriages between Muslim men and non-Muslim Norwegian girls occur when the man is not practising the Islamic precepts. This is confirmed by Anway's study, as well as my investigation. Larsen's interviewees regarded the sudden change in their husbands' religious practice in positive terms, as their husbands became more involved in family life. Their husband's positive change made the Norwegian women look deeper into what

Islam stands for. This corresponds to Anway's report from one of her interviewees:

He [my husband] introduced me to Islam but never asked me to convert. As I saw him gradually acquire an inner peace, I became envious. Inner peace was what I sought (Anway 1995: 23).

I believe there are more female converts in Scandinavia than male because more Scandinavian women marry Muslims. This has to do mainly with the traditional social system to which many Muslims adhere, where men tend to choose their partners freely, whereas Muslim women are kept under more strict social control. Furthermore, in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) Muslim women are denied the right to marry non-Muslim men, whereas men are able to marry Christian and Jewish women (Sabiq 1998, Vol. II: 179–182).

Although Muslim men can marry Christian and Jewish women, many prefer their wives to convert to Islam. In my discussions with men from the Arabic-speaking community in Scandinavia in particular, I have discovered that this is attributed to the minority status of Muslims in Western countries. Most men have explained that it is possible to marry a non-Muslim woman in a Muslim society, but in a non-Muslim society they feel it would be difficult. The reason they gave is that, according to sharia, they have obligations to give their children an Islamic upbringing. This can hardly be fulfilled in a non-Muslim society if the wife is a non-Muslim as well. During my interview with Sheikh Muḥammad Darsh (d. 1997) in London in December 1995, he explicitly stated that he regarded marriage to a non-Muslim in a non-Muslim society as reprehensible (*makhruh*).

As Larsen's observation shows conversion to be often the result of marrying a Muslim, it seems that the factor of having had previous contact with Muslims before the conversion to Islam is the most common feature among *female* converts. In Anway's investigation, for instance, 63% of her respondents were already married to Muslims or had had a relationship with a Muslim prior to their conversion. Köse also mentions that many women in Britain who get involved with Pakistani and Arab men convert to Islam (Köse 1996: 19). Haleem's study indicates a similar trend, and even many of the male converts had some contact with Muslims prior to their conversion. Poston found that 60% of the convert narratives he studied mentioned the influence of Muslims on the conversion process (Poston 1992: 173), but it is interesting to note that 69% of Poston's

study involved males, and it is unlikely many would have been married to Muslim women before their conversion.

Köse has observed that 14 of his 70 interviewees were married or engaged to a Muslim at the time of conversion (Köse 1996: 114). In my study I had a higher rate of male-female relationships prior to conversion. Of the 112 respondents who answered the question, 65 (58%) were married to Muslims or had a Muslim partner prior to their conversion, 37 (33%) had Muslim friends at the time of conversion and 10 (9%) had had no prior contact with Muslims before they converted to Islam. Of the 10, 4 were men and 6 were women. These individuals had turned to Islam mainly through reading the Koran or other religious books, particularly by famous Muslims such as the American convert to Islam, Malcolm X. Of the 116 respondents, 16% were men whereas 84% were women. Correspondingly, 40% of those who had had no previous contact with Muslims at the time of conversion were men, whereas 60% were women. Proportionately, thus, in the present study more men than women embraced Islam as a result of reading books, than having personal relationships or encounters with Muslims.

The result of the present study shows that 91% of the respondents had a form of personal relationship with Muslims at the time of conversion. The fact that many new Muslims have been in a love relationship with Muslims prior to conversion has made many researchers as well as journalists with whom I have spoken conclude that most new Muslims embrace Islam due to this factor. It is important to note that almost all of the respondents as well as interviewees, when first asked why they converted, never mentioned such a relationship as a reason for conversion. It was only with follow-up questions that I could construct a more complete picture. Out of interest, two of the respondents in this study who had answered 'no' to the question of whether they had had personal relations with a Muslim prior to conversion, had actually had Muslim boyfriends when their interest in Islam started. This I discovered in the interviews I conducted with them.

Larsen, in her discussion of 'the motive of love' (*kjærlighetsmotivet*), also notes that most new Muslims who were married at the time of conversion did not mention the aspect of love as a motivation for turning to Islam in their convert narrative (Larsen 1995: 144). Larsen believes that this reflects either that some converts do not want to discuss this part of their life, or that, in their development as a

Muslim, they do not see the role their partners played in the conversion process as decisive. I believe there is a third reason why new Muslims might try to hide their contact with Muslims prior to conversion. New Muslims who are married or had Muslim partners prior to their conversion have expressed to me that they are often adjudged to have become Muslims because of their partners. As they feel that their decision to convert is their own, rather than that of their partners, they feel belittled by the insinuation that they cannot decide for themselves. This is particularly true for female converts, who are often faced with the prejudice that Muslim women are oppressed by male relatives.

Larsen further refers to some female converts who came into contact with Islam through marriage to non-practising Muslim men. As personal contact with a Muslim might trigger women to look more deeply into the Islamic message, some even divorce their husbands for not being 'good Muslims'. Many of these have then married Muslim men who do follow the Islamic precepts (Larsen 1995: 143). Some of the interviewees in the present study had a similar development.

In my interviews, only two individuals admitted that their conversion was due to being married to a Muslim. Both converts, one Swedish woman and one Danish man, were non-practising Muslims and considered their conversion as pragmatic.

The fact that most converts deny the aspect of their partner being Muslims to be the trigger for conversion is interesting; evidently it is not love alone that makes converts turn to Islam. Rather, personal contact that helps converts differentiate between Islamic ideas and the stereotyped images of public discourse is regarded by many new Muslims as the most important aspect of the conversion process. I believe that it is the strong emphasis on gender equality (*jämnhets*) and women's independence from male authority that makes Scandinavian new Muslims deny 'the motive of love'. Moreover, in my discussions, some new Muslims particularly emphasised that their choice of becoming a Muslim was 'truly theirs', even though they came to know about Islam through their husbands or partners. Hanna expressed, 'Sometimes my husband jokes with me, saying that if it was not for him I would never have been Muslim. But this is not true. Even though I had not married him, I would have found Islam in one way or another.'

As religions and societies demarcate themselves from other religions and societies, Islam and Muslim cultures have come to be

regarded in unfavourable terms in Scandinavia, as discussed in an earlier chapter. Thus, the personal encounter seems to be even more important for conversion to Islam than to other religions. As claimed by the new Muslims themselves, there might be, therefore, intellectual and religious reasons for converting, such as an intellectual refusal of their own society's values or religious beliefs. As indicated by the results of the questionnaire, many new Muslims had religious or social commitments before the conversion, a commitment they transferred into the Islamic context. It is important to note that there are many new Muslims who are active in presenting Islam and the Muslim situation to majority society in all three Scandinavian countries.

Köse has observed that many British converts embrace Islam for marital reasons. He says, however, 'though the initial impetus for conversion comes from the desire to marry, a Muslim partner may later develop a desire to embrace Islam' (Köse 1996: 114). One of Köse's informants, Jason, states:

To be honest, I'm not quite sure which came first; my attraction to the girl, or my attraction to Islam. I think they moved along with each other because we talked about Islam a lot (Köse 1996: 114).

I believe Jason's statement shows a reconstruction of his convert narrative with time. As the initial intention to embrace Islam might have been sparked by his wish to marry a Muslim, the two desires grow together and his convert narrative changes accordingly.

As 91% of all the new Muslims in the present investigation had had an encounter in one form or another with Muslims at the time of conversion, the personal network must be seen as an important factor in the conversion process. One must remember, however, that there are many Scandinavians who have love relationships or friendships with Muslims and do not become Muslims. The personal encounter might thus be regarded as a necessary criterion for converting to Islam, but not on its own a sufficient one. Other criteria have to be fulfilled. In conclusion, I believe it is possible to see the personal encounter as a *triggering factor* rather than a reason for conversion to Islam.

The extensive religious change in Scandinavia, which has been brought to light by the EVSS study (Pettersson and Riis 1994), is linked to a suspicious attitude towards institutional religions as well as authoritative institutions (see Halman 1994: 70). It is probably because of this attitude that the 'encounter' stage of the conversion

process, becomes a necessary factor for conversion to Islam in Scandinavia. Without the personal encounter it is difficult to appreciate the Islamic message with its apparent strict rules and regulations or many Muslims' insistence on traditional gender roles. Moreover, I believe the personal encounter is necessary as Islam is a minority religion and one of social defame in Scandinavia. The majority discourse tends to create a hostility towards Islam and Muslims, whereas in the personal experiences with Muslims non-Muslims might change their view on Islam. In the Scandinavian context, it seems that the stage of 'encounter' is the first stage of the Muslim conversion process, in contrast to Rambo's model, where it comes after the conversion.

Islam as a 'logical' religion

Poston observes that, in contrast to the enormous amount of literature on, say, Christian conversion narratives, Islamic literature by European or American converts contains little mention of supernatural experiences.⁵ He argues that, for Christians, such narratives have had an apologetic value. For Muslims, on the other hand, his suggestion is that the *tenets* of faith have been decisive. He says:

But the Muslim believes that the propositional tenets of his faith are self-evident if they are properly presented and understood, and the focus of his proselytization is the proclamation of these tenets rather than the experiences of human beings (Poston 1992: 158).

My own study reinforces Poston's findings. Although some of my interviewees have described part of their conversion process in supernatural terms, it is the intellectual aspect that dominates the convert narratives. This is also confirmed by Eaton in the story of his 'journey from unbelief to faith' (Eaton 1994: 2). As referred to above, he gives an indication of divine interference, but his main reasoning represents an intellectual process ending up in a belief in God. Among other arguments, he sees that 'dissatisfaction with Western civilization' turns people to Islam. For converts to Islam, Poston has

⁵ Poston wrote his book on converts in 1992, whereas Jeffrey Lang, whose book actually contains supernatural experiences, published *Struggling to Surrender* in 1994.

observed that their conversion experiences are often ‘the end result of a long process of seeking, a deliberate choice made after careful examination and consideration of alternatives’ (Poston 1992: 169). He contrasts this ‘rational’ approach to religion with the findings by researchers on conversions to Christianity, where ‘intensity of emotions’ is seen as an important aspect (Poston 1992: 169). He states:

Conversions to Islam, then, differ significantly from conversions to Christianity in that they appear to be ‘conversions of the head’ (i.e., the intellect) rather than ‘conversions of the heart’ (i.e. the emotions) (Poston 1992: 171).

Poston’s observation concurs with many of the conversion narratives where interviewees see ‘the logic of the Islamic message’ as a motivating force in their conversion process. Ulf Karlsson, the Swedish convert interviewed in Haleem’s book expresses the same when asked about the factors which brought him to Islam: ‘I guess the logic of it all . . . The logic and reasoning of the Qur’an, the scientific facts — all made it clear to me that this was not the work of man, but the words of God’ (Haleem 1999: 116). The idea of the Islamic message as ‘logical’ corresponds to another idea I have observed. Most new Muslims describe their conversion as ‘a coming home’. Kari, who converted in her late twenties states:

When I read about Islam it was as if I was coming home. Everything I read correlated to my own ideas. I realised that everything in my own society that I saw as a problem had an answer in Islam. Islam is the answer to human life and human society.

Similar ideas were expressed by new Muslims in a graduate thesis conducted at Lund University in Sweden. Veronika Belina who conducted the study notes that many of the new Muslims see Islam as having the ‘right’ answers and that the Koranic ideas express their own feelings (Belina 1999: 14).

Poston also shows how some of the converts look upon Islam as a ‘supremely *rational* faith’ (Poston 1992: 177). 21% of the converts in his study point at this aspect as a major factor in their decision to convert. Poston refers to how converts express that ‘Islam appeals to one’s reason’ and that Islam ‘invites and encourages the pursuit of knowledge’ (Poston 1992: 177). Poston further states that Islam ‘was [seen as] a natural religion that did not conflict with, but rather accommodated, the findings of modern science and was therefore

[seen as] the only viable option for the enlightened man or woman' (Poston 1992: 177).

Many of the respondents to the questionnaire in this study stated that they chose Islam because it is a 'rational' and 'logical' religion. However, in contrast to this rational approach is the approach of the Sufi converts. In the questionnaire, 5 respondents claimed a Sufi affiliation and only one of these mentioned 'logic' or 'rationality' as motives for conversion. In my discussions with the 32 interviewees, however, I discovered that most spoke about Islam as a 'rational' and 'logical' religion, even those who had a Sufi affiliation.

Karima, who converted in the mid-1980s, remarked that the Koran encourages believers to look at the creation of God in order to understand His existence. She points at how God speaks of nature as a sign, which he has given to mankind. 'Some will not accept God's sign and will therefore not believe in God, whereas others will understand and thus believe,' she states. In her study, Larsen has also observed that Norwegian converts state it is 'reasonable' (*fornuftig*) and 'logical' (*logisk*) for them to be Muslims (Larsen 1995: 140).

The question to raise is why so many Scandinavian new Muslims regard the Islamic teaching in terms of 'logic'. The popularity among Scandinavian converts of Maurice Bucaille's book, *The Bible, The Koran and Science*, in which he argues that the Koran, in contrast to the Bible, is in conformity with scientific results, indicates the strength of the idea of Islam as 'a logical and reasonable religion.' I believe the particular 'logical' approach to Islam reflects the modern Islamist approach. The Muslims' encounter with the secular Western world from the 18th century onwards has continued to instigate processes of change, with ideas from the secular sphere influencing the formation of new approaches to the Islamic message. The idea of a 'logical' religion is in contrast to the common Western notion of religion as an other-worldly practice. Thus the choice of Islam might imply a particular break with the Protestant Christian concept of religion. Poston bears this out, saying that 19% of the converts he studied were attracted by a 'this-worldly' focus in Islam. This, he says, contrasts with what was seen as the other-worldly orientation of [particularly of Protestant] Christianity (Poston 1992: 178).

Linked to the 'logical' approach, and to the convert's reaction to previous religious traditions, is the notion of the 'simplicity' of the Islamic faith. Poston has listed this as one of the main factors attracting many Western converts. He quotes various testimonies that say

how Christian traditions and doctrines have become complicated and intricate (Poston 1992: 176). In my own investigation, many new Muslims expressed similar sentiments. Anna claimed that 'Islam is so easy to understand. The faith has various levels and everybody can find a suitable approach according to their particular level of understanding.'

The concept of 'Islam as logical religion' thus has many dimensions. It refers to a Koranic logic, where the existence of God is described in terms of phenomena in nature, such as the regularity of seasons, the coming of day and night, the growing and dying of trees and flowers; it refers to the idea of God as the Creator who knows what the creation needs (Islamic laws are thus in conformity with the needs of human beings); and it refers to the idea of Islamic theology as accessible, in contrast to the new Muslims' perception of Christian and Jewish theology.

The rejection of the teaching of Trinity

In contrast to the Scandinavian setting, where few new Muslims have a religious history, many American and even British converts seem to have come to Islam from a practising Christian background. In Belina's study, out of the 8 converts interviewed, only one reported to have been a practising Christian before conversion to Islam (Belina 1999), whereas the others had either had some kind of faith in a God or were atheists. Belina's findings correspond with my own, the great majority having testified to a vague belief in God or claimed to be agnostics or atheists prior to conversion. This result has to be regarded in view of the EVSS study. Built on this study, Halman has observed that the wane of traditional church-oriented religiosity is a feature of Northern Europe and Scandinavia, and the belief in a kind of spirit or life force is much more widespread than the belief in a personal God (Halman 1994). In the United States, on the other hand, the situation is different. Many of the converts interviewed by both Haleem and Anway tell of a thorough search within the Christian faith and other faiths before coming to Islam. Poston's study also indicates that many of the converts had looked into other faiths before accepting Islam (Poston 1992: 165). Few of the respondents in the present study reported a particular religious interest before conversion. Some belonged to free churches, which in Scandinavian society refers to those not affiliated to the evangelical-Lutheran state Church.

However, despite the lack of religious interest prior to conversion, many of the respondents and interviewees regarded their rejection of the teaching of the Trinity as a key factor in their conversion to a strict monotheistic religion. The notion of 'direct contact with God in Islam', in contrast to the Christian idea of having Jesus or priests as intermediaries, was an oft-recurring theme. In Haleem's book, the aspect of rejecting the Trinity is mentioned in many testimonies. In Anway's book, many of the converts had experienced a growing discontentment with the logic of the teaching of the Trinity. Many testimonies in the studies of Poston, Haleem and Anway show that the desire for direct contact between God and man is a decisive factor in bringing them to Islam. Inherent in this expression is an implicit criticism of both the teaching of Trinity and the role of priests in Christianity. However, the converts' claim that they chose Islam as a result of rejecting the teaching of Trinity might be a reconstruction of their convert narrative, as this rejection is a main aspect of the Islamic creed and the main factor distinguishing it from the Christian creed. This rejection of the teaching of the Trinity is a rejection of Christianity, and I believe it can be seen as a symbolic rejection of the whole system of pre-conversion beliefs. Using Flinn's theory of the three elements of conversion, of which 'separation' is the first, this rejection can be seen as an intellectual paradigm shift that the convert goes through particularly in the initial phase of the conversion process.

Some converts also mentioned 'the material spirituality in Islam', which reflects an Islamic understanding that the spiritual and material aspects of life are compatible rather than mutually exclusive. This formulation, however, has been less evident in other convert narratives, although I have often come across the similar notion that 'Islam is a practical religion'. Linked to this notion is the idea that Islam gives rules and regulations for every aspect of life. More than 60% of the respondents in this study referred to this in the questionnaire. Moreover, 18 of the interviewees expressed that one of the reasons they chose Islam was the fixed and established system of regulations that made life easy. Many of these converts, male and female, contrasted the Islamic system with Scandinavian society, where, as one Swedish woman stated, 'everything is so loose'. She saw free and individualized society, where 'the individual's choice is built on the consideration of self', as being in opposition to Islamic ideas.

As for the notion of Islam having fixed rules and regulations, it is of interest to recount an event that took place during my own first years of conversion. I was invited by a journalist, along with two Swedish and one Norwegian convert, to talk about Islam and my reasons for converting. During the interview, we spoke about 'Islam giving us security and stability in life, as there are clear rulings for all aspects of life in the Islamic sources.' The journalist then started to penetrate into Islamic issues: why are Muslim men not supposed to follow a particular dress code? Are contraceptives forbidden or permissible in Islam? How about abortion? Etc. Our answers to all these questions were 'it depends' or 'there are various views among the Islamic scholars on this issue'. At the end, the journalist said that he found it strange that we all spoke of clear rulings in Islam, whereas in reality the answers to nearly all questions depended on time, place or circumstances. I believe the journalist opened my eyes to the problematic view that many new converts have of Islam, that it offers a strict and firm system that has to be followed in all areas of life. In reality, many Islamic rulings have flexible interpretations, according to context.

My experience with Scandinavian new Muslims is that many of them view Islam as a fixed system in the early years of their conversion. However, as they acquire more knowledge of Islam and mature and develop as individuals, some tend to change this view. Some new Muslims, particularly those that are highly educated, tend to adapt the notion of Islam as a flexible religion whereas others, often less educated individuals, tend to accept the notion of Islam as a religion with rules for every detail in human life. A third group turns to hair-splitting discussions in an attempt to find the only 'true' rule for every single detail in human life.

In his study, Poston does not mention the aspect of Islam as a religion whose injunctions are easy to follow. This might have to do with the fact that his research concentrated on testimonies written mostly by intellectuals and individuals who had developed their Islamic faith before going public with their writings. My respondents, on the other hand, belong to various categories of educational standard, and many have been Muslims for quite a short time. The outcome of the research might therefore be different.

Conversion as rebellion

Köse speaks of 'rebellion conversion' (Köse 1996: 54), where individuals convert to Islam as a direct consequence of an adolescent rebellion. Of the three individuals in his study who converted in late adolescence, Köse deals at length with Steve, who speaks of his conversion as a rebellious act, saying that 'the next rebellion perhaps was initially the thought of joining a religion (Islam) which was obviously so hated by the people of the West' (Köse 1996: 56). Köse believes that, by adopting 'a religion or a world view opposed to that of the parents, these young people wished to separate themselves from their parents' (Köse 1996: 59).

In my study, as many as 25 respondents were 19 years or less at the time of conversion. One young girl was as young as 12, and another was 13 when they converted. Of these 25, two were young boys who had close Muslim friends. Three of the girls who converted at the age of 17 had experienced harassment at school. The 20 remaining girls who converted at this young age had Muslim boyfriends at the time of conversion. None of the respondents or interviewees who converted at an early age mentioned this aspect of rebellion. However, I would claim that some of the respondents who converted at a later age might have considered themselves as rebels in one form or another, although no one actually stated this as clearly as in Köse's study. I found that 34 converts (29%) had belonged to either the political left or to the environmental movement prior to conversion. Two of the interviewees, however, one man and one woman, who belonged to this group of leftist political activists, explicitly discussed their conversion in terms of a rebellion against society. It seems, thus, the social aspect of rebellion is an important factor in the conversion process. It is important to note that Köse's informant, Steve, explicitly states that his rebellion is against both his father and society. He says, 'I've always rebelled against something. If it wasn't my father, it had to be something else when he died. So I rebelled against society' (Köse 1996: 56). Köse, however, chooses to analyse Steve's statement in psychological terms, as an adolescent rebellion against parent authority rather than as a broader social protest.

In my study and dealings with converts in general, I have sensed a strong link between conversion and converts' relationships to society. In the questionnaire, therefore, I asked what attitude the respondents had to their own society before their conversion to Islam. I

am aware that such a question might reveal more about the individual's present situation than his/her past, because of a possible reconstruction of the past. However, their answers might also indicate how certain disillusioned individuals chose Islam, whereas others did not. Even informants who have not belonged to the political left or been part of environmental movements have expressed a general negative attitude towards Scandinavian society. Lisa, who embraced Islam in the mid-1990s, stated:

I have felt like an anthropologist my whole life. I have been an observer. Since I was a small child, I have observed what people around me have said and done and I have thought many times that this is the Swedish way, this is how the Swedes act and think. I have never felt myself to be part of this picture; I have never been a participant. I was never harassed as a child; it was never them who shut me out; rather I myself chose to leave myself out.

Aisha, who turned to Islam in the early 1980s tells how she was harassed at school. 'I never bothered much about it,' she claims, 'I just felt the others to be stupid. I did not feel part of the group, nor did I feel part of a society that produces such harassers. When I learned about Islam, I felt myself turning my back on a social order I despised.'

At the time of her conversion, Annika, a former leftist, regarded the political Islamist books as confirming her previous political ideas. Kari, with a similar political background, expressed that, for her, Islam became a continuation of her struggle against injustice in society. 'As I became conscious of God's cosmic justice, that every individual will suffer the consequences of their actions either in this life or in the Hereafter, much of the aggression and hopelessness I had felt in the face of injustice in society, faded away. It was left for me to do my duty to humankind and my best for society.' There is a tendency for new Muslims with a leftist past to look upon Islam in liberating terms. Kari stated that 'in Islam one should not be afraid of anything but God, and, with this attitude, one can stand up for injustice in society without anxiety or fear for any created being'. She continues, saying, 'I no longer have the fear of authority I used to have.'

I see a link between being a leftist in the seventies and the eighties and the conversion to Islam. Both actions are indicators of rebellion towards the established order. Khadija, a highly educated new Muslim stated:

Both the leftists and the Muslim converts are rebels; they both want to extend their boundaries. They are different from mainstream society. The conversion to Islam becomes part of the criticism of their societies. The converts dare to stand up and be different in a world where conformity is demanded. For instance, the ideals of our society are to be beautiful and stay young forever. The converts protest against such ideals and stand up for the possibility of being themselves.

That there are leftists who embrace Islam is confirmed by the Swedish anthropologist, Thomas Gerholm, who claims that Sufi brotherhoods in Europe tend to attract young people with leftists sympathies. He shows for instance that in Granada, Spain, there is a big group of Muslim converts dedicated to the 'return of Islam to Andalusia'. He claims that the majority of this group has a background in left-wing political movements (Gerholm 1998: 264–265). The Swedish painter Ivan Aguéli with his anarchist sympathies is another example on leftists embracing Islam.

I found from my study that the Scandinavian new Muslims with radical political ideas who converted in the 1980s had previously been members to or sympathizers with radical Marxist groups or the left wing of the Social Democratic Party. With regards to the latter, many new Muslims had previously belonged to the youth wing of the Party, which is regarded as quite radical in comparison to the mother party. This background was particularly common amongst new Muslims born in the 1950s, whereas formerly radical new Muslims born in the 1960s and 1970s had been more directed towards the environmental movement. I believe that this represents a generational shift. As social rebellion in the 1970s and early 1980s was channelled through Marxist and leftist groups, the rebellion in the late 1980s and 1990s was, and to a great extent still is, channelled through environmental movements.

Another aspect of the rebellion motive in conversions to Islam is the minority/majority dichotomy. Rebellion is partly about adapting the opposite extreme of what one rebels against; Islam as a minority religion with a 'bad' reputation will then be a suitable solution to turn to. Moreover, as leftists often tend to sympathise with the 'weak' and 'oppressed' in society, sympathy with Muslims might cause a further interest in Islam that ends up with a conversion.

Age at the time of conversion

Whereas 25 of the respondents embraced Islam at the age of 19 years or younger, the majority of the group, 68 respondents (59%), converted in their twenties. 16 respondents (14%) were in their thirties and 7 (6%) embraced Islam after 40. This means that 93 (80%) were under 30 at the time of conversion.

It is interesting to note that the majority (68 respondents) converted to Islam in their twenties at an age where one has lived out one's adolescence feelings and has reached an age to settle down.

Islamist Literature

In later chapters, I will deal with literature that is read by new Muslims in Scandinavia in detail. However, I think it is important to bring out some of the characteristics in the present discussion from Islamic literature, in order to clarify certain traits peculiar to Scandinavian new Muslims.

I aim to point at the most important characteristics that I could extract from Scandinavian convert narratives: first and foremost, the above-mentioned 'logic of the Islamic message'; secondly, the rejection of the Christian dogma of the Trinity; and thirdly, the search for a more comprehensive life style with firm rules and guidance in an increasingly relativist world. All these factors, observed in the Scandinavian setting, are also reflected in the testimonies of other countries' converts, but to a lesser extent. As I met and read about new Muslims from other parts of the world, particularly from Trinidad, the United States of America, Germany, France, and Great Britain, I realised that the Scandinavian pattern of Muslim convert narratives is, to a great extent, the result of the Scandinavian cultural context of the 1980s and 1990s as well as the particular Islamist literature prevailing at that time. Larsen has looked at Islamic literature read by Muslim converts, and she notes that the seventies saw the start of the printing of many Islamic books in various European languages. According to her, these books have a 'marked spiritual and moral emphasis' (Larsen 1995: 139. See also Denny 1987: 245). Larsen talks particularly about books published by English-Muslim publishing houses and organisations. From the early seventies, the IIFSO (International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations),

published a great number of Islamic books into 72 languages. These books were apologetic in the sense that they were targeted at a Muslim audience and contained a critical attitude to non-Islamic ideologies, particularly the ideology of secularization, and to non-Muslim societies, particularly Western society. Furthermore, the books had a particular emphasis on reason and logic, ideas that made them attractive to an audience brought up on modernistic ideas of belief in science and reason.

Pernilla Ouis, a Swedish Human ecologist and convert to Islam, has written about the particular political and 'rational' approach to Islam that is promoted by the IIFSO. She has observed that, as IIFSO books were freely distributed to Islamic organisations and Islamic centres across Europe, they became available to most new Muslims. Furthermore, as these books were translated into nearly all the European languages, for a long period of time they were the only available Islamic books in the converts' own languages (Ouis 1996).

In Sweden, new Muslims played an active role in the publishing of the Muslim magazine *Salaam*. *Salaam* was first issued in 1986 and, in the beginning, most articles were written by new Muslims from the Nordic countries. Although published in Swedish, *Salaam* is read by new Muslims from other Nordic countries, particularly Norwegians and Swedish-speaking Finns. Muslims in Sweden and Norway have had close relations and have to a great extent attended each others' conferences. The Association of Islamic Information in Norway, for instance, was from the 1980s to the mid-1990s a subgroup of the Swedish Association of Islamic Information.

IIFSO literature and the ideology of the Islamist movement have had an obvious influence on the content of *Salaam*. *Salaam* has the same stress on logic and reason as IIFSO literature. Many of the convert narratives also emphasize Islam as a 'logical' and 'reasonable' religion. This particular understanding of Islam, therefore, has greatly influenced the development of the Scandinavian new Muslims' Islamic ideas. This might be the reason why few Muslim converts in Sweden, Norway and Finland turn to Sufism. In Denmark, on the other hand, many new Muslims are Sufis, particularly those with few Arab links.

Reflections

I find from my research that Rambo's model of conversion cannot be applied to the Islamic context without modifications. This is partly due to the different nature of the two religions, but first and foremost it has to do with the aspect of majority versus minority. Most research has been conducted in contexts where Christianity in one form or another, is the religion of the majority population or a religion promoted by Western missionaries whose social status was high. In this context the convert continues to act within the majority society and most changes happen on the psychological level. Conversion to Islam in Western society is in contrast a process of change which the convert mostly experience on a social level. The social aspects are therefore essential for a model of conversion to Islam in Western society.

Rambo sees the stage of 'encounter' as important in his model, but his understanding of this stage is different from the reality of the 'encounter' stage in the Islamic context. In the Islamic conversion process, the stage of 'encounter' is often the first stage, occurring earlier than Rambo's model suggests. The reverse is true of the stage of 'crisis', which comes early, often as a triggering factor in Rambo's model, but usually after and as a consequence of conversion *if* it occurs in the Islamic conversion model. The other stages in Rambo's model are of a more general nature, concerned with the levels of interaction or commitment to the new faith. In the Islamic context these differ. Some turn to Islam from religious and intellectual convictions, whereas others embrace Islam for pragmatic reasons such as marriage. These stages are thus hard to group together in general patterns.

There are many reasons why Scandinavians embrace Islam. Due to converts' tendencies to reconstruct their convert narratives according to time and context, it is difficult to produce exact data on the matter. Whereas most converts would regard their conversion as an intellectual or religious search for the truth, I found that in 91% of cases, converts had partners, brothers, sisters, parents, children or close friends who had introduced them to Islam. It would rarely be questioned that conversion to other religions or religious denominations outside Islam often contains an aspect of love, friendship, or just contact with someone from the faith in question. However, as Islam has a rather bad reputation in Scandinavian society, most

non-Muslims would entirely attribute a person's embrace of Islam to love or friendship. I would claim that due to this bad reputation, there is a special need for personal contact in order for a non-Muslim to have a second thought about Islam at all. The findings that 91% of the converts in this study had prior contact with Muslims might just reflect this need.

The aspect of crisis or bad childhood experiences has been prominent in many of the psychological theories of conversion. In the Islamic context, I found that both these factors were of minor importance for the respondents and interviewees in this study. A small minority of respondents reported a problematic childhood, but I believe the level reflects that of society in general. Moreover, if one should look at all individuals with bad childhood or crisis experiences as possible 'converts', one might wonder why more Scandinavians do not convert to a religion.

On the aspect of rebellion, 29% of the respondents reported a radical political past. My findings differ from Köse, who equates rebellion conversion with adolescent revolt. This is a psychological perspective, and I believe that the convert's rebellion is targeted just as much towards the existing social order in society.

A prominent reason for conversion to Islam is claimed by the respondents to be the idea of Islam as a 'rational' and 'logical' religion. I believe that both these aspects find their mirror in a secular Scandinavian society that lays stress on precise science and rationality. The Islamist literature distributed among converts in the eighties and nineties promoted a view of the Islamic message as 'logical' in comparison to, say, Protestant Christianity, which this literature described in supernatural terms. Moreover, in this literature, Islamic phenomena are described as complementing scientific fact; Islam is described as a 'rational' religion, fully compatible with modern science. Islamist literature might thus be regarded as a key protagonist in the presentation and understanding of an Islam that is suited to modern Scandinavian society. Islamist literature also provides material for new Muslims to structure their convert narratives and form conceptions of their 'way to Islam'.

As motivations for embracing Islam are manifold, there results a variety of understandings of the Islamic message. The convert community in the Scandinavian countries is closely linked to the Muslim immigrant communities. In the next chapter I will present the various Islamic trends to which new Muslim tend to adhere.

CHAPTER FOUR

MUSLIM CONVERT TRENDS

The Prophet said: ‘The Jews divided into 71 groups, the Christians into 72 groups, and my Umma will divide into 73 groups. Of these 73 groups 72 will go to hell and one will go to Paradise. This is the Jama‘a [here: the group who follows the Prophet].’ (Ḥadīth)

(Sunan Abū Da‘ud, *kitāb al-sunna* no. 17718)

The complexity of Islam in Sweden is reflected in the new Muslim community: many new Muslims are active in the immigrant communities in one way or another; they are attracted to the variety of Muslim trends; and they can be found among the most non-practising Muslims at one end of the scale and the most extreme practising Muslims at the other. Mats, a new Muslim who converted from Catholicism to Islam at the beginning of the 1980s, expresses:

There is a lack of organisation and leadership among Muslims, particularly among the youth. There is continuous talk about different trends, however, this is only the flipside to what I see as a very positive phenomenon, namely the individual’s personal freedom to interpret and shape his/her own faith. The consequence of such a freedom is that God holds individuals accountable for their choices and how their faith is implemented in daily life. In the Catholic Church there are authorities that one cannot oppose, at least when it comes to the doctrines.

New Muslims are faced with a multiplicity of Islamic views. In Western countries one can find Muslims of various cultural backgrounds, law schools and trends. New Muslims who encounter these manifold views and trends tend to be confused. In search of the ‘truth’, they tend to look for the ‘pure sources’ instead of settling for one of the many cultural expressions born Muslims term ‘Islam’. The search for the ‘pure sources’ was expressed by many of the respondents and informants in this study. Moreover, many new Muslims rejected the Law-School system, saying that they would follow only the Koran and Sunna. The new Muslim decision to

define 'Islam' according to the Koran and Sunna, ignoring traditional Islamic knowledge, seems to be a consequence of their being faced by a multitude of Islamic expressions. Below I will discuss the methodology of 'turning back to the Koran and Sunna'. This methodology is used by new Muslims of various trends, but with different results due to differences in outlook.

One encounters a major problem when trying to define the various trends. Most trends overlap with each other and a Muslim affiliated to one trend might easily share ideas and methodologies with Muslims in other trends. For instance, Jesber, a leading Scandinavian convert, considers himself a '*salafi* Sufi', thus indicating the vague borders between various Islamic trends. Although Muslims in general cannot be exclusively cultivated in a single direction, Jesber's mixed approach seems to typify that of new Muslims in particular, reflecting a lack of socialization into traditional Muslim knowledge.

Below I will discuss new Muslims' approach to Islam. Although there are overlaps between trends, I will use Weberian typologies. Most new Muslims can be found in a moderate, 'middle' trend, which I will call the 'rational-logic' or 'rational' approach. Even the Shi'a Muslims I have interviewed have a similar approach. I will also talk briefly about 'cultural Muslims' who tend to adopt their partners' specific cultural approach to Islam. In this approach there are both practising and non-practising Muslim converts. I will further describe the Sufi Muslims and the more extreme Islamic expressions, namely *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* and the *salafi* trend.

Cultural Muslims

As observed by Larsen, many new Muslims, particularly women, tend to share their partners' understanding of Islam, which is based on a certain socio-political, economic and cultural paradigm. According to Larsen, it is the way of dressing, the food one eats and traditional Eid celebrations that new Muslims adopt first. Larsen shows how one of her informants, Mariam, who is married to a Pakistani man, started to distinguish between Islamic and Pakistani culture after being Muslim for a while (Larsen 1995: 153). Larsen concludes that adaptation to a Muslim cultural pattern varies according to the period of time one has been a Muslim. Although I have observed similar patterns in my own research, it seems that new Muslims tend

to adopt much more than just the outward expressions of dress, food and festivals. I have discovered that some new Muslim women tend to adopt the totality of their husbands' Islamic ideas. And, although most new Muslims turn away from some of these ideas after a while, some keep the same framework of ideas even 15–20 years after converting. It is particularly the husbands' ideas on gender that many new Muslims come to see in terms of 'culture'. Other ideas, however, such as the husbands' notions of creed and worship, might be retained long after conversion.

Some of the male converts, who converted as a result of falling in love with Muslim women, also show some tendencies to follow their wives' particular form of Islam. For instance, Peter tells how he and his wife used to sit and read about Islam from books in her language. 'She tells me what the book says and this is how I get my Islamic knowledge,' he says. Håkon, another new Muslim has adopted his wife's law school as his own, which he says is more convenient as she can help him with basic knowledge on *fiqh* questions.

I have interviewed individuals who I regard as 'cultural Muslims' and below I will present some of their ideas on Islam. I have chosen representatives of two types: Nina, a 'cultural Muslim' who does not practise Islam; and Hanan, a practising 'cultural Muslim'. Nina is working as a teacher and she became Muslim nearly twenty years ago when she married her husband. She neither wears a headscarf nor does she pray. She does not eat pork and sometimes fasts during Ramadan because her children fast and she wants to show solidarity with them. Nina speaks the Arabic dialect of her husband fluently and even speaks Arabic with her children. Her friends are mainly women from her husbands' country of origin, both practising and non-practising Muslims. She has a Muslim identity and her colleagues at work know that she is married to a Muslim, but they do not know she is a Muslim. She tells how she defends Islam and Muslims at work and how her colleagues accept her views. She says she is 'very fond of Islam' but she is afraid of professing her Muslim identity openly, due to the prejudices she sees against Islam and Muslims in her country. When I ask why she does not follow the Islamic precepts, such as praying and fasting for the whole month of Ramadan, she says that, because her husband is not praying she does not want to do it. 'It would be nice to have a closer relation to the divine,' she says, 'but I guess I am lazy.' She says that her husband is also lazy in keeping to the Islamic precepts. She does

admit though that if he had been more disciplined strictly in practice of Islam, she would probably have followed him.

Hanan embraced Islam nine years ago when she met her Algerian husband. She says she was harassed at school and always felt an outsider. When she met her husband he treated her nicely and she felt confidence in him. As she became a Muslim and acquired Muslim friends, mostly women married to her husbands' friends, she started to feel more confident. 'I felt accepted by the Muslims,' she says, 'suddenly I felt like an insider, not an outsider.' Hanan has five children of her own and also raises her husband's son from a former marriage. Hanan dresses like an Algerian, covering her head and wearing a long coat. She cooks Algerian food and she is a housewife. She even speaks Arabic with her children and her husband. Both she and her husband live on social allowances, but she has the main responsibility for domestic affairs and the children's education. When I ask why she does not work instead of living on social allowances, she says that her husband would not allow her to work as he believes 'a woman's place is in her home'. Moreover, according to her, he would never manage to take care of the children, as he has always left that to her. Hanan accepts her role as a housewife and, although she feels that her husband should be more helpful with the children since he does not have work, she feels happy with her life.

Nina and Hanan are examples of what I have termed 'cultural Muslims'. There is a difference between the two: Nina neither practices the Islamic precept nor wears a headscarf in order for others to identify her as a Muslim, whereas Hanan prays, fasts and openly professes her affiliation by wearing Islamic dress. However, there are similarities, namely that they have both adopted the cultural patterns of their husbands.

The 'rational' trend

Most new Muslims in the present study can be regarded as having a 'rational' approach to the Islamic message. This is probably partly due to the literature to which new Muslims have had access (this will be discussed in the next chapter), and partly because ideas promoted by this trend tend to have some overlap with modern rational thought.

In order to understand the part the rational interpretation of Islam has come to play in Scandinavia, it is important to look into the background of the modern *da'wa* movement. *Da'wa* means 'invitation to Islam' and Islamic *da'wa* broke through into the West in the 1970s with the establishment of The Islamic Council of Europe in London in 1973 (Hedin 1988: 44). According to the Swedish researcher, Christer Hedin, the initiative for this *da'wa* organisation came from Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. The early *da'wa* in Scandinavia were dominated by the publications of the Islamic Foundation and the IIFSO (International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations) with their emphasis on a 'rational' approach to Islam, as I discovered during my interviews with Scandinavians, particularly those who converted in the 1980s. According to my informants, the two organisations' publications were widely read. This is confirmed by the observation of Ouis, who claims that in nearly all the Muslim homes she visited, irrespective of nationality or ideological orientation, she found IIFSO books (Ouis 1996: 19). This was mainly due to the fact that the books were given out free of charge, as demanded by the publishers' financial backers from the rich oil states in the Gulf (Ouis 1996: 19). Similarly, Norwegian researcher, Lena Larsen, has observed that Norwegian converts frequently read books written by authors such as Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī and Ḥammūdah 'Abdulātī, who are all represented on The Islamic Foundation and IIFSO publication lists. Norwegian new Muslims also read books by Abū A'lā al-Mawdūdī, founder of the Indo-Pakistani Islamic organisation Jama'at-i-Islami. Larsen further points to the fact that the literature read by these new Muslims falls mainly into the bracket Swedish researcher Christer Hedin has called 'fundamentalist apologetics' (Hedin 1988: 44). This literature is based on ideas such as *tawḥīd*, i.e. strict monotheism; Islam as a comprehensive way of life which covers all aspects of humanity; and rhetoric where the high Islamic moral code is set up against low moral standards in 'the West' (Larsen 1995: 139–141).

The main message of this particular literature is that of Islam as a 'logical' and 'rational' religion based on reason and intellect. It was thus the 'rational' trend that came to dominate the Scandinavian *da'wa* movements in the eighties. In order to get a more profound understanding of the 'logical' and 'rational' approach to Islam, I will discuss the IIFSO and The Islamic Foundation as organisations. In the next chapter, I will go on to analyse some of their publications.

IIFSO

The IIFSO was established in 1969. It has its roots in the MSA (Muslim Students' Association of the United States and Canada), which was established in 1963 and of which the Iraqi natural scientist, Dr. Ahmad al-Totonji, was a founder. The establishment of both the MSA and the IIFSO might be seen as a Muslim response to the cultural encounter with the West, but they are also a response to the cultural encounter between Muslims from various parts of the Muslim world. This becomes apparent in the IIFSO's own statement about MSA members' encounters with American converts and representatives' participation in conferences and conventions in various countries, which made them 'increasingly aware of the need to restructure Islamic thought and identity' (IIFSO 2001: 1). The IIFSO was born out of this awareness, helping Muslim students move 'towards a common goal: the creation of an umbrella organization that could help in the organized promotion of concepts such as the unity of Islamic thought, the universality of the Islamic movement, and the consolidation of a mature Muslim leadership' (IIFSO 2001: 1). The IIFSO statement stresses the practical and pragmatic approach to Islam, stating that 'the IIFSO's method is intellectual as well as practical' and that it combines 'scholarship with pragmatism' (IIFSO 2001: 2).

The IIFSO statement mentions that most of those who have held the position of Secretary General have been past presidents or active members of the MSA (IIFSO 2001: 2). 'The roots of the IIFSO,' the statement says, 'run deep in the experience of those members who were students in the West' (IIFSO 2001: 2). One can therefore regard the IIFSO as a direct result of the cultural encounter between Islam and the West, despite the fact that the economic funding for both the organisation and its huge book production came from the Muslim world. Many of the books spread by the organisation were written either by members or sympathisers with the Islamist movement, The Muslim Brotherhood. Some books also indicate the IIFSO's close relations with Saudi Arabia, such as those written by 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1787).

By looking at some of the founders and heads of the organisation, it is possible to understand its specific direction of Islamic thought. Al-Totonji, who is a petrol engineer, became the first elected Secretary General. Al-Totonji is originally from Iraq but has Saudi-

Arabian citizenship. He pursued his post-doctoral studies in Great Britain and the United States. Al-Totonji has been one of the founders of both WAMY (World Assembly of Muslim Youth), which has its headquarters in Saudi Arabia, and the IIIT (International Institute of Islamic Thought), with its headquarters in Herndon in the United States. It is particularly from the latter organisation that one can derive an understanding of al-Tontonji's approach to Islam. This organisation's agenda is to create new epistemological standards for Islamic thought in the modern world. Subsequent Secretaries General of the IIFSO, such as the electrical engineer Hisham al-Talib and the socio-linguist Sayyid Muhammad Said, are also linked to the IIIT. It is possible to regard the activities of the IIIT as a continuation of the IIFSO's activities in the Western world. Hjärpe has depicted this particular Islamic trend 'engineer-Islam', observing that many of those involved in modern Islamic organisations are educated in technical fields. In his view, their technical educational background seems to have influenced their understanding of Islam, which becomes 'technicalized'.¹

The IIFSO had an explicit claim for *da'wa*. In 1986, its prospectus stated that its main aim was to 'elevate the word of God and spread the fundamentals of Islam' (IIFSO 1986: 15). In the same book, Muslim unity is also emphasised (IIFSO 1986: 15). It seems that the IIFSO's method of reaching such a unity was to search for it in Islamic thought. In the book it says:

The IIFSO has, from the start, felt the need for a unity of Islamic thought, for the youth with their different homelands and different languages. So it chose a collection of Islamic books that straighten the path and make clear the guidelines in different areas of Islamic knowledge. The IIFSO works for the translation of these books into all the languages spoken by Muslims in the world. And the IIFSO has managed—thanks be to God—to translate its books into seventy languages. (IIFSO 1986: 17).

Bruce Lawrence has observed that the Islamic movement is a consequence of, rather than a rejection of, modernity (Lawrence 1989). It is thus interesting to see how the IIFSO's attempt to create a united body of Islamic thought is in conformity with 'the modern

¹ Personal communication with Jan Hjärpe, 31th of May, 2001.

project' with its call for 'one truth'. The IIFSO's call for a unity of Islamic ideas is in contrast to the development of Islamic thought throughout history. The acceptance of various Schools of Law, as well as diverse argumentation from Islamic scholars is characteristic of Islamic history, whereas the call for 'one truth' has to be regarded within a framework of 'modernism'.²

The IIFSO's book production indicates an orientation towards *salafī* ideology, which interprets the Islamic sources according to the beliefs of the first three generations of Muslims, rather than the established scholarship of the four Islamic law schools. In addition, many of the books present an *ikhwān* ideology. By this I mean the ideas promoted by the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-ikhwān al-muslimūn*). The *ikhwān* has a largely 'rational' understanding of Islam, and a 'return to the Koran and Sunna' in matters of jurisprudence and politics is prominent. A common trait of IIFSO literature is therefore a 'rational' approach, where the validity of religious sentiment and the existence of God are 'scientifically proved'. In addition proof of the logic of Islamic doctrines and God's existence are often based on Koranic verses. In his book from 1988, Hedin analyses books published by the IIFSO and the Islamic Foundation. His study points at this particular 'rational' understanding of Islam that came to dominate Muslim culture in Scandinavia in the 1980s.³

In Ouis' study on how a certain understanding of Islam became pervasive in Europe due to the influence of these IIFSO books, she claims that oil wealth enabled the spread of this interpretation so that it came to be regarded by many as the only 'true' version (Ouis 1996). Ouis does not portray this particular understanding of Islam as part of *ikhwān* ideology, but it is obvious that this trend is over-represented in IIFSO books. The *ikhwān* notion of a 'rational' understanding of Islam is prominent in most of them, as epitomised by the notions of a 'return to the Koran and Sunna' and the stress on the political aspect of Islam.

² Lawrence distinguishes between 'modernity' and 'modernism', seeing 'modernity' as denoting modern technology and communication and 'modernism' as the ideology of the belief in the fallibility of science and human reason (Lawrence 1989).

³ It is interesting to note that Hedin does not mention IIFSO literature, as it is mainly the Islamic Foundation's books he deals with in his 1988 book. He has some IIFSO books on his list, although he does not mention the publishing house. In his article from 1999, however, he deals more explicitly with the IIFSO and discusses this organisation's publications more thoroughly (Hedin 1999: 222–224).

In Scandinavia, IIFSO books were translated mainly into Swedish, with only a few books, such as al-Mawdūdī's *Towards Understanding Islam* and Ḥammūdah 'Abdulātī's *Islam in Focus* being translated into Norwegian and Danish. This might be because Sweden has nearly 9 million inhabitants, compared to Norway and Denmark with approximately 4.3 and 5.5 million respectively. It is, however, also probably due to the fact that the largest immigrant group in Denmark and in Norway is the Pakistani community, whereas in Sweden the Arabic-speaking community dominates and IIFSO consisted mainly of Arabic-speaking individuals. Although al-Mawdūdī comes from the Indian subcontinent it is mainly because of an 'Arab'-Islamic ideological sphere of influence that his literature reached Scandinavia.

The Islamic Foundation

The Islamic Foundation is based mainly on al-Mawdūdī's political ideas, which are manifested in the political party Jama'at-i-Islami. Individuals close to al-Mawdūdī established the organisation in 1968 and Khursid Ahmad was its first head. Ahmad still has a prominent position in the Islamic Foundation, Manazir Ahsan being the current General Secretary (2002). The ideological base of the Islamic Foundation is evident from the names given to the buildings of its centre at Markfield, outside Leicester in Great Britain. Ibn Taymiyya Hall, for instance, points to an ideological link to the scholar Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), who promoted a 'purification' of the Islamic creed from the cult of saints and pilgrimages to graves. Another building, named after the Egyptian Islamist Ḥasan al-Banna' (d. 1949), indicates a close link between the Pakistani political party, Jama'at-i-Islami, and the Arab Islamist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood. The Islamic Foundation is known first and foremost for its extensive publication of Islamic literature. The Islamic Foundation's book production was similar to that of the IIFSO, particularly in the seventies and the eighties. Some titles, by al-Mawdūdī and leading Arab Islamists, were published by both organisations. Even in the 1990s, this link with the Arab Islamist movement is evident, but there is a tendency to concentrate on books written in the Western context. One example is how the books of the Egyptian-Swiss scholar, Tariq Ramadan, grandson of Ḥasan al-Banna', have been translated into English and published by the Islamic Foundation.

The post-ikhwān trend

Both the IIFSO and the Islamic Foundation represent the *ikhwān* trend. However, in the 1990s, a new trend has emerged in the ranks of the Islamists. I have chosen to call this trend the ‘post-*ikhwān*’ trend, as it is an independent Islamist trend that builds on the ideas of the *ikhwān* ideology. In addition to the ‘logical-rational’ understanding of Islam and its notion of ‘returning to the Koran and Sunna’, the political interpretation of Islam, which views Islam as a complete system of life, is also prominent in this trend. Due, however, to this trend’s independence from Islamist organisations, there is a greater rationale for change (see Roald 2001a: 54–57). The post-*ikhwān* trend is not evident in one particular group, rather it is a composite of various individuals from different backgrounds with some common traits. Many of them are also former members of or sympathisers with the Muslim Brotherhood or similar organisations.

I would claim that many European converts to Islam have adopted this post-*ikhwān* trend of thought, which I will call the ‘rational’ trend. This is due to their being among those targeted by the literature published by the IIFSO and the Islamic Foundation. As discussed in the last chapter, a popular reason given for conversion to Islam is that it is ‘a logical religion’. This response seems to result from the spread of this literature and these ideas, which virtually socialized new Muslims into this school of thought. As most traditional Islamic literature in the 1980s and 1990s was mostly available in Muslim languages, such as Arabic, Turkish, Urdu and Malay, IIFSO and Islamic Foundation literature in European languages became, by definition, ‘convert literature’. Many new Muslims have thus oriented themselves towards *ikhwān* forms of Islamic discourse, although they tend to develop away from the controlled *ikhwān* trend to a more independent, post-*ikhwān* view, where *ikhwān* ideas still dominate, though with less constraints. Ramadan’s books might be regarded as the most prominent in this post-*ikhwān* trend.

I have observed that most converts, having a leftist political background, tend to regard Islam as a ‘rational’ religion. I have questioned new Muslims belonging to various Islamic trends about their affiliations. Abla, who was a leftist in the 1970s, answered:

I am one of the ‘logical, rational Muslims’, as logical and rational arguments were important reasons for my conversion to Islam. Even the feeling of Islam being right and true also played an important

part. Sometimes I can feel there is too much logic and reason, too many rules and decrees and too little emotion. I am therefore also interested in Sufism.

It is interesting to note that Abla embraced Islam due to its 'logic' and 'reason', whereas she now often disapproves of these same factors. However, her answer also points at the same phenomenon as that of Jesber, who regards himself as a 'salafi Sufi'. The borders between the various Islamic trends have become blurred and seem to be in a state of flux. Abla further sees her conversion to Islam as related to her political sympathies. She says:

The social and economic system of Islam; solidarity with the weak; sharing with the poor; strong relations between people, such as relatives, neighbours and women; and also the prohibition against interest on loans, attracted me as a leftist.

Abla read political IIFSO literature and, like many others with a similar political background, this literature made Abla feel that Islam confirmed her political ideas, adding also a divine dimension to them. Abla's view of Islam as a 'logical' and 'rational' religion is typical of many Scandinavian converts, even those with no former leftist sympathies. According to my findings, this can be regarded as the most common Scandinavian-convert understanding of Islam. Even Shi'a converts have expressed similar ideas, indicating a similarity in ideological approach between the IIFSO and Islamic Foundation literature and Shi'a *da'wa* literature.

Most new Muslims belonging to this trend expressed the belief that Islam is 'rational'. Ouis, however, who converted to Islam in the mid-eighties has, as she says, 'developed away from this idea of Islam being "rational".' Ouis used to be an editor of the Swedish magazine, *Salaam*, which has been largely run by new Muslims, at least up to the mid-1990s. Her writings in this magazine used to promote the idea of Islam as 'logical' and 'rational', however, Ouis' extensive studies of modernity and modernism seem to have made her see the 'rational' aspect of Islam in a different light. She sees her particular interpretation of Islam as being through the sources, the Koran and Sunna, and she does not adhere to the Islamic Law-School system (*madhhab*). This is a 'rational interpretation of the Islamic sources', she states, 'but this does not mean that Islam is rational'. She goes on:

Many Muslims say that 'Islam is logical', but the Islamic system is only logical through its own logic. I regard myself a 'post-rationalist', as I have understood that not everything in Islam is rational. To regard rationality as pre-eminent is actually a modern thought I cannot accept. The Islamic sources are placed above logic and rationality. This is the privilege of religions: through superiority [over logic and reason], they can acknowledge dogma and mysticism, without having to justify themselves on the basis of rationality.

Ouis continues to say that she believes it is dangerous to justify religious truth on 'reason' and 'logic', as have Bucaille and the creationists for instance. 'Science,' she says, 'cannot prove the truth-value of a religion. If one looks for scientific proof of religious dogma, one accepts that science is truer than religion. I do not believe that this is so.' Ouis' answer, although only representative of the most highly educated new Muslims, is interesting in its intellectual subordination of 'rationality' and 'reason', concepts that many new Muslims regarded as unproblematic.

Ouis' argument points further to a specific understanding of Islam through 'turning back to the Koran and Sunna'. This indicates an influence by IIFSO political literature and is another aspect of the post-*ikhwān* trend. As indicated above, most new Muslims tend to have such an approach to Islam. Amal, a highly educated new Muslim, is one of them:

I am following the Koran and Sunna and I am not affiliated with any law school. My reason is that I cannot find any proof in the Islamic texts saying that we have to follow the scholars or a specific tradition. The Koran says that it is guidance for everybody who wants to understand. It also says that this guidance is there to make life easy for us and that it has clear and obvious messages for all of us. Why should we then complicate it? The Koranic text appeals to our reason and all our senses and speaks to us individually. The strength of Islam is that it opens up a direct contact with God, without our having to go through mediators, such as the clergy or scholars.

Amal's approach reflects an individualistic way of interpreting Islam. The Law-School system promotes a collectivist and authoritative approach to Islam, demanding each Muslim adhere to one particular law school and follow a particular set of interpretative norms. In the eighteenth and the nineteenth century the law school system started to lose its authoritative status, as intellectual Muslims questioned its truth-value. New Muslims are the inheritors of this intellectual trend and, through IIFSO and Islamic Foundation literature,

have developed their own ideas. Amal's statement shows how these ideas, taken to their extreme, facilitate an individualistic approach that allows every Muslim to make their own interpretation. Amal goes on to discuss the Law-School approach. She states:

The founders of the law schools were themselves open to other peoples' interpretations. They did not see their own interpretations as absolute, rather they saw they could be changed. They were humble in their understanding of *fiqh*, and it is wrong of us to exalt their words as the law of God. I do not believe that they really wanted this. In my view this is the best example of Islamic *bid'a* (religious innovation).

Amal's notion that the human words of the law school scholars' have been exalted to a divine status forms part of an inner-Islamic debate on how to understand Islam. On the Swedish Muslims' cyberspace e-group (Sveriges Förenade CyberMuslimer [SFCM]) there have been many discussions on this issue; whether one should rely solely on 'the Islamic sources' or also on the 'rules and regulations of a certain law school'. The focal point of the discussion is thus the role of tradition in a Muslim's understanding of Islam, as well as his/her relationship to it.

Amal's view that the Law-School system is *bid'a* echoes the views of the *salafī* movement who, as I will discuss below, condemn the law school system *in toto*. Amal continues:

I further believe that the Law-School traditionalists are guilty of great errors and transgressions, committed in the name of Islam. By this I mean all the crimes committed against women, such as genital mutilation, forced marriages, custody of children, restriction on female divorce. I see it as every Muslims' duty to search for the truth in the Koran and Sunna themselves, not trust the traditional interpretations that are based largely on the opinions of patriarchs (*gubbar*) at certain times and places.

In this statement, it is obvious that Amal sees the traditional interpretations of the Islamic sources as being based on patriarchal ideas. This is a notion she shares with other highly educated new Muslims. It is also a view shared with feminist theologians in both Christianity and Judaism (see also Roald 1998).

The consequence of the 'rational' approach with its notion of Islam as a 'logical' and 'rational' religion is the individualization of the Islamic message. In the 'rational' approach much of the traditional knowledge of the Law-School system is refuted. There is thus

a need to reinterpret the Islamic sources and, in doing so, the modern individualist perspective might come to the fore.

I discovered that the 'rational' approach to Islam has become the mainstream approach among Swedish converts as most respondents and informants actually referred to Islam as a 'logical' and 'rational' religion. It is also the approach that can be regarded as most in line with mainstream Scandinavian 'individualism', according to the EVSS study. Halman, for instance, notes that the Scandinavian individualization 'implies that traditional collective shared meaning systems have disappeared and that religious feelings are increasingly based on individual choices and preferences' (Halman 1994: 65–66). Further the individualist perspective Amal represents reflects Ahlin and Dahlgren's claim of the human need 'to use components of meaning that can be used in a more pragmatic way' (Ahlin and Dahlgren 1999: 163), and that many Swedes today actually have eclectic 'systems of meaning'. Amal's example indicates that some converts do not accept the whole package of the Islamic 'system of meaning' in a certain institutional form, rather they pick out 'components of meaning' thus creating a new Islamic understanding in the new cultural context. In the above discussion, only a few persons are quoted, but their answers can be considered as representative, since several other new Muslims presented similar answers.

Shi'a converts

It is difficult to separate Shi'a converts from the more 'rational' Sunni Muslims. Books by Shi'a scholars have a similar 'rational' approach; those of Imam Khomeini, for instance, are saturated with 'rational' ideas on the existence of God, as well as Islamic politics. The Shi'a convert, Trond Ali Lindstad, a former Norwegian Marxist-Leninist who embraced Islam in the 1980s, said in an interview in a Norwegian newspaper, that, besides believing in God and doing good deeds, the call for 'using one's reason' is the most important request in the Koran (Aftenposten 28/7–2001). Many other Shi'a converts, like Abla above, have actually stated that it was the 'rationality of Islam' that made them embrace Islam. Having said this, it is important to regard Shi'a Islam as a separate category in its own right; Shi'a Muslims have a fundamentally different view to that of

Sunni Muslims on the issue of leadership, the promotion of temporary marriages (*mu'ta*) and the manner and time for prayer. All the Shi'a converts in this study belong to the Twelver Shi'a denomination, which is the biggest Shi'a group.

In Sweden there are approximately 60,000 Shi'a Muslims (Thurfjell 2000: 33) and I would estimate that between 50 and 100 converts are Shi'a Muslims. In Norway, there are at least 14,000 Shi'a Muslims (Vogt 2000: 8) with less than 50 converts amongst them. In Denmark there are approximately 10,000 Shi'a Muslims and, according to the Danish convert Abdul-Wahid Pedersen, less than 50 converts are Shi'a Muslims (personal communication with Abdul-Wahid Pedersen).

In order to get a better understanding of these directions, I will give a brief survey of the differences between Shi'a and Sunni Islam. The controversy between Sunni and Shi'a Islam started as a political conflict in the 7th century. The main dispute was the issue of leadership: who should be the leader of the Muslims after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad? According to the official Islamic historical sources, those supporting 'Alī, the cousin of the Prophet, did so because they promoted leadership based on consanguinity with the Prophet. The division between those who opposed 'Alī as a leader and those who promoted him came early in Islamic history, when the Islamic creed was still in its formative phase. This political schism led therefore to a dogmatic schism and the two groups started to develop away from each other. The main distinction between them is still the issue of leadership, the role of the leader and dogma such as the 'hidden Imam'. The role of the leader might be considered a minor issue, yet it plays a role in a Muslim's daily life. In Shi'a, certain Islamic scholars — those who are *marjī' taqlīd* (the authority one imitates) — are far less restricted in their performance of *ijtihād* than their Sunni counterparts. Imam Khomeini, for instance, could effectively issue the *fatwā* (legal decision) of the death penalty for the author Salman Rushdie. If a Sunni scholar issued such a *fatwā* on his own authority, without reference to a consensus of scholars, which is the traditional procedure in Sunni Islam, it is unlikely to have the same effect.

Due to the important role leaders and scholars play in Shi'a Islam, Shi'a Muslims have to choose a *marjī' taqlīd* to follow in their daily life. The ideas promoted by various Muslims thus depend on the direction of the scholar they choose. The issue of who can be a

marjīʿ taqlīd is sometimes a matter of controversy. Muḥammad Ḥussain Fadlullāh, who is a popular choice, particularly among young educated reformist women, is regarded by more traditionalist forces as not having the standard of a *marjīʿ taqlīd*. In 2000 I conducted an investigation on satellite television in Sweden and Denmark among Arabic-speaking Muslims. One set of results showed that many Shiʿa Muslims who referred to Fadlullāh as their favourite Islamic scholar also regarded the broadcasts of Sunni scholar, Sheikh al-Qaradāwī as their favourite television programme (Roald 2001b). This indicates that the two scholars offer a similar approach to understanding the Islamic sources that goes beyond the limitations of Islamic denomination.

In the present study, six female converts to Shiʿa Islam answered the questionnaire and I interviewed two of them. All six respondents said they regard Islam as a ‘logical and rational religion’. Some of them had chosen Fadlullāh as their *marjīʿ taqlīd*, whereas others had chosen scholars like Ayatollah Khoʿi. I discovered that there is a tendency among new Muslim women to choose the *marjīʿ taqlīd* of their husbands, although two had chosen differently.

In my discussions and interviews I asked why these new Muslims have chosen to follow the Shiʿa branch. Each one attributed their decision to the issue of the historical leadership. Gunilla, a convert to Shiʿa Islam, states that the idea that ‘Alī should be the natural successor to the Prophet is a matter of course. ‘It is natural that ‘Alī should be the spiritual guide for the Muslims,’ she says.

In order to get a more profound view of the ideas of converts on Shiʿa Islam, I will focus on the words of Shiʿa Muslim, Margaretha. Her ideas can be seen as representative for the six Shiʿa respondents. They also reflect ideas in the broader social context of Shiʿa converts. Margaretha became Muslim in 1987. She was a seeker of ‘the truth’ and when she met a Shiʿa Muslim in the mid-1980s, she started to discuss Islamic ideas with him. After a while she found that he always had an answer to her arguments. She wanted to convince him that his faith was wrong, but, having known him for 6 months, she realized that his ideas were much more convincing than hers. She attributes her choice to become a Shiʿa Muslim to the issue of leadership, saying that leadership has always been important for her. She also believes that an ideology has to be ‘logical’ and has to have well-founded argumentation. According to her, Shiʿa Islam satisfies both requirements; its ideology is ‘logical’ and it emphasises the issue of leadership. She states:

In Islam, we believe that there has always been a vicegerent of God on earth (*khalīfa*); a vicegerent appointed by God and sent to the people. Thousands of Prophets have been sent and all of them were impeccable, as they were sent by God and controlled by God. There was always a *khalīfa* on earth, from the creation of the earth until the birth of Muḥammad. Sometimes the *khalīfas* numbered tens, hundreds, even thousands at the same time. When the Prophet Muḥammad died, after having given us the last revealed message and completed the religion, should God then suddenly just leave humankind without any divine-appointed *khalīfa*?

Margaretha continues, saying that there are innumerable questions that continuously need to be answered; not all could be asked during the time of the Prophet. This is due mainly to material changes and to ever-changing cultural presuppositions. ‘Research and science develop, new diseases as well as new inventions appear, the climate changes,’ she says, ‘yes, everything is changeable.’ Her conclusion is, then, as God has not created anything without due cause, He would not ‘logically’ remove what He has created without due cause. The caliph after Muḥammad, according to Margaretha, was, first and foremost, ‘Alī, followed by the subsequent 11 Imams from his descendants. While waiting for the return of the 12th Imam, Imam Mahdī, the *marjī‘ taqlīds* safeguard the interpretation and the guidance of Muslims. She says:

As Islam is the last revealed divine religion it always has to be up to date. There has therefore always to be a *khalīfa* who can understand, explain and guide the people, otherwise the same thing happening to other religions will happen to Islam. It will be distorted. This cannot be what God wants with His last revealed message.

Margaretha goes on to argue why ‘Alī had to be the next leader after Muḥammad. She refers to the Koran:

Nay, I swear with the setting of the stars. And verily this is a most solemn affirmation, if you but knew it. Behold, it is the noble script in a well-guarded [or hidden] script which none except the purified (*mutahharūn*) may touch. (Koran 56: 75–80)

In her view this verse does not mean that only the purified and those with ritual ablution can touch the Koran. ‘Rather,’ she says, ‘everyone, even a non-Muslim, can physically touch the Koran.’ She continues:

In the Swedish translation of the Koran it says that only those with a pure heart can understand and explain the Scripture. But who has a totally pure heart? Nobody is without sin and only an impeccable

person can have a pure heart. Does it mean that when Muḥammad died there should never more be any person on earth who can understand and explain the Koran? But God swore his strongest oath that the purified are the only ones who can touch the Scripture.

Margaretha believes that the ‘purified’ persons who can ‘touch’ the Koran are the Imams whom the Shi‘a tradition regards as impeccable. However, in the Sunni tradition, there are other views on this Koranic verse. The Swedish convert, Knut Bernström, who is a Sunni Muslim, translated the Koran and it was published in 1998. In the translation he incorporated Koranic commentaries by the Polish convert Muhammad Asad. He writes in a commentary to the afore-mentioned Koranic verses that ‘[the purified] first and foremost are those with a purified heart and purified intentions; only those are able to understand the real meaning and benefit from it’ (Bernström 1998: 797). In the Koran, the verses 85: 21–22, which is often linked to the verses 56: 75–80, say: ‘Verily, this is a divine script upon a well-guarded tablet’. By those who interpret the Koran in a literal manner, these verses have been understood to mean an ‘actual “heavenly tablet” upon which the Koran has been inscribed since all eternity’ (Bernström 1998: 905). However, Bernström has chosen to see its meaning as ‘an allusion to the *imperishable quality* of the divine script’ (Bernström 1998: 905). He therefore interprets a ‘divine Koran upon a well-guarded tablet’ as God’s promise that ‘the Koran would never be corrupted and would remain free of all arbitrary additions, diminution and textual changes’ (Bernström 1998: 905). Bernström’s translation of the Koranic text and his commentaries to the Koran, which he builds from Sunni sources, do not naturally support the Shi‘a understanding of these verses.

The Inquisition (*mihna*) of 833–849 CE might be linked to the Koranic verses 56: 75–80 and 85: 21–22. A literal interpretation of the revelation that the Koran is inscribed upon heavenly tablets suggests that the Koran is uncreated. Both the contemporary *salafīs* and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 849), who is revered in the *salafī* movement, hold this view. In contrast, Montgomery Watt, the British scholar in Islamic studies, has implicitly stated that many of those who saw the Koran as created had a Shi‘a background or Shi‘a sympathies (Watt 1968: 66;89). Watt has discussed the Inquisition and he indicates that the question of whether the Koran was created or uncreated became an issue of power concerning the role secular and religious Muslim leaders should have (Watt 1968: 88). Belief in the

uncreated Koran meant that the Koran could not be changed or set aside. This view implied an increase in the Islamic scholars' influence in state affairs, since they were the recognised interpreters of the Islamic sources. The belief in the created Koran, on the other hand, meant that it was created in time and space and could, therefore, at certain times be set aside by the leader. This view implied a part-exclusion of the Islamic scholar and it strengthened the influence of the main leader. As with this historical incident, there is a schism between Shi'a and the Sunni Muslims when it comes to understanding these verses. The question idea of who can 'touch' or 'understand' the Koran indicates a difference of view based on the same controversy as the Koran being 'created' or 'uncreated': Who are the real interpreter of the Koran? The Swedish translator of the Koran, Bernström, has aligned himself with many of the classical scholars, such as Muḥammad ibn al-Tabarī (d. 923) and Imād al-Dīn Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373) (Bernström 1998: 905), and placed himself in a moderate position by interpreting these verses in an allegorical manner.

There is a *salafī* understanding of these verses that contradicts the Shi'a understanding that the 'purified' beings are the Prophet or the 12 Imams. During my stay in Jordan in 1992, members of the *salafī* movement presented to me their understanding of the 'purified who can touch the Koran'; it is a view that has gained in popularity in the recent debate, except among traditionalists, who adhere to the law schools in this matter. In the verse in question, the Arabic word used for 'purified' is '*mutahharūn*', the plural form of the passive participle in form II of the root *t-h-r*. The same form in feminine singular is used in five other verses of the Koran. In three of these, the word is used as an adjective to describe the purified partners that human beings will have in paradise (Koran 2: 25; 3: 15; 4: 57). In the fourth and the fifth verses, the Koran speaks of the noble pages (*suhuf mukarrama*) that are elevated and purified (*marfū'a, mutahhara*) (Koran 80: 14), and about the purified pages (*suhufan mutahhara*) recited by God's Messenger (Koran 98: 2). In the *salafī* view, these verses, like verse 85: 21–22, indicate a heavenly Koran. The *salafīs*, thus, see the *mutahharūn* as beings purified by God and feel that angels, being purified beings, are those referred to in this verse and therefore the only ones who can touch the heavenly and eternal Koran. In contrast to the passive participle of the form *t-h-r*, they claim that the active participle of the same form, *mutahhirūn*, and

also form *V* of the same root, *mutatahhirūn*, both denote human beings who purify themselves. From all of this, the *salafīs* conclude that there exists a heavenly Koran on a well-guarded tablet that can only be touched by angels. Furthermore, the materialized Koran, which exists on earth, is only the image of this heavenly Book. This theological discussion might seem overly subtle and pedantic but it had interesting repercussions for Muslim women. According to the law schools, the verse 56: 75–80, which says that the script can only be touched by the purified, has been taken to mean that women cannot read or touch the Koran during their monthly period. As the *salafīs* have a different understanding of this verse, they claim that women *can* read the Koran during their monthly period. The Jordanian *salafīs* explained that the logic of this understanding is that it gives women the opportunity of always being able to read the Koran. Women do not pray during their monthly periods and might become weak in faith as a result. They need more spiritual guidance, therefore, which they will find through reading the Koran.

By looking in detail at the various understandings of Koranic verses, it is possible to comprehend the diversity in interpretation of the Koran and grasp the logic of each approach. Just as one Shi‘a objective is to find evidence of the specific role of the Prophet’s family, so a *salafī* objective is to find the rationale for women to read the Koran during their monthly period in order for them to become more pious.

The second Koranic verse quoted by Margaretha is the verse 33: 33:

God wants to remove from you all that might be loathsome, O members of the Prophet’s household (*ahl al-bayt*), and to purify you to utmost purity.

Margaretha points out that Bernström has not translated *ahl al-bayt* as ‘members of the Prophet’s household’, but as ‘those who are closest to the Prophet’. She states that this verse provides more evidence for the Prophet’s household’s purified and infallible status. In the Sunni understanding of this Koranic verse, however, *ahl al-bayt* is said to refer to the wives of the Prophet, not to the Prophet’s blood-relatives, as is the Shi‘a understanding of *ahl al-bayt*. In the Shi‘a direction, the blood relatives are regarded as the Prophet’s offspring through his daughter Fāṭima who was married to ‘Alī. Margaretha’s choice of Koranic verses shows again how the reading of the Koran can depend on the specific trend to which one adheres.

The new Muslims belonging to the Shi'a direction tend to stress the importance of the Islamic leadership. In my discussion with Shi'a converts they all stated that they regard the conflict between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims as a political conflict. This is in contrast to the Sunni converts, many of whom see the difference as one based on creed. One convert adhering to the *salafī* movement even regarded Shi'a Muslims as being outside the Islamic creed. This has to be regarded in terms of this movement's tendency to proclaim Muslims with an 'incorrect' creed as *kuffār* (non-Muslims, sing *kāfir*).

It is important to note that Shi'a converts feel themselves in a peculiar position as a result of their choice of creed. Gunilla says that she feels discriminated against as a Muslim by majority society on the one hand and Sunni Muslims on the other, who tend to be dismissive of Shi'a Muslims. She refers to a booklet that was published in Swedish by Dr. Ali Omar in the 1990s.⁴ It is called *Skillnaden mellan shiiterna och majoriteten av muslimska lärde* (The difference between the Shi'ites and the majority of Muslim scholars). The book discusses Shi'a ideas such as the Imamate, *taqiyya* (fear; caution; here: the dissimulation of one's religion under duress or in the face of threatening damage [Wehr 1974: 1094]), *mut'a* (temporary marriage) and Ghadīr Khūm (the place where, according to the Shi'a creed, the Prophet appointed 'Alī as his successor). 'When I read this booklet,' she says, 'I was furious. It contained lies upon lies about Shi'a Muslims.' She refers to how the author states, firstly, that Shi'a Muslims claim the Koran is not complete and has been changed. Secondly, she points to the fact that the author accuses Shi'a Muslims of fabricating hadiths. Thirdly, she contests the insinuation that Shi'a Muslims have invented historical events in order to distort and change the Koran and the Prophet's Sunna. In Gunilla's view, this booklet, which was read by Muslims in the early 1990s, has contributed to a tension between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims in Sweden. It is as a consequence of the tension between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims in Sweden that Gunilla, together with other Shi'a converts, feels that Shi'a Muslims are a minority group within the Muslim community in Scandinavia.

⁴ The origin of this booklet is obscure. There is no mentioning of date or place of publishing, nor is it mentioned whether the book is written in Swedish or is a translation.

Traditionalists

For converts, traditionalism, or adherence to one of the Islamic law schools (Ḥanbalī, Mālikī, Ḥanafī, Shāfiʿī) is often linked to Sufism. Many of the new Muslims who promote traditionalism also tend to regard themselves as Sufis. Some new Muslims, however, say that, although they are attracted to Sufism, they would not dream of calling themselves Sufis, who are considered to be on a different spiritual level to the bulk of Muslims today. There are also new Muslims who claim to be Sufis without adhering to a law school, rather they adopt Sufic methods, such as *dhikr*. This they do in order to attain a certain spiritual state of mind, although they do not adhere to the Islamic precepts in daily life. In his book, *Muslimsk mystik* (Muslim mystic), Geels (1999) discusses the distinction between two sorts of Sufism: the ‘sober’ branch and the ‘intoxicated’ branch. These two terms suitably describe the distinction between new Muslims, who, through either adherence to a law school or *dhikr* attain their respective spiritual experiences.

In this section, I will deal with the traditionalists who are to some extent also involved in Sufism. One Sufi group active in Europe is the *shadhiliyya* order, which arrived through its followers from Syria and Jordan. This order advocates adherence to the rules of the Shāfiʿī law school. Its Jordanian leader is Sheikh Nuah Ha Mim Keller, an American convert to Islam, whose English translation of *The Reliance of the Traveller* from 1991 made Shāfiʿī legislation known to an English-speaking public. Keller travels widely in the Western world and has many followers among new Muslims and second- and third-generation Muslims. One of his main objectives has been to establish educational programmes in sharia legislation for Muslims living in Western countries. Many scholars in Islamic studies living in the West come from Muslim countries and therefore they have little understanding of Western society. Keller regards the Islamic education of Western Muslims as essential for addressing the social problems faced by Muslims in Western countries. A follower of Keller suggests that renewal tends to come from within the Islamic law schools, which shows how the adherents to these schools respond to a changing society with changing social roles and attitudes.

The Reliance of the Traveller is important in a Scandinavian context. Although few of the Scandinavian converts regard Keller as *their*

‘sheikh’, his book is widespread and was for a long time the only source for law school *fiqh* available in the area.

In my discussion with Håkon, I discovered that he tends to refer to the ‘old Sufis’ in a rather reverent way. When I asked him whether he regards himself as a Sufi, he stated:

It depends on the definition of Sufism one has. The Sufism to which I am attracted can be found in the Koran and in the statements of the Prophet. There is therefore no need to depict it as Sufism, because it is Islam itself. Imam al-Nawawī wrote a beautiful text in a book called *al-maqāsid*. The chapter is called *tasawwuf* (Sufism), where he explains the spiritual way. In this text there is no talk about the seven stages or sheikhs or murids; it deals only with the fact that human beings must be satisfied with what God gives. One should read the Koran and make *dhikr* and one should gather with good people and avoid bad people. It is such simple things that Sufism is about and nothing else.

Another convert who is influenced by Sufism is Bo Werne, a Swedish-Danish new Muslim who has lived most of his grown-up life in Africa. His view of Sufism is similar to that of Håkon above. In his book *Tro och Gärning i Islam* (Faith and praxis in Islam), he devotes a chapter to Sufism. In the book, he presents the translations of Persian mystical poems by Eric Hermelin (d. 1944), containing works by Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d. approximately 1220), Jalāl al-Dīn Rumī (d. 1273) and Hakīm Sanā‘ī (d. approximately 1135). Werne’s main aim with the book is to show that these mystical poets actually presented ‘orthodox Sunni Islam’ in their poems (Werne 2000: 11). In his chapter on Sufism, he refers to the famous Swedish researcher on Sufism, Tor Andrae, who depicts the early Sufis as pious Muslims (Werne 2000: 634). Werne’s aim is to place Sufism in its Islamic context and look at the harmony between Sufism and orthodoxy. To this end, Werne has, like Håkon, indicated his interest in the ‘sober’ Sufic ideas, rather than the ‘intoxicated’ and ecstatic form of Sufism.

The Swedish convert, Abd al Haqq Kielan, who is also influenced by Sufi thoughts, wrote in an article ‘Sufismen inom islam’ (Sufism in Islam):

Sufism is inseparably linked to spiritual life, social service, politics, state and state-building, and to the spread of Islam in all the regions we use to call the Islamic world. But Sufism is also the heart’s way of witnessing Reality, the realisation of *‘ubūdiyyāt* — the unconditional worship of God (Kielan 2001: 7 [translation mine]).

This statement indicates a view similar to that of Håkon, that Sufism is ‘Islam itself’. It is important to note that Kielan further rejects the ‘intoxicated’ form of Sufism when he says that some people believe that sharia is only a preliminary stage to the spiritual experience of ‘becoming one with God’ (Kielan 2001: 8). ‘This form of Sufism’ he states, ‘is not accepted in Islam and is regarded as a degenerated species’ (Kielan 2001: 9). He further claims that Western seekers of spiritual truth have misunderstood the classic Sufi thinkers, such as Ibn al-‘Arābī and al-Ḥallāj, by interpreting their ecstatic expressions in a literal manner:

There exist even those who have misunderstood the symbolism of Persian mysticism with its images of wine, cupbearers and bars, to such an extent that they really believe respected professors of mathematics, such as ‘Umar al-Khayyām sat and drank at bars (Kielan 2001: 9).

Jesber, who became Muslim in the early 1980s, sees Sufism in a similar way to Kielan. He was a member of the group of Murabitun converts. Today he belongs to a Naqshbandiyya *ṭarīqa* (order), and his sheikh has been living in Western countries for a long time. According to Jesber, he has chosen this sheikh because he understands new Muslims better than would a sheikh living in the Muslim world. ‘He knows that I, as a person born and raised in the West, often need to form my own conclusions,’ he says, ‘and he grants me this freedom.’ He continues, saying that new Muslims find it harder to submit totally to another human than do the sheikhs’ typical apprentices in the Muslim world. Jesber’s sheikh understands this and he is much more careful in his dealings with new Muslims than with born-Muslims. When I asked why he has chosen to be a Sufi, Jesber answered that he has not chosen to be a Sufi, rather he sees Islam itself as only a tool. ‘To pray and fast,’ he says, ‘is not a goal in itself, it is a tool for the ultimate aim, which is to remember and worship God day and night.’ According to Jesber, the only way to achieve this goal of worshipping and remembering God is to make *dhikr*. Although Jesber sees the Sufi methods as a way to worship God, he refuses to categorise himself exclusively as a Sufi. ‘I am a logical person,’ he says, ‘and I would therefore categorise myself as a “*salafī* Sufi”.’ He explains that he will not accept anything that is against the Koran and Sunna. Moreover, although he adheres to the Shāfi‘ī law school, he tends to be ‘*salafī*’, i.e., turning to the Koran and Sunna when it comes to certain social matters. In cer-

tain cases, he sees that the law schools have made *ijtihāds*, which are not suitable to present time.

When I ask why he adheres to a law school, he answers that it is because he is not entitled to make his own *ijtihāds*. Those who are able to make *ijtihāds* should, according to Jesber, know the Koran and many hadiths by heart. They should know all the required knowledge, such as the knowledge of the hadith-transmitters (*‘ilm al-rijāl*) and the contexts of the Koranic verses (*aṣbāb al-nuzūl*). ‘My knowledge,’ he says, ‘is not that great, and I am not able to make my own *ijtihāds*.’ Jesber’s view resembles that of Håkon, who explains why he adheres to a law school, thus:

It is important to follow a law school, as it gives one guidelines and a clear consequence in life. When it comes to being a convert in Sweden, there are two alternatives: one buys a traditional *fiqh*-book based on a law school, such as Nuh Keller’s *Reliance of the Traveller*, or one pieces together one’s own home-made *fiqh*. This home-made *fiqh* might be based on several propaganda booklets and pamphlets from Saudi Arabia all speaking against each other. It is therefore easier to follow a certain way and have the time and effort to devote oneself to what is important, namely worshipping God. One does not want to waste time and effort discussing and wondering about unimportant things so that the main aim of worshipping God is lost.

Like Jesber, Håkon distinguishes between the social message and the spiritual message in the *fiqh*-books. It seems, thus, that even new Muslims in the traditionalist trend tend to turn to the Koran and Sunna when it comes to matters of social relations. It is particularly the issue of female circumcision that the Shāfi‘ī law school, for instance, sees as obligatory, that causes new Muslims to react against the judgement of the law school. Jesber states that, in this case, ‘Shāfi‘ī was wrong’. However, he does claim a difference between social matters and matters of worship, and, though there are social rules that he finds hard to follow, it does not mean that he will refuse the whole Law-School system.

Omar Louborg, a Danish Muslim who was the sheikh of the Murābitūn group in the late 1970s and early 1980s, has written some small booklets about Sufism. In one of the booklets he discusses the ‘external form of Islam’, which he regards as a necessity ‘if one wants to travel the mystical path’ (Louborg 1990a: 5). He writes:

The opening up of the inner level does not come if there is no external form to conclude the various transactions of life. It is the external form that keeps the wholeness together. Without it, there is no

bliss in the spiritual aspiration. It is also the inner spiritual longing that is the fundament that keeps Islam alive. (Louborg 1990a: 6 [translation mine]).

Louborg's reference to 'the external form' might be understood as the link between an apprentice and a master (*murid*/*sheikh*), as Louborg begins a discussion of the spiritual masters in history immediately after this statement. This might suggest that Louborg's Sufi direction only concentrates on those Sufic methods that might lead to spiritual experiences. However, in his other book on the Sufi masters, Louborg explicitly mentions the daily prayers and fasting as important (Louborg 1990b: 9), thus indicating a more orthodox direction of Sufism.

Cyber-space

In the Swedish Muslims' cyberspace (SFCM) e-group, Islamic issues are frequently discussed from various points of views. The controversies between the traditionalist and the *salafi* points of view are often raised. A female convert shows her confusion with the Law-School approach, saying:

When I became Muslim I did not have any idea that one has to adhere to schools. I learnt hadiths and how to perform prayers, but it was not mentioned in any book, however, that this method was in accordance with this or that School. Everything seemed so simple and now all is so complicated (according to my limited point of view) — how should one for instance know which School to adhere to? Which one is to be recommended? (SFCM 4/6–2001 [translation mine]).

This statement is typical, indicating how new Muslims often have limited access to profound Islamic literature. When one becomes Muslim one reads booklets in one of the Scandinavian languages or in English. This has, however, slightly changed in the late 1990s when more books have become available to an English-speaking public.

During summer 2001, a discussion on apostasy from Islam started on SFCM. Individuals adhering to various trends contributed to the discussion. A born-Muslim man wrote that he believes the death penalty for apostasy from Islam to be a consequence of the specific socio-political situation in the early history of Islamic expansion. 'I cannot understand,' he says, 'how this [death penalty] can be seriously promoted by a Muslim living in a modern and pluralistic soci-

ety' (SFCM 24/6–2001). A traditionalist female convert, Umm Ayman, adhering to the Ḥanafī law school, answered that sharia cannot be compromised even though attitudes in society change. She says, 'One cannot negotiate any part of sharia to suit human rights that are defined in a different way. We cannot refuse the Islamic punishments just because they are unpopular or politically incorrect' (SFCM 25/6–2001). She goes on to state, however, that Muslims living in Sweden have a sort of contract with the Swedish State and should therefore live according to the Swedish Law. Another female convert, belonging to the 'rational' trend, sees the death penalty for apostasy as part of the early Muslims' war against non-Muslims. In her view, apostasy at that time was similar to treason, for which, even in many modern societies there still exists a legislated death penalty. 'This,' she says, 'is the most logical explanation for the hard punishment for apostasy' (SFCM 27/6–2001). It is interesting to note how she interprets the law on apostasy in a contextual way and uses the word 'logical' to reinforce her view. As previously discussed, the idea of Islam as a 'logical' religion forms the basis of a rationale for its legitimacy in the modern world.

A female convert in the discussion, Samira, who seems to hold a *salafī* view, makes a determined judgement. She refers to two Koranic verses that seem to indicate that the death penalty should be the punishment for apostasy:

They will not cease to fight against you till they have turned you away from the faith, if they can. But if any of you should turn away from the faith and die as a denier of the truth — those it is whose works will go for nought in this world and in the life to come; and those it is who are destined for the fire, therein to abide (Koran 2: 217).

They would love to see you deny the truth even as they have denied it, so that you should be like them. Do not, therefore, take them for your allies until they forsake the domain of evil for the sake of God; and if they revert to enmity, seize them and slay them wherever you may find them (Koran 4: 89).

She also mentions a hadith from the collection of al-Bukhari, that says whoever apostatizes from Islam should be killed (SFCM 7/7–2001). As is usual for new Muslims, she did not give a precise reference for the hadiths. She ends by saying: 'The Koran always applies. Nothing can be removed in time.'

Another female convert, Camilla, responds by referring to the context of the two verses. In her view, they have nothing to do with

apostasy. I tend to agree with her; on reading the two verses, it seems to be quite difficult to see them as commanding the death penalty for apostasy. The first verse talks about how a person who leaves Islam will lose out, both in this world and in the Hereafter, but the punishment indicated is more spiritual than physical. The second verse deals with allies who turn hostile rather than with Muslims who turn apostates. Camilla refers to an English Koranic commentary that details exceptions for the death penalty, namely if the apostate asks for asylum with a people allied to the Muslims, or if a person fights against the Islamic creed without having any 'real' intention of doing it. Camilla, ends her answer to Samira, saying:

As the Koran always applies, it is important that one interprets it correctly. One cannot take certain verses out of context. One has to look at the totality when reading the Koran (SFCM 9/7–2001 [translation mine]).

The discussion above shows various points of view among Muslim converts. In my view, it also shows that many new Muslims are ignorant in matters of Islamic jurisprudence. Samira's reading of the Koran indicates a literal understanding that does not take into account the context of each verse.

There is a tendency for traditionalists to accept the judgements of the law schools, although it is obvious that there is an awareness of the limitation of sharia legislation in areas like Scandinavia, where there are no official Islamic authorities to enforce the Islamic legislation. As mentioned by Umm Ayman, one of the activists on the SFCM's sendlist, as long as Muslims live in non-Muslim countries they have to be aware of the fact that they have implicitly concluded an agreement with the authorities in the country and have therefore to follow the legislation of the majority society. In my discussion with new Muslims who adhere to one of the Islamic law schools, most shared a similar point of view. It seems, however, in matters of worship, such as how to pray, fast and make *dhikr*, new Muslims in general tend to follow the law school legislation in the Scandinavian countries.

Ideas on Sufism vary among Scandinavian converts. However, new Muslims who adhere to a specific law school regard themselves as being a Sufi. Håkon and the author Bo Werne have slightly different views; they see Sufism as being the 'pure' message of 'Islam' itself.

In my discussions with Scandinavian converts I discovered that

the majority of new Muslims adhering to the Law-School system were men. I also discovered that the women of this trend were mainly those married to immigrant men from Turkey, South Asia or African countries, where Sufism is much more widespread than in the Arab world (except Syria and parts of North Africa). It is important to note that Vogt has noted that Sufism has not led many Norwegians to Islam (Vogt 2000: 210), and, in Norway, there are few new Muslims who turn to Sufism after their conversion. This is in contrast to the situation in Sweden and Denmark.

Extreme movements

In Scandinavia there are three main movements that I would describe as extreme movements: the *ḥabashī* movement, the *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* and the *salafī* trend. I call them extreme movements as their ideologies differ substantially in one way or another from those of mainstream Muslims. They are all exclusionist movements, and they are often in conflict with either each other as well as with mainstream Muslims. The conflicts are usually verbal but, at times, there have been violent clashes between the groups, such as when adherents of the *ḥabashī* movement clashed with Muslims of the *salafī* trend in the main 'immigrant' area of Rosengård, in Malmö in the mid-1990s.

It is mainly the two latter movements that have attracted Scandinavian converts. However, as some female converts are married to immigrant men of the *ḥabashī* movement, I will also give a brief introduction to their ideas.

The ḥabashī movement

The *ḥabashī* movement adheres to Sufism, but differs from other Sufi orders in its approach to Muslims outside its own ranks and in its methodology. At the risk of over-simplifying the situation, one could say that the *ḥabashī* movement, which has its headquarters in Lebanon, is the Arabic Sufi group most actively involved in socio-political work in Europe. Its founder, Sheikh 'Abdullāh al-Ḥabashī, travelled from Ethiopia (*ḥabashī* is the Arabic word for Ethiopia) to Syria where he came into conflict with other Islamic scholars, before settling in Lebanon. During the civil war in the 1970s he attracted many followers, mostly from Beirut, and the *ḥabashī* movement spread to

Western countries with the wave of Lebanese refugees. The movement is most active in Switzerland, Canada and in the Scandinavian countries, where, among their many achievements, they set up kindergartens and schools.

The *ḥabashīs* believe that supplication can be directed to the Prophet Muḥammad or to the saints, so that they in turn might approach God on the Muslim's behalf. They claim this belief is supported by the hadith literature. In contrast, the *salafīs* claim that supplication to the Prophet was only possible during the Prophet's lifetime. To accept the possibility of an intermediary between God and man is unbelief (*kufr*), in their view, as it violates their concept of the unity of God (*tawḥīd*). So, whereas the *ḥabashīs* believe that it is part of the Islamic creed to regard the Prophet Muḥammad and the saints as intermediaries between man and God, the *salafīs* regard this as unbelief (*kufr*) due to the emphasis they put on 'the true creed', which is *tawḥīd*. In an Arabic-speaking context, the two movements might be regarded as polar opposites.

Ḥizb al-taḥrīr^{5,6}

Ḥizb al-taḥrīr (the Islamic Liberation Party) was established in Jerusalem in 1948 by Sheikh Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī (d. 1977) from Haifa, who had an Islamic education from al-Azhar. The founder's view was that all contemporary Islamic and nationalist movements and parties had failed to achieve their goals after the fall of the caliphate in Turkey because they had not succeeded in raising the intellectual, political and social achievements of Muslim society. Al-Nabhānī wrote many books delineating the ideology of the party, of which the establishment of the caliphate was a central issue. This is reflected in the party's organisation under a centralized power that promulgates the same political and ideological stance to all members, wherever they live. All must give their assent. Such unanimity ensures that all members promote similar ideas and have similar positions with regard to religious and socio-political matters (*ḥizb al-taḥrīr* 1963:

⁵ The description of *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* is partly built on a description of the movement in *Women in Islam: The Western Experience* Roald 2001a: 45–50.

⁶ The information given is based on interviews and discussions with members of the party in Europe and in Jordan.

88; 1953: 71). This is in contrast to the approach of many other Islamic movements, which often stress the importance of local circumstance in political analysis. On a practical level, however, it seems that members of the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* do adapt to their environment, particularly with regard to social issues.

The *ḥizb al-tahrīr* is also present in Western countries, where it has been increasingly active since the 1980s. Members are settled all over Western Europe, but it is in Great Britain that they are strongest. The party's greatest presence is on university campuses, but with the International Muslim Khilafa Conference at Wembley Arena in London, August 1994, it manifested this presence nationally in Britain.

The relationship of the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* to other Islamic groups in Europe, particularly in Britain, is not harmonious. Members of the party tend to take a competitive and oppositional attitude towards other movements and a confrontational attitude towards Western society in general. There have been confrontations not only between party members and non-Muslims, but also between party members and members of other Islamist movements. Jewish groups have opposed the party's intensive anti-Zionist propaganda. At times their activities are banned. Other Islamist movements, who have a more co-operative attitude towards their host society, feel that the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* undermines their activities.

Some members of *ḥizb al-tahrīr* live in the Scandinavian countries. In Norway and Sweden the party only has a few individual members, but in Denmark it is fully activated. The party has existed in Denmark from the mid-1990s but it has, until recently, been a small organisation with ten to twenty members. Few took it seriously. It was in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks that the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* suddenly started to attract attention both from Muslims and the Danish media. The party will not report the number of its members, but according to *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* it is estimated at approximately 300 (*Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 27/10–2001). In October 2001, the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* held a meeting in Copenhagen attended by more than 1000 persons. Although many people came out of curiosity rather than sympathy with the organisation, the meeting scared the Danish public as well as Danish politicians. Fahmy Almajid, a Syrian-Danish journalist claims that many of the members are students who are well integrated and speak Danish well. Almajid believes that the reason for their membership to such an organisation is that they do

not see any benefit from their integration into Danish society. They feel unappreciated by the Danish society; the labour and housing market is closed for them and they are not accepted as neighbours or friends (*Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 27/10–2001).

In the Danish election campaign of autumn 2001, the *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* came to the forefront as it urged Muslims to boycott the election. The party's spokesman, Fādī Abdullāṭif, wrote in *Khilafah*, the magazine of *ḥizb al-taḥrīr*:

It is prohibited for Muslims to run for a seat in the Parliament either as an independent candidate or as a member of one of the political parties. It is also prohibited for Muslims to vote on the candidates in the Parliament election, whether the candidates be Muslim or non-Muslim (*Khilafah* quoted in *Urban* 21/11–2001 [translation mine]).

In the *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* meeting in October 2001, the political message was that democratic principles are inappropriate and, according to the *Khilafah* magazine, God is the only legislator (*Urban* 21/11–2001). Members of *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* regard the Muslim politicians as tools for the Danish authorities. They believe they are used in order to let Muslims 'accept, internalize and adopt Western values, traditions, culture and norms that will eventually lead to Muslims losing their faith in Islam, their Islamic culture and identity' (*Khilafah*, quoted in *Urban* 21th of November 2001). According to one of my informants in Denmark, there are also some new Muslims among the *ḥizb al-taḥrīr*, whom he describes as 'angry young men'. He sees their membership to this organisation as part of a youth rebellion against their society.

In August 2002 I attended a Muslim meeting in Denmark. One of the main speaker was the Egyptian-Swiss scholar, Tariq Ramadan whose understanding of Islam is one of compatibility with Western society; Muslims should integrate and act within the society they are living in. At the meeting, which was attended by a couple of hundred Muslims, many individuals with a *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* direction showed up. It seemed quite obvious that they came to attack Ramadan's view on 'a European Islam'. Their hostile attitude; posing provocative questions and even acting in a very rude way, created a gloomy atmosphere at the meeting.

Ḥizb al-taḥrīr was prohibited by the Danish authorities in 2002 on the reason that the group promoted anti-democratic ideas. It is probably the hard political climate and the fact that Muslims feel harassed

in daily life and by the Danish media that force individuals into such extreme groups. The anti-integration message given by *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* appeals to marginalized persons who feel discriminated against by majority society. It is no coincidence, in my view, that members of the *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* in Sweden have not managed to organise the party; the attitudes towards Muslims in the media and in majority society in general are rather neutral and not as openly hostile as in Denmark.

Ideology

In order to get a more profound understanding of this movement's ideas and actions, I have looked into books by leaders and members of *ḥizb al-taḥrīr*. To see how this movement manifests itself in Denmark, I have interviewed a member, a Danish convert whom I will call Mansur.

According to *ḥizb al-taḥrīr*, the Islamic state and its leadership alone are responsible for commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong (*al-amr bi l-ma'rūf wa n-nahy 'an al-munkar*). This view appears to have convinced its members not to engage in work associated with social institutions, such as education, welfare, economic enterprises or the building of mosques (*ḥizb al-taḥrīr* 1985: 40; 1953: 25). The *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* seeks to achieve its goals in three stages. The first stage, in which the members receive their ideological education, is conducted in secret. The second stage consists of *da'wa* activities with public dissemination of the party's ideas. The third stage is the re-establishment of the caliphate (al-'Abdalāt 1992: 106). When I asked Mansur why he is a member of the movement he told me that '*ḥizb al-taḥrīr* is the only Islamic party working conscientiously, seriously and ideologically towards establishing a pure Islamic society.' Mansur further refers to the movement's approach being the correct Islamic way, saying:

What impressed me with *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* in the first place was the deep and practical understanding of the method of *da'wa*. The party has deduced this method from the Prophet's (p.b.u.h.) working method in Mecca, where he called people to Islam and then established the Islamic society in Medina.

It is interesting to link Mansur's stress on a general *da'wa* to the actual situation in Denmark, where *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* refused to participate in the political election. *Da'wa* in *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* seems, thus, to be just the verbal propagation of the Islamic message, rather than

actual social participation. Such an approach is in accordance with the second stage of public dissemination of the party's ideas, observed by Marwan al-'Abdalāt.

Al-Nabhānī's view on legal matters was that 'true Islam' can only be achieved by returning to the Prophet and his Companions' approach to the Koran (Taji-Farouki 1996: 51). This led him to repudiate the traditional institution of Islamic scholars (*ulamā'*) (Taji-Farouki 1996: 37). He criticised these scholars for 'violating the Islamic legal rule by shying away from politics' (quoted in Taji-Farouki 1996: 87). He was also critical of the famous Islamic philosophers of the Golden Age of Islam, claiming that they had not evaluated Greek philosophy in the light of Islamic doctrine and had thus introduced non-Islamic traits into their understanding of Islam (Taji-Farouki 1996: 51). In order to avoid modern interpretations of Islam being corrupted by modern ideologies such as capitalism and socialism, al-Nabhānī argued that 'all foreign ideas must be evaluated on the basis of the Islamic doctrine, and rejected outright if they contradict any aspect of it' (Taji-Farouki 1996: 52). Mansur professes similar ideas, saying that the party cleanses Muslims' ideas and thoughts 'from traditions and traditional heritage, and foreign concepts and ideas which are un-Islamic.'

In a similar fashion al-Nabhānī accords primacy to revelation, in contrast to the 'rational' trend in Islam, which has always either subordinated revelation to reason or put revelation and reason side by side. In spite of his rejection of the methods of traditional Islamic scholars and his promotion of 'turning to the Koran and Sunna', it seems that al-Nabhānī still adhered to traditional legislation. Mansur sees the *ḥizb al-taḥrīr's* eclectic approach, which, in his own words, included 'both rational and Islamic arguments', as convincing.

For Mansur, Islam is 'a rational religion'. One should, therefore note the difference between members of the *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* and Muslims of the 'rational trend' in terms of their view of the 'rational'. It might be that al-Nabhānī has a tendency to follow the historical example of the strict Zāhirī school of thought (Taji-Farouki 1996: 57–63),⁷ which has been perceived as 'rational'. This tendency might explain why the *ḥizb al-taḥrīr's* ideas sometimes correspond with those of the

⁷ The Zahiri school of thought promoted a literal interpretation of the Islamic sources.

salafī trend. Al-Nabhānī, like the *salafīs*, believes that the Prophet's example should be imitated *in toto* (Taji-Farouki 1996: 58–59). This is in contrast to the 'rational' trend, who divide the Prophet's example into three different categories: his sayings, actions and decisions, which form the basis of sharia regulations; those actions that are linked to his special status as a Prophet, for instance his marrying more than four wives; and those sayings, actions and decisions that are associated with his human status, his cultural background and the traditions peculiar to Arabia of that time, such as those concerning clothing or food (Abū Zahra [n.d.] b: 89). Another similarity with the *salafī* trend lies in al-Nabhānī's belief that consensus (*ijmā'*) in Islamic legislation should be based solely on consensus among the Prophet's Companions.

Although al-Nabhānī tends to interpret Islamic law in a strict manner, as indicated above, he shows a 'modern' approach to the question of authority, i.e. *who* should interpret the Islamic sources. He claims *ijtihād* is an obligation for those who have the necessary competence, and he also calls for unrestricted *ijtihād*. It is important to draw attention to the fact that, although he demands competence for performing *ijtihād*, he also believes that all Muslims are 'potentially capable of at least deducing legal rules for personal issues, and could consult the numerous reference works available in the fields of Arabic language and jurisprudence for advice in this respect' (Taji-Farouki 1996: 55). In this matter also his stand can be compared to that of the *salafī* trend. Al-Nabhānī's approach to *ijtihād* indicates a modern individualistic understanding of Islam. However, this is offset by al-Nabhānī's view that Muslims should strictly follow *all* the hadiths. Mansur also sees the party's approach as 'modern' in terms of being up-to-date. He says that the party is capable of linking the Islamic social system to contemporary issues and problems. He believes that the party manages to strike a balance between the traditional approach and the modern approach of deducing solutions suitable to contemporary issues.

As for women within the Party, Taji-Farouki has observed that, although their membership is permitted, it is regulated (Taji-Farouki 1996: 144). There is strict gender segregation in all party activities and, in Taji-Farouki's view, women are marginalized within the movement. She claims that women usually have their own study circles, but my observation in Jordan did not support this claim. In my interview with Abū ar-Rashta, a leading member of the Jordanian

branch of *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, he stated that the main tasks of a woman are to look after the house and raise the children, so their training is mainly the concern of their husbands. His view might be a consequence of the political situation in Jordan, where the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* is under surveillance and where party leaders are frequently jailed (Roald 1994: 101–104).

When I asked Mansur about his view on women's position in society he gave me an article written by al-Nabhānī translated into Danish. The article is called 'Manden og kvinden i lyset av Shari'ah-forpligtelserne' (Man and woman in light of the obligations in sharia) and is also a chapter in one of the *ḥizb al-tahrīr*'s books, *The Social System in Islam*. Mansur stated that his own views coincided with those of the article. Al-Nabhānī lived in the Arab world, in a totally different cultural sphere to Denmark. Moreover, he died in 1977, at a time when the equal gender opportunities debate was much less developed than it is in the early twenty-first century. Mansur's reference to this article thus reflects the centralized nature of *ḥizb al-tahrīr*'s ideology, organisation and activities.

In the article al-Nabhānī states that in Islam neither the issue of equal gender opportunities nor the issue of unequal gender opportunities have been taken into consideration. He says:

The solutions presented by Islam are for all human action and are not specific for men or women. The case of equality or inequality between men and women has therefore never been discussed. Neither do the terms 'equality' and 'inequality' exist therefore in the Islamic legislation.

Al-Nabhānī sees the concept of 'equal gender opportunities' as a concept created in Western society due to the fact that women in Western society are oppressed and humiliated. As a reaction to the Western oppression of women, Western women have raised the issue of gender equality and demanded their rights. 'No Muslims care about the idea [of equal gender opportunities], except for a few who imitate the West', he claims. In al-Nabhānī's view, there is no need for the concept of equal gender opportunities in Islam, as the Islamic social system is 'based on a strong foundation that guarantees and secures the cooperation and elevated status of community and the society.'

Al-Nabhānī continues, saying that men and women have similar rights and duties as human beings. He does not, however, regard

these similar rights and duties in terms of equality. Al-Nabhānī turns to the specific rules which are given women due to their specific ‘female’ (*unthā*) nature, their position in the group and their status in society; and the rules given men due to their specific ‘male’ (*dhakar*) nature, their position in the group and their status in society. In these cases the rights and duties are not similar, he states, and one is concerned not with the treatment of human beings in general, but with a specific ‘type’ of human being. He refers to examples such as two female witnesses equals that of one male, female heritage in contrast to male heritage, the dowry men give women at the time of marriage, and the responsibility/authority (*ansvarlighed/myndighet*) that men have over women. Although he states that there are social differences between men and women, al-Nabhānī emphasizes no human being should be regarded as better than any other. The article seems to be marked by the time and place of its writing. The way he regards the gender issue as a specific ‘Western’ problem fits into a certain pattern prevalent in the sixties and seventies, equating ‘East’ and ‘West’ with ‘Islamic’ and ‘un-Islamic’ respectively. As Muslims experience living as integrated immigrants in the Western world, this oppositional thinking has tended to change.

The Danish convert tends to accept al-Nabhānī’s text *in toto* without reflecting on its implications, such as the glorification of the Muslim world as a place where the oppression and humiliation of women do not exist. As I discovered during my fieldwork in the late nineties in Europe, even Arab members of *ḥizb al-tahrīr* referred to the discrepancy between the ‘ideal Islam’ and Muslim practice in the real world. The cultural encounter between Islam and the West makes Muslim immigrants aware that Western life is different to the portraits painted of it in many parts of the Muslim world. The cultural encounter seems thus to have changed the nature of the ‘East/West’ discourse that is evident in many Islamic books of the sixties and seventies. In contrast, Mansur’s acceptance of al-Nabhānī’s ideas without any reflections of their relevance or implications in Western society might be regarded in view of the role of Islam as a minority religion in Western society that offers converts a frame within they can express opposition and rebellion towards their own society.

Most *ḥizb al-tahrīr* literature was written more than twenty years ago, using an argumentation built on certain presuppositions that are different to those of the present debate. Mainstream Islamic

movements and trends tend to change their ideas and their argumentation according to time and place, whereas members of *ḥizb al-tahrīr* have to a great extent kept within a social context of the Arab world from the sixties and seventies. Currently, therefore, there is a discrepancy between ideas in the mainstream Islamic discourse and the ideas in the discourse of *ḥizb al-tahrīr*. This discrepancy is evident mainly in the divergence of political ideologies and ideas of gender relations.

*The salafī trend*⁸

Salafī ideas are rooted in the *wahhābī* school of thought, which originated on the Arab Peninsula at the time of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in the eighteenth century. It is important to note that this movement is not the same as the reform movement *salafīyya* of Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh in the nineteenth century. Although one could argue that the nineteenth-century *salafīyya* movement and many of the Islamist movements of the twentieth century were built on similar ideas as those of the *wahhābī* movement, there are major distinctions between them, owing to the fact that they developed in different ways. The *wahhābī* movement developed in a closed, non-colonized atmosphere, and it therefore evolved trends particular to this environment. Many of the other movements developed in an atmosphere of Western colonization and their understanding of Islam reflects the encounter between the traditional and the modern. Although ‘Abd al-Wahhāb advocated ‘the return to the Koran and Sunna’, the practice of *wahhabism* on the Arab Peninsula was to adhere firmly to the Ḥanbalī law school. The novel aspects of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s approach are the strict adherence to the *ḥadīths* and the rejection of practices permitted in traditional Islam, such as the wearing of amulets or the visiting of graves of the Prophet’s Companions or saints. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb prohibited these practices on the grounds of *shirk* (associating partners with God). To this day the Ḥanbalī School’s emphasis on the hadith literature influences the *salafī* movement.

⁸ The description of the *salafī* trend is partly built on the description in my book *Women in Islam. The Western Experience* (2001) in where I have discussed the *salafī* trend in more detail.

Even though the *salafī* trend varies slightly in its professed views, it is united in its commitment to the direct interpretation of the Koran and the Sunna of the Prophet. The conflict between the *salafīs* and the more 'rationalistic' Islamic trend is not a new one (Abū Zahra [n.d.]; al-Ashqar 1982). Some scholars, such as Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1996), have compared the conflict between these two movements to the historical differences between those who adhered to the hadiths (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) and those who believed in the opinions of scholars (*ahl al-ra'y*) (M. al-Ghazālī 1989).⁹ However, this may not be an adequate comparison, since these early Muslim movements were mainly concerned with looking to base adjudications on methodological principles, whereas the contemporary Islamic movements are reform movements.

The ideas of the *wahhābī* movement did not expand from the Arab Peninsula until oil wealth facilitated their spread to other parts of the world. In Saudi Arabia, some Islamic universities have been established that are concerned exclusively with Islamic teaching. These universities are easily accessible, even to students from impoverished countries, due to a generous scholarship system. The graduates of these universities, who work as imams or teachers in other countries, disseminate *salafī* ideas.

The *salafī* trend is loosely organised. The term '*salaf*' refers to *al-aslāf* (the first three generations of Muslims). The *salafīs* regard the example of these Muslims as normative, both in terms of '*aqīda* (creed or doctrine) and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and interpret the Koran and the Prophet's Sunna in accordance with the understanding of the three first generations of Muslims. Although this is also an issue in other Islamic movements, the *salafīs* go further in this regard. They consider the problems of the Muslim Umma to be a result of diverse understandings of Islam that stem, in part, from Muslims' adherence to particular law schools (Amin 1982: 71; cf. al-Albānī 1993). In interviews and discussions with *salafīs*, I observed that they reject the Law-School system entirely, and, on every single *fiqh* question, they look for the strongest evidence (*dalīl*) in the Koranic verses and the

⁹ In early Muslim history there was a conflict between those who relied on hadiths for Islamic rules (*ahl al-ḥadīth*), as was mainly done within the Ḥanbalī *madhhab*, and those who relied on scholars' views and interpretations of the body of hadith literature with reference to the Koran for developing Islamic rules (*ahl al-ra'y*).

Sunna, thus searching for ‘one single judgement’. They emphasize the idea of innovation (*bid‘a*), which refers to that which is not explicitly mentioned in the Koran or hadiths, or was not practised by the first three generations of Muslims.

Whilst the *salafī* view of the Islamic creed is shared, to some extent, by other Islamic movements, the strict *salafī* approach to *fiqh* is unique to the movement. The *salafīs* do not tolerate a multiplicity of views in matters of jurisprudence, as I have discovered during my fieldwork among *salafīs* in Jordan and in Europe.

The *salafī* view of women and their role in society is strict. Women are encouraged to stay in their homes, a view I have observed is criticised, even by some of the *salafī* women. Many women wear face veils. In this issue, they follow the Saudi grand *mufti* ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Ibn Bāz (d. 1999). Generally speaking, the *salafī* trend tends to take the strictest legal position. This has estranged many Muslims from their ideas, but attracted many others.

In Europe, the *salafī* trend has some strong footholds, for instance in France, Great Britain and Holland. Even in the Scandinavian countries, there are large groups of *salafīs*, particularly among Arab and Somali groups. Lately, the *salafī* view has started to impact new Muslims. Strong material and financial support has enabled *salafī* thought to spread through Europe. This interpretation of Islam tends to attract immigrant Muslims with little formal education, who become more religious in the cultural encounter with the West. However, although the *salafī* understanding of Islam is non-integrationist, some *salafīs* become more moderate in their approach to European society as time goes on. Conversely, with the increased marginalization of immigrants in European society due to unemployment and poverty, many *salafīs* become more strict in their interpretation of Islam, as can be seen from the following example from Sweden.

In 1996 an imam who belongs to the *salafī* movement gave a Friday sermon in a Swedish cellar-mosque, in which he posed the question: should Muslim women in Sweden go to the mosque? He explained that, according to Islam, nothing prevents a woman from visiting a mosque, but in his view, the social environment demands that a woman should stay at home, as the streets in Sweden are not safe for women. He went on to explain that, on the one hand, women represent a temptation (*fitna*) to Muslims, as few Muslim women in Sweden wear a face-veil; and, on the other hand, that there is a danger of women being raped if they go out of their

houses. This preacher represents some sectors of the *salafī* trend, although there are *salafīs* with a much more open approach both to European society and to the issue of women in Islam.

Within the *salafī* trend, the role of women is understood in terms of the Koranic verse: 'And stay in your houses. Adorn not yourselves with the adornment of the Time of Ignorance (*jāhiliyya*)' (Koran 33: 33). This verse is regarded by many non-*salafī* Islamists, however, as being directed at the wives of the Prophet only, due to their special status as 'mothers of the believers'. The non-*salafīs* support their claim by referring to the immediately preceding verse that says: 'O, you wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women. If you keep your duty (to God), then be not soft of speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease aspire (to you) but utter customary speech' (Koran 33: 32).

There is a notion within the *salafī* trend that it is the husband's duty to teach his wife Islamic knowledge; this tends to restrict *salafī* women's movements outside the home. There are, however, some *salafī* women who gather weekly to study Islamic sources. Women usually lead these gatherings, although men might occasionally give lectures. In sum, *salafī* ideology is directed towards gender segregation. This is strongly reinforced in the European context, where *salafī* women rarely play any part in wider society, particularly because these societies encourage free mixing of the sexes.

After the Gulf War in 1992, the movement split into various factions. In Europe, four main approaches can be identified within the *salafī* trend. Two of these support to varying degrees the Saudi Arabian religious and political system. One trend supports the Saudi scholars linked to the Saudi government, both politically and religiously, which means they would agree with these scholars both in their support for and their criticism of the Saudi government. The other trend is linked to the Saudi scholar, Rabī'ā Madkalī, who advocates absolute support for the Saudi political system. Both these trends have substantial material support from the Saudi Arabian government. The two other factions reject the Saudi political system, due mainly to its support of the Western alliance during the Gulf War. However, both trends continue to support the Saudis' religious understanding and practice of Islam. The third trend criticises the Saudi political system orally, and its followers support Saudi scholars who have been jailed in Saudi Arabia for their criticism of the political system. Followers of the last trend have a *jihadic* approach,

opposing the Saudi Arabia system *in toto*. This trend's main criticism of the Saudi government has been that the Saudis permitted non-Muslims (notably, American soldiers) to stay in Saudi Arabia after the Gulf War. Usama Bin Laden might be regarded as one of the prominent figures in this trend, the strength of which had not been anticipated until the late 1990s with the terrorist attacks on American targets in Africa. However, although at the time there were suspicions that Usama Bin Laden was involved, the reach of this political trend was not fully comprehended before the events of September 11th. Suddenly the *salafî* ideology came to the fore and *salafî* ideas were exposed to the whole world.

One must recognise the importance of continuous war in Afghanistan on the development of the *jihadic* trend of the *salaf* ideology. The civil war in Algeria between the government and the religious extremist groups also had an impact in the development, as did the fight between extremist Islamists in Egypt and the Egyptian authorities. Muslims from all over the world, particularly from Algeria, Egypt and the Gulf states, gathered in Afghanistan to fight, first, with United States financial support, the war against the Russians, then in the internal conflicts between the various Afghani tribes and ideological directions. The war revolutionized many of the *salafî* fighters, who developed a more extreme trend within the *salaf* ideology. Among Muslims in Europe and the United States it was a well-known fact that many of the *jihad*-fighters, particularly from the Arabic-speaking community, who had gone to the war in Afghanistan, belonged to an extreme and often violent faction of the *salafî* movement.

There are even some Scandinavian converts who belong to the *salafî* movement, most of whom are from Sweden. A few new Muslims sympathise with the more extreme trend within the movement, although most Swedish *salafîs* follow the two trends that support the Saudi Arabian political and religious system. One trait common to all the *salafî* trends is a strict schism between Muslims and non Muslims. *Salafîs* tend to refer to non-Muslims as 'kuffār' (non-believers, sing. *kāfir*). Many other new Muslims prefer to say 'non-Muslims', so as not to hinder any co-operation with them, but the *salafîs* explicitly refuse any dealings with non-Muslims, who are, in their view, enemies. Furthermore, many *salafîs* often regard other Muslims as not belonging to Islam, notably those born into Muslim families who do not practice their religion, and those belonging to other trends.

A group of Swedish new Muslims have a homepage on the Internet (www.muslimer.com). All the texts on the site, apart from a few introductory texts, are translations of texts written by *salafī* scholars, such as ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1787), Sheikh Muḥammad S. al-Munajjid, Sheikh Nasr al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1999), Sheikh Abū Ḥamza an Egyptian imam living in Britain, and Sheikh Aḥmad Farīd. Even the Jamaican convert, Abu Aminah Bilal Philips is represented but he is not given the title ‘sheikh’ on the site. It is obvious that most of the new Muslims working on the site are women, as Swedish women have translated the texts. They rarely put their own names, rather they denote themselves Umm Bilal (the mother of Bilal), Umm Halima (the mother of Halima), Umm Omar (the mother of Omar), etc.

The text ‘About Us’ is unsigned and gives an introduction to the message of the site. The text discusses the way Islamic issues, particularly those of the Muslim woman and ‘the veil’, are presented in the official debate. It says, ‘We have observed how other Islamic homepages are active in the debate and sometimes present Islam wrongly, only to satisfy the *kuffār*’. The text continues, quoting the Koranic verses 3: 119–120, dealing with the relationships between Christians, Jews and Muslims, and it states: ‘These verses show that the *kuffār* hate us whatever we say and do’.

The texts on the homepage provide detailed discussions of *ḥarām* (what is prohibited) and *ḥalāl* (what is allowed), the right way to pray, fast, behave, etc. There are, for instance, detailed explanations of how to perform ritual ablutions in the ‘correct’ way. It is stated that if some parts of the ritual are performed incorrectly, the ablution as well as the prayer become void. It is also interesting to note that the site has several texts on the issue of women. One text deals with the characteristics of the Muslim woman, another with women and *jihad*, and a third with women and travelling. Other texts deal with the characteristics of the Prophet’s Companions, general questions and answers about worship and social issues, and a text reflecting on Shi‘a Islam.

The general texts deal with how to maintain one’s Islamic identity, and there is an urge for total segregation from non-Muslims and ‘bad’ Muslims. In the texts on women, the message is that women should stay at home and raise their children, be obedient to their husbands and not behave like men with regards to work outside the home. The text *Jihad and Women* by Sheikh Abū Ḥamza talks about the various duties of women. Abū Ḥamza has lived for

many years in Great Britain and he is known for his extreme views relating for instance to Muslim and non-Muslim-relations. According to Abū Ḥamza the first duty is to keep to Islam. He continues:

The second duty for the sisters is to prepare to be a good and decent wife. For a young woman to go out and learn how to command men, have a career like a man and be independent, is bad, and the result is that the woman is neither a woman nor a man (www.muslimer.com/kvinna_jihad.htm) [translation mine].

It is also interesting to note that Abū Ḥamza actually encourages women who are married to Muslim men who do not practice the Islamic precepts in their entirety to divorce their husbands.

Another female duty promoted by Abū Ḥamza is the education of her children. In this part, he says that a Muslim woman should not send her children to places where they might lose their religion. 'To give them knowledge,' he says, 'does not mean that they should be sent to school.' This statement seems to encourage segregation in society, as promoted by many of the other texts. The text on women travelling promotes the view that women should never travel without a male relative (*mahram*) even if the journey is only for a few hours. New Muslims in the traditionalist trend share this view. However, the views promoted by new Muslims in the 'rational' trend differ as they regard it as necessary in the modern world that a woman travel without a male relative. They claim that the law on women travelling has to do with the specific situation during the time of the Prophet, when people travelled through the desert and fights between the various tribes made it dangerous for both women and men. Travelling in the present time, according to them, is usually secure for women. 'If the plane crashes I do not believe a male relative will be able to help me much,' Karima, who promotes the 'rational' trend, says.

The text on Shi'a Islam indicates the *salafi* tendency to see Muslims of other trends as being outside the Islamic creed. The text is unsigned and it claims, firstly, that shi'ism attacks the Koran when it says that the Koran has been changed. Secondly, the text tells how Shi'a Muslims 'hate' and curse the two Muslim leaders, 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb and Abū Bakr. Although the text does not explicitly state that Shi'a Muslims are outside the creed, it ends with: 'Shi'ism has also very determinedly refused *ahl al-sunna* (Sunni Muslims) and fought against them, which means that the gap between us has widened . . . I hope

that more brother and sisters realise what this SECT stands for' (www.muslimer.com/shia.htm).

It seems that the people behind the homepage promote the view of *jihad* against current Muslim leaders. Sheikh Abū Ḥamza, in his text on women and jihād speaks of two forms of *jihad*: the defensive and the offensive *jihad*. The defensive *jihad* is, in the author's view, obligatory in order to 'defend the Islamic ideology on Muslim territories'. The *salafī* way of classifying certain Muslims as *kuffār* becomes obvious in his text when he talks about the Muslim leaders:

Jihad in Chechnia and in Saudi Arabia is the same. Islam does not see the difference between a blue-eyed *kāfir* and a brown-eyed *kāfir*. Islam is the same. The first *kuffār* the Prophet (saas) fought against were his own uncle and his own people. Now we defend Islam itself against our own tyrants. We even place our families among the unbelievers to protect them against our own kind (www.muslimer.com/kvinna_jihad.htm) [translation mine].

He continues, saying that 'there is absolutely no doubt that the *jihad* existing in our homelands is the defensive *jihad*'. In this statement there is a close link to Usama Bin Laden's struggle against the Saudi Royal family. It is also interesting to note that one of the women who translated some of the text was living with her Algerian husband in Afghanistan for some years. During the United States' bombing of Afghanistan in autumn 2001, the Swedish newspapers reported her missing. It seems, thus, that the new Muslims behind this homepage belong to the *jihadic* trend of *salafī* groups.

The *salafīs* have a particular way of understanding the Koran and the Sunna literally. The way they understand gender relations, extrapolating from the social system at the time of the Prophet, is also specific to this trend. The Swedish woman, Umm Bilal, has translated a text on women and travelling by Abū Muslimah. In this text there is a discussion on how women, particularly converts who have no Muslim relatives, should travel if they have no male relative over ten years of age (*mahram*) to accompany them. The scholar states that a woman can only travel with a male relative, but if she has no other possibilities she can bring along even a son of 3–4 years as *mahram*, although he states that this is not desirable. In my discussion with Amal, who belongs to the 'rational' trend, she told how upset she gets by reading the *salafī* converts' homepage. She specifically mentioned this example that for a woman to bring a young son as *mahram* is more acceptable than to travel alone. 'There is no logic

in their reasoning,' she exclaims, 'they just follow principles without looking at how reasonable these principles are.'

There are two hadiths in particular that are often quoted by *salafīs*. The first is linked to *jihad*:

One who sees a bad thing (*munkar*) should change it with the hand. If the person is not able to do this, then he should change it with his tongue. If he is not able to, then with his heart and that is the weakest of faith (*iman*).

The second hadith is linked to the exclusionist attitude towards non-Muslims and Muslims of other directions:

The Jews divided into 71 groups, and the Christians divided into 72 groups. My Ummah will divide into 73 groups and all of them are in the fire except one.

This hadith is used to point to the belief that the *salafīs* are the only group on the 'right path'. This was the view of Umm Mustafa in an interview conducted with her. She went on to say that other Muslim groups are on the 'wrong path'. Their way of looking at Shi'a Muslims is an example of the exclusionist attitude of *salafīs*, who even often regard other Sunni Muslims as being outside the Islamic creed.

Another characteristic of the *salafīs* is their total reliance on scholars, despite their claim of 'returning to the Koran and Sunna'. A traditionalist contributor to the SFCM's e-group points out this phenomenon, saying:

Persons who argue against adhering to a law school (*taqlīd* i.e. imitation) rarely understand what it is about. On one hand one cannot build up a solid understanding of Islam by recurrently claiming 'Koran and Sunna' as a slogan instead of looking at how the scholars have understood things. On the other, *taqlīd* does not necessarily mean to follow blindly. The funny thing about this discussion is that those who claim that *taqlīd* is a blind following are often the ones who follow scholars most blindly. What 'al-Albānī says' and 'Ibn Bāz says' suddenly become divine truths in certain circles (SFCM 4/6–2001 [translation mine]).

The idea that *salafīs* tend to follow some scholars blindly is reinforced by an interview with some Swedish male *salafī* converts on Swedish radio on 30th of November 2001. The participants belonged to a small Muslim congregation in one of the suburbs of Stockholm. One of the men had been studying Arabic and Islamic studies in

Yemen and spoke fluent Arabic. The female reporter described the wife of one of the men as fully covered with face-veil and gloves and the reporter stated that the wife did not join them in the room where the interview took place. The men responded to the reporter's questions with what the reporter called 'standard answers.' Whenever the reporter wanted them to give their own views, they refused. At times they stated that they would have to discuss certain questions with their sheikhs in the Muslim world before they could give adequate answers.

Elsewhere, I have argued that the *salafī* movement is the only movement that might be described as a 'fundamentalist' movement, in terms of its following the Islamic sources literally (Roald 2001a: 23–27). 'Fundamentalism' can be defined as a political understanding of religion and it seems most trends within the movement have a political approach to Islam. It is interesting to note how it is particularly the *salafī* trend that confirms many of the prejudices non-Muslims have about Muslims and Islam. Many of the *salafī* statements have been the reason that women's weak position in Muslim society has been linked to the Islamic creed. The idea that women have a weak and restricted official position in Islamic societies is confirmed by the afore-mentioned website's statement that women should be housewives only, as well as their view that women cannot travel alone. Moreover, the site's stress on *jihad* as military action is a typical cause of Western society's prejudice that Islam is a violent religion.

Many of the new Muslims belonging to the traditionalist as well as the 'rational' trend have said that they regard the *salafī* movement as problematic. The way Amal disputes their methods of following principles instead of being reasonable and pragmatic indicates the kind of criticism other new Muslims have of the *salafī* movement. The movement's exclusionist attitude towards other Muslims as well as majority society is another factor that has dissatisfied many new Muslims. All in all, the *salafī* movement is a marginalized phenomenon in Muslim society as well as in Muslim communities in Scandinavian society. Although there are *salafī* converts, I would claim that they belong to a small minority within the Scandinavian convert community. The *salafī* converts are often segregated from the rest of the new Muslim community, as they tend to regard Muslims belonging to other trends as not following 'the right path'. The interaction between *salafī* converts and the rest of the Muslim and new Muslim community is thus limited.

It is important to note the aspect of rebellion in the extreme trends, the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* and the *salafī* movements. In Chapter Three, I discussed how some new Muslims saw their conversion in terms of a rebellion, either against their parents or society. The commitment to the extreme groups can be regarded as a social rebellion. Members of the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* and *salafī* movement have said that the morality of Scandinavian society is 'loose and without boundaries', especially in sexual matters. 'Islam' becomes the antithesis to such a 'loose' system, with its 'fixed and strict rules and regulations for every single action of human life', as expressed by one *salafī* convert. Mansur who belongs to the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* expressed a similar idea when he stated that 'Islam gives solutions and clear rules for all problems in life, for the individual, for the society and for state affairs.' I see many of the statements of the members as belonging to the initial stage of the conversion process, where converts tend to become 'more royal than the king'. Further on, the new Muslim tends to enter a more reflective stage, where one might realise that the 'strict rules and regulations' are not as fixed as one had thought. I will deal with this stage of new Muslim conversion in Chapter Seven.

The extreme trends within the Sunni convert community are controversial even within the Muslim community. Muslims and particularly new Muslims generally see these trends as disturbing the image of Islam as a 'nice and decent' religion. Some of these extremist groups, which include new Muslims in their membership, promote violence or extreme attitudes. New Muslims belonging to the other trends have pointed out how these groups confirm all the prejudices held against Islamic ideas and practice by majority society. 'How can I claim that Islam means peace, when these Muslims, in the name of Islam, act and speak with violence and hostility,' states Bettina, who belongs to the 'rational' trend. She continues:

They promote polygyny as the norm, when I understand from the Koran that polygyny is the exception. They speak of Scandinavia as a *kāfir* society, when I see that the Scandinavian society, in many ways, is more Islamic than many of the Muslim societies. They speak of a woman's role as being within the home only, when I understand from the Islamic sources that the woman's role is much wider than that. When I hear these people speak about Islam it is as though they speak of a totally different religion to my own.

This statement is an indicator of the great variety of views existing within the new Muslim community. The diversity of the community

is due to the fact that many new Muslims follow their partners' preference for a certain understanding of Islam, and the fact that a person's history, personal experience and dispositions, tend to influence the way s/he understands the Islamic sources.

Reflections

Some Scandinavians who befriend or marry Muslims convert to Islam, but the degree of this Islamic commitment varies. Some embrace Islam because they marry a Muslim but do not practise the Islamic precepts. Some converts choose to stay within their partner's cultural sphere, whereas others adhere to one or more of the general trends in the Muslim community. The three main Islamic trends, the 'rational' trend, 'traditionalism' and extreme movements, have been discussed above.

The great majority of new Muslims adhere to an understanding of Islam where descriptions such as 'logical' and 'rational' are frequently employed. This idea of Islam as 'rational' is also common among the Shi'a converts.

As for Islamic 'traditionalists', it seems that many who adhere to the Islamic Law-School system tend to also have an interest in Sufism. Even in the Muslim world there is a link between the Law-School system and Sufism.

Adherence to an extreme Islamic movement often coincides with the early phase of a new Muslim's conversion process. I have observed that only some new Muslims remain in these movements for a long period of time, many tend to modify their views at a later stage and become either Sufis or adhere to the 'rational' trend.

In the next chapter I will look at literature that has been spread among the new Muslims and therefore at the particular ideas that have formed the various Muslim trends.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF CONVERT LITERATURE

Read in the name of your Lord, who has created — created the human being out of a germ cell. Read for your Lord is the most Bountiful One, who has taught [human beings] the use of the pen — taught human being what s/he did not know (Koran 96: 1–5).

The immigrant community in Scandinavia has little profound Islamic knowledge and few Islamic scholars, therefore Scandinavian converts' ideas are to a great extent formed by the literature they read. During the interviews, I asked the informants what literature they have read and what books had most influenced their ideas. Below I will discuss the books to which they referred. I will also look at books written by new Muslims in order to investigate those ideas promoted by new Muslims in new contexts.

When I embraced Islam in 1982 there were few books about Islamic issues printed in the Scandinavian languages. The Koran was translated into Swedish and Norwegian, but these translations were done in an Orientalist fashion, i.e. by Arabists who translated mainly in a literal manner without taking care to explain double meanings or cultural expressions (Zetterstéen 1917; Berg 1980). In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Swedish intellectuals showed an increased interest in Sufi literature. One of these was Eric Hermelin (d. 1944), a Swedish nobleman, whose travels introduced him to various religious traditions. He was neither a Muslim nor a Sufi; more an 'Abrahamist', as he felt the three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam conveyed similar messages (Werne 2000). He became proficient in the Persian language and, when he was put in a mental hospital after his return to Sweden, he translated a huge amount of work by the Persian mystical poets, such as Farīd al-Dīn Aṭṭār, Jalāl al-Dīn Rumī, Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Sā'dī and Hakim Sana'ī, into Swedish. Part of his work has now been revived by Werne, in his book *Tro och Gärning i Islam (Faith and Deed in Islam)* (Werne 2000).

The Swedish theologian, Tor Andrae, was another intellectual who devoted much time to the mystical elements of Islam. He wrote *Muhammad: hans liv och hans tro* (Muhammad: His Life and His Faith) in 1930, and his book *I Myrträdgården. Studier i tidig islamisk mystic* (In the Myrtle Garden. Studies in Early Islamic Mysticism) was published in 1947. In the latter, he concentrates on classic ‘orthodox’ Sufis whose main message was that of piety and adherence to the Islamic law (Werne 2000: 633–634). This book is widely read both in academic and new Muslim circles.

In the first half of the 20th century some books were even translated by new Muslims. Between 1926 and 1960, the works of Sufi sheikh, Inayat Khan (d. 1927), were translated into Swedish by a Swedish Sufi convert. In addition, a Norwegian admirer of Khan translated one of his books into Norwegian. A Swedish male convert to the Ahmadiyya movement started to publish a small stencil periodical in 1959 (Otterbeck 2000: 113–114) and a Swedish female convert wrote books particularly on women’s issues.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, books written by non-Muslim Swedish, Norwegian and Danish academics have been published. In Sweden emerged such books as *Islam, Lära och Livsmönster* (Islam, Doctrine and Pattern of Life) (1979) and *Politisk Islam — Studier i muslimsk fundamentalism* (Political Islam — Studies in Muslim Fundamentalism) (1980/1983), both by Jan Hjärpe; and *Alla är födda muslimer — Islam som den naturliga religionen enligt fundamentalistisk apologetik* (Everybody is Born Muslim — Islam as the Natural Religion in Fundamentalist Writings) by Christer Hedin (1988). In Norway it was Einar Berg, whose Norwegian translation of the Koran was published in 1980, who dominated as the main voice of Islam. In Denmark, Jes Asmussen wrote his book *Islam* in 1981, and, until the beginning of the twenty-first century, the only translated version of the Koran in Danish was the Ahmadiyya version.

I was an undergraduate student in History of Religion at Oslo University at the time of my conversion, and I was particularly aware of Hjärpe’s books as the main works on Islam in the Scandinavian languages. However, as I became more interested in Islamic issues and started to visit the local mosques, I was given books, mainly in English, written by Muslims. In Norway, the main immigrant Muslim community is that of the Pakistanis, and I was therefore referred to

books written by the Urdu-speaking scholar, al-Mawdūdī. The first books written by a Muslim that I read were his famous *The Fundamentals of Islam* and the English translation of his Koranic commentary, *The Meaning of the Quran*. When I went to the public library in Oslo I found books written in English and published in Lahore, Pakistan, by al-Mawdūdī and the American-Jewish convert, Maryam Jameelah, who went to live in Pakistan in 1962. There were also books published by The Islamic Foundation, dominated by works of adherents to the Jama'at-i-Islami in Pakistan. My discussions with Norwegian converts revealed they had similar experiences in their search for literature. The active *da'wa* of Pakistani Muslims affiliated with the *jama'at-i-islami*, who gave free Islamic books to public libraries, seems to have had an impact on the choice of Islamic orientation for Norwegian converts in the 1980s. It was not until a couple of years later that IIFSO books started to take over the Muslim book market. Many IIFSO books in English and in the Scandinavian languages were published in 1982, 1983 and 1984. Despite the fact that scholars with Arabic as a first language have written most of these books, al-Mawdūdī's *The Fundamentals of Islam* became one of the IIFSO's most widespread books in Scandinavia.

The Koran

Few Scandinavian converts read or understand the Arabic language and they have thus relied on translations of the Koran. In Norway, the lecturer in Arabic studies at Oslo University, Einar Berg, translated the Koran in 1980. The first edition was printed with the Norwegian text only, whereas in the latest edition the Arabic text runs parallel to the Norwegian text. Muslims have criticised Berg for persisting in naming his translation 'The Koran'. According to them, only the Arabic version of the Koran is *the* Koran. As this work is the only existing Norwegian translation of the Koran, however, few Norwegian new Muslims have objected to it as an accepted translation. Some new Muslims, however, tend to combine Berg's translation with Yusuf Alī's English translation of the Koran. This is also because Berg's translation of the Koran does not contain commentaries. Some new Muslims also use the Swedish translation by Swedish convert, Bernström (1998), who has included commentaries.

In 1996, Lindstad, the Norwegian convert, translated the two first chapters of the Koran into Norwegian. However, he translated the Koranic verses from English rather than from Arabic and this might be the reason for other new Muslims' criticism of it.

In Denmark, there is no accepted translation of the Koran, as the only existing translation is the one translated by the Aḥmadiyya movement. The new Muslims I met thus use mainly Yūsuf Alī's English version. Some also use Bernström's version, saying that it is the best translation in any Scandinavian language.

In Sweden, there have been several translations of the Koran. The diplomat Fredrik Crusenstolpe published the first translation in 1843, and the second translation, by Professor Carl Johan Törnberg, was published in 1874. The early Swedish interest in the Islamic creed is, according to Hjärke, a result of the political relationship between the Swedish king, Karl the XII, and the Turkish-Ottoman Empire in the 18th century (Hjärke in Geels 1999: 9–15). As both empires were in decline, they united in an attempt to stop the growing Russian empire. This relationship resulted in an academic chair, Theological Pre-notions and Theological Encyclopaedia, being introduced at Uppsala University in 1754. This chair was later renamed History of Religion with Psychology of Religion and it was aimed at studying non-Christian religiosity.

In 1917, professor Karl Vilhelm Zetterstéen completed his translation of the Koran, which, like Berg, he called *The Koran*. Hedin has noted that the early study of Islam in Swedish universities was marked by an Orientalist attitude. He points to Zetterstéen's introduction that says:

The content of the Koran is partly picked from Christian and Jewish sources. Even the old Arabic sources offered abundant material for Muḥammad, who picked from them many instructive examples. Then finally came his own statements on religious and worldly issues. The frequent fire-and-brimstone sermons witness to an obvious Christian influence (Hedin 1999: 216 [translation mine] See also Zetterstéen 1917: xxiv).

Despite Zetterstéen's understanding that the Koran is a man-made text rather than the Words of God, Hedin believes he is very careful to translate it as accurately as possible. 'If he might seem prejudiced in the introduction,' Hedin says, 'it is never noticed in the translation' (Hedin 1999: 216). Hedin also refers to a fourth translation of the Koran by Åke Ohlmark, which he criticises severely. This

translation of selected Koranic verses is from 1968, and, according to Hedin, is a very weak edition. He points out that the author has only selected certain parts of the Koranic text 'in order to lead the reader to that which he [the author] considers important in the text' (Hedin 1999: 217). He shows that all the texts 'that correspond with Western prejudices about sex, violence and oppression of women are included' whereas 'the more religious parts are omitted' (Hedin 1999: 217).

In my discussions with Swedish new Muslims, few had actually read Ohlmark's translation, although nearly all had heard about it. As for Zetterstéen's translation of the Koran, new Muslims were divided as to its value. A Swedish female convert I spoke with in the 1980s described it as spiritual and beautifully written. Ouis, however, writes that Zetterstéen tends to comment on the text 'in an orientalist spirit'. She points out that Zetterstéen's old-fashioned language and his particular selection of words leads the reader to form certain conclusions. She refers for instance to the word '*kāfir*' that he translated as '*otrogen*' (infidel). She contrasts this translation with that of Muslim scholar, Bernström, who uses '*förmekare av sanningen*' (the one who denies the truth) (Ouis 2000). The above example gives a good indication of how Zetterstéen's choice of words might encourage in non-Muslims hostile feelings towards adherents of Islam. Bernström's less categorical expression, on the other hand, allows for a more embracing attitude from both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Many new Muslims have expressed their disapproval of Zetterstéen's translation. The Shi'a convert Margaretha believes that his translation of the Koran is an insult to Islam and its message. She says that 'it is a shame that Zetterstéen has been allowed such a free scope and has become famous as a translator of the Koran.' Other new Muslims are just as critical, but less outspoken. Karima explains how she belonged to a convert group in the 1990s. Every week the new Muslims met and discussed chosen passages of the Koran in Zetterstéen's translation. 'Many times,' she reflects, 'we felt awful because the language was so strange. It was not only because it felt ancient, but there was no spirituality in the text.' As Karima began to read and understand some Arabic she felt that she would rather read the text in her very frail Arabic than rely on the Swedish translation.

When Bernström's translation was published in 1998, many new Muslims felt relieved. Bernström is a former Swedish ambassador

who openly proclaimed his conversion to Islam when he retired in the 1980s. He worked on the translation of the Koran into Swedish for more than ten years and a renowned Swedish publishing house, Proprius, eventually published it. The translation is also accepted by the authorities of the Islamic Research Academy at al-Azhar in Cairo.

What is special to Bernström's edition in the Scandinavian context is the Koranic commentaries, which he has taken in large part from Muhammad Asad's Koranic commentaries, *The Message of the Qur'an* (1984). Fittingly, Bernström has also named his translation *Koranens Budskap* (The Message of the Koran). Asad's work has a 'rational' approach, including commentaries by 'rational' scholars such as Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144). Al-Zamakhsharī was one of the last followers of the 'rational' movement Mu'tazila and he openly declared the Koran to be created (see Chapter Four for a further discussion).

Bernström was careful to let many Muslims, new Muslims and born Muslims, read the book before he published it, which is why some of Asad's commentaries were taken out and replaced with Bernström's own. One example is the issue of women's dress. Asad interprets the Koranic passages dealing with female dress, in a liberal way. In his commentary for instance to the verse on *jalabib* (sing *jilbab*: outer garment), he says:

The specific, time-bound formulation of the above verse (evident in the reference to the wives and daughters of the Prophet) as well as the deliberate vagueness of the recommendation that women 'should draw upon themselves some of their garments (*min jalabibihinna*)' when in public, makes it clear that this verse was not meant to be an injunction (*hukm*) in the general, timeless sense of this term but, rather, a moral guideline to be observed against the ever-changing background of time and social environment. This finding is reinforced by the concluding reference to God's forgiveness and grace (Asad 1984: 651).

Bernström has changed this commentary. In his own, he stresses the hadīth that says that a grown-up woman should show only her hands and her face (Bernström 1998: 618). He also discusses the term *khimār* in the manner of classic Koranic commentaries. He says that *khimār* was a headscarf that women used to wear, but whose scarf-ends would hang loosely on the back. The Koran instructs women to take the scarf-ends and cover the bosom with them. (Bernström 1998: 511).

Many new Muslims have expressed that Bernström's translation of the Koran and his Koranic commentaries have helped them acquire a more profound understanding of Islam. Elisabeth states that she could read Zetterstéen's edition, although there were many passages she could not understand. She believes that Bernström's translation will help not only new Muslims but also Muslims born and bred in Sweden. As a new Muslim, she feels that she sees many of the Islamic ideas, particularly those pertaining to women and family, in a different light to, say, Arabic-speaking Muslims. In her view, Bernström has managed to convey the Islamic creed but at the same time taken care of particular attitudes with which she can identify herself.

Karima, who also had difficulties in reading Zetterstéen's translation, expresses that Bernström has been successful in crafting a beautiful and spiritual language. 'When I read it,' she says, 'I feel elevated. Bernström has managed to keep in tune with the original Arabic text.'

Mattias, who converted more than 15 years ago, also says that he finds Bernström's use of the Swedish language very readable, easily accessible, lucid and plain. He further states that Bernström's language is to the point and well suited to the age we live in. However, he feels that Asad's included commentaries are sometimes irritating, often being too 'rational'. 'Some of them,' he says, 'are even controversial and it would have been better if they had been left out.' Mattias' criticism of Asad's commentaries seems to be grounded in his particular affiliation to the traditional Islamic law schools and Sufism. Like the *salafis*, Muslims who adhere to Sufism or to the Islamic law school criticise Asad for his overly 'rational' approach to Islam.

I also asked new Muslims adhering to the Shi'a creed whether they accepted Bernström's translation. Bernström is from the Sunni tradition and has therefore not referred to the Shi'a sources of Koran interpretations. Margaretha, who was particularly critical of Zetterstéen's translation, says she is 'immensely satisfied with the new translation.' However, although she does not feel offended, she does react to the fact that the Sunni perspective is the only one represented in the text. In her view, the Sunni commentaries are too superficial and she would have preferred both perspectives, in order to give the most exact meaning and significance for every detail in the Koran.

The only new Muslims I found who had some criticisms of the *Message of the Koran* were those who adhered to a *salafī* creed. They pointed at the fact that Bernström and Asad are much too 'rational' in their commentaries. *Salafīs* tend to interpret the text in a literal way, whereas Asad and Bernström sometimes interpret the text allegorically. I will take the example of *jinn* (spiritual forces) to illustrate the difference in view. The *salafīs* regard these as materialized beings, whether visible or invisible, whereas Asad explains them in terms of 'elemental forces of nature', as a 'metonym for a person's preoccupation with what is loosely described as "occult powers"', or merely unseen beings.

Many new Muslims in the *salafī* trend use the English translation by Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān and Muḥammad al-Hilālī, both linked to the Islamic university in Medina. Khān is also the translator of English versions of al-Bukhārī's collections of hadiths, much referred to by *salafī* converts. Their translation of the Koran is called *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language*. I have discussed these two scholars' translation of the Koran elsewhere (Roald 2001a) and I found in the case of women's dress for example that their interpretation was very subjective and did not allow for diverse interpretations. Of the Koranic verse 24: 31, where the term *khumur* is used for a woman's covering, the two scholars write:

And [for women] not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent (like palms of hands or one eye or both eyes for necessity to see their way, or outer dress like veil, gloves, head-cover, apron, etc.) and to draw their veil (*khumur*) all over *juyūbihinna* (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms, etc.).

According to Arabic-English dictionaries, *juyūb* means 'breast' or 'bosom' and it is important to draw attention to how these two *salafī* scholars have included bodies and faces in their definition. In the same verse, the two scholars have a similar translation for the term *jalābīb*, which is used for 'female covering'. As many *salafīs*, even in Scandinavia, tend to claim that women's face-veil is obligatory, it is obvious that the translation of Khān and al-Hilālī has had some impact on this group.

Literature in the 1970s and 1980s

The Danish researcher, Jørgen Bæk Simonsen, has observed that most literature about Islamic issues in Denmark from the 1970s and 1980s does not contain any guidance or instruction on how to live daily life as a Muslim in a minority community. He states that the message given at this period is the overarching scholastic notion that the Koran and the Sunna form the base for all human existence, even in the 20th century (Bæk Simonsen 1990: 109). By looking at the IIFSO's choice of literature, Bæk Simonsen's observation becomes obvious. The IIFSO's books emphasize the Islamic creed on one hand and Islamic socio-political thought on the other. Some of the most widespread books from the 1980s, as I, and many of my informants, can recall were *Tawhid*, by 'Abd al-Wahhāb and *Tawhid: Its Relevance for Thought and Life* by Isma'īl al-Farūqī. Both books call for a purification of Islam; i.e. a cleansing of the Islamic message from religious innovation, such as the Sufi sainthood and its seeking of intercession through material things or human beings, even Prophets. The former book deals with the Islamic creed in detail, in keeping with an understanding that later has come to be known as *wahhabism*. On reading this book, Bæk Simonsen's observation comes to mind. The latter book, however, is an attempt to give a practical guide to living *tawhīd* (the unity of God, i.e. strict monotheism) in 'real' life. Despite the practical emphasis of the latter approach to Islam, I would agree with Bæk Simonsen that there are no substantial guidelines for the particular immigrant situation in Western countries. This approach reinforces immigrants' tendency to cling to the culture of their homelands rather than integrating into the host countries' social systems. The new Muslims' reaction to this approach has been to divide into 'convert communities' and, as will be shown below, to take over much of the literature production in the late 1990s.

There is a strong link between IIFSO books on the Islamic creed and its books containing socio-political messages. The *wahhābī* ideas of purification of the faith were changed slightly by the *salafīyya* group in the nineteenth century, before reaching the whole Muslim world. These ideas came to be the basis for the modern Islamic movement, denoted by Muslims as *al-ṣaḥwa al-islāmīyya* (the Islamic reawakening), and became decisive in the formation of the socio-political message that Islam is a comprehensive way of life. Through its book

production, the IIFSO was the main agent in spreading the Islamic political message in Western countries. Books by al-Mawdūdī, Sayyid Quṭb, Muḥammad Quṭb, Malik Bennabi, Ḥasan al-Banna', Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, etc. became widespread and dealt with contemporary political issues, such as corruption in the Muslim world and Western cultural dominance of the Muslim world.

Abū A'la al-Mawdūdī

Other IIFSO books in Scandinavian languages that were widely read by converts were the above-mentioned *Towards Understanding Islam*, by al-Mawdūdī, which was translated into all three Scandinavian languages; Sayyid Quṭb's book, *This Religion of Islam*; and Muḥammad Quṭb's book, *Islam — the Misunderstood Religion*. In the discussion below, I will deal mainly with literature in the Scandinavian languages, although I will tackle some books written in English, as I discovered during interviews that many new Muslims also read such literature.

Al-Mawdūdī's *Towards Understanding Islam* in particular came to be regarded as a new Muslim reference book. The spread of this book is also observed by Hedin who comments, 'There is hardly any other book that has spread a popular Islamism to a broader mass of people.' (Hedin 1999: 222). In his book, al-Mawdūdī discusses the idea that submission to the will of God is the literal translation of the word 'Islam' (see also Wehr 1980: 426). He further introduces 'peace' as an alternative meaning of the term, claiming this as the word 'Islam' is derived from the etymological root *s-l-m*, which has 'peace' or 'safe' as its basic meaning. New Muslims in Scandinavia have adopted this understanding on a mass scale. 'Submission' and 'peace' are often linked as cause and effect: 'submission' means, at least to a certain extent, the surrender of personal preferences and wishes to the will of God, which in turn engenders a feeling of peace and acceptance when unavoidable things happen, instead of remorse or guilt because one could have acted differently. Muna, who became Muslim in the early 1980s expresses, 'If I have done all I can and things still turn out to my disadvantage, by saying and mentally accepting the expression "*mashallāh*" (God's Wish has been fulfilled), I feel peace inside.' This statement seems to be influenced by al-Mawdūdī's analysis and it indicates how Islamic literature has shaped Islamic conceptions in Scandinavia.

As Hedin has remarked, much IIFSO literature is ‘apologetic’, in the sense that Islamic ideal is compared to Western reality and is seen as being compatible with ‘reason’ and ‘logic’. Bæk Simonsen has observed that much of the ‘apologetic’ literature in Denmark in the 1970s and 1980s dealt with how Koranic revelations are compatible with modern scientific findings and how man’s progress in the Western sciences has its base in the Muslim world (Bæk Simonsen 1990: 109). Some of these apologetic traits are apparent in al-Mawdūdī’s book, which deals mainly with issues prominent in Western discourses, such as human rights. Hedin shows how al-Mawdūdī, in his discussion of human beings’ submission to God, points to a relationship between ‘the universality of Islam and the rationality of Islam’ (Hedin 1988: 107). Hedin further discusses how al-Mawdūdī confronts the Western concepts of human rights by rhetorically stressing alternative rights (Hedin 1999: 222). In his booklet, *Human Rights in Islam*, al-Mawdūdī states that ‘when we speak of human rights in Islam we mean those rights granted by God’ (al-Mawdūdī 1980: 15). However, it is interesting to note that al-Mawdūdī, although going some way to Islamizing the Human Rights Declaration, still maintains a strict patriarchal discourse where women are concerned. His use of grammar indicates that the individual’s right to freedom is granted to men only, whereas a woman’s right is to be respected for her chastity (al-Mawdūdī 1972: 18–21; 25–28).

Al-Mawdūdī’s booklet, *Jihad in Islam*, was translated into Swedish in 1983. It was originally a speech made by al-Mawdūdī on the Iqbal Day in Lahore in 1939. Although the context for the booklet is the British colonization of the Indian subcontinent, nevertheless it serves to highlight Islam as a revolutionary force with its call for world revolution. As al-Mawdūdī discusses the Koranic statement that ‘sovereignty is for God only’, he states that no human being has the right to be a ruler by his/her own effort. He says, ‘To acknowledge a human being’s personal authority as a source for orders and prohibitions is similar to acknowledging that this person shares power and authority with God.’ He continues, ‘This is the source of all evil in the universe’ (al-Mawdūdī 1983: 19). As mentioned in an earlier chapter, I discovered from the questionnaire that some Scandinavian converts who became Muslims in the 1970s and 1980s had been part of the leftist movement. Bettina, who was involved in this movement, expresses how she felt al-Mawdūdī’s booklet reflected her previous revolutionary ideas. ‘It was like coming

home,' she says. 'In my youth I wanted to fight oppression and injustice in all its forms and when I found such attitudes in Islam I knew that I had made the right choice [by converting]. In Islam I found both the security of belief and the counter force to oppression and injustice.'

Muhammad Qutb

A rhetorical stand against 'Western' issues, similar to that of al-Mawdūdī, is particularly evident in Muḥammad Qutb's book, *Islam — the Misunderstood Religion*. Many, even within the Muslim community, have opposed this book. New Muslims in particular have reacted negatively to Qutb's portrayal of 'the West'. Qutb's approach is more explicitly socio-political than that of al-Mawdūdī in *Towards Understanding Islam*. Qutb discusses such issues as slavery, feudalism, capitalism, the class system, punishment, gender relations and sexuality, but he does so in a provocative manner. In his discussion on women for instance, he recounts how European philosophers throughout history have discussed whether or not women have souls. He then compares this discourse and the historical elements of the women's struggle in Europe with the ideal Islamic situation where 'the woman is a respectable being' (Qutb 1983: 198). In Qutb's book one finds the root of Islamic discourse's rhetoric against 'the West'. Whereas Islam is portrayed in ideal terms, in conformity with 'reason' and 'logic', the West is seen as the incarnation of immoral and unjust behaviour. Khadija, revealed her negative reaction to reading this book: 'It [the book] was written in a harsh way and I felt that in a sense this manner was un-Islamic.' She continued:

Much of what Qutb says about the West is not true. I feel he sees only one particular part of our society. Moreover, he does not criticise Muslim society in the same way as he criticises Western society. When he does criticise Muslim society he is defending misbehaviour at the same time. It is as if he feels he has to criticise, but his heart is not really in his criticism.

It is particularly on the issue of women that many female converts disregard Qutb's writings. In my discussions with Khadija she showed me passages in which Qutb, in her view, portrays women as weak and unable to deal with their own lives. She points out how Qutb refers to women in Western countries as victims both of male sexuality and their own lust (1983: 185–187). Khadija was particularly

upset by one of the passages, which, in her view, presents a totally distorted image of Western women. Quṭb says:

What these hadiths do not condone is such a stupid activity as women walking uncovered in the streets without any real reason for going out. Nobody can claim that women realise their abilities and receive any respect through such stupid and unhealthy activities. Women can in such situations easily fall prey to irresponsible and pleasure-seeking men; as is illustrated by the example of the enlightened, civilised girls of high society in the West. (Quṭb 1983: 251).

Suzanne Haneef

The book, *What Everyone should Know about Islam and Muslims* ([1979], 1994), written by Suzanne Haneef and published in the United States, is another book widely read by Scandinavian converts in the 1980s. The book is, to a certain extent, in line with IIFSO apologetic literature, but it differs slightly in that it is written by an American new Muslim living in Western society. Hedin discusses Haneef's book as an apologetic work similar to those of born Muslims in Muslim countries. He has observed that Haneef addresses both a Muslim audience and non-Muslim audience (Hedin 1988: 168). Somaya states that she preferred Haneef's book to many other books written by Muslims at that time, particularly because of her view on women's issues. 'In her book,' she says, 'a woman is portrayed as being personally responsible for her actions, whereas in most of the other books we used to read in the 1980s women were looked upon as being the man's responsibility.' Hedin writes that, although Haneef obviously promotes women's liberation, she still keeps within a frame of gender distinction rather than strict gender equality (Hedin 1988: 168).

Haneef's book reflects the feminist global flow that promotes female empowerment described by Schreier. Moreover, the positive presentation of women in books written by Western female converts opposes the view of the typical born-Muslim scholars and reflects the flow of cultural expression from the centre to the periphery in the cultural encounter between Islam and the West.

Fatima Heeren and Aisha Lemu

In the small booklet, *Women in Islam*, published for the first time in 1976, the cross-fertilization between Islam and the West is further expressed. The booklet was written by two European converts to Islam, Fatima Heeren from Germany and Aisha Lemu from Great Britain, and it was widely read by Muslim converts in the 1980s. Many new Muslims said that, as the book was written from a European perspective, it was easier to accept its ideas on women than those presented by born Muslims living in non-European society. This might be a result of the fact that Heeren and Lemu avoid the use of 'biological reductionism', where an inferior role for women is justified on biological grounds. The two authors stress the role of mothering and domestic management in the terminology of liberation, 'sparing' them from struggling 'for their livelihood in a harsh world in the same way as men do' (Heeren and Lemu 1976: 19; also quoted in Hedin 1988: 168). Their ideas seem to have been widely adopted in the Scandinavian convert context. Most female converts with whom I have discussed women's issues have expressed similar ideas. The ideas of the book, therefore, have probably influenced the Scandinavian converts' discourse on gender.

Muhammad Asad

Another European convert whose books were popular among Scandinavian converts was the former Polish-Jewish journalist, Leopold Weiss (d. 1992), who adopted the name Muhammad Asad after his conversion. His book, *The Road to Mecca* (1954), was translated into Swedish in 1956. He also had published such books as *Islam at the Crossroad* (1982, first edition 1934), *The Spirit of Islam* (1975) and, in 1980 (1984), his translation of the Koran, *The Message of the Qur'an*, which included commentaries. During interviews, many new Muslims, particularly the Swedish, referred to the Swedish translation of *The Road to Mecca* as a spiritual inspiration on their journey to the Islamic faith. It is the story of Asad's pilgrimage to Mecca, and also of Asad's conversion to Islam. A female convert tells how she felt this book conveyed both a religious message as well as the exciting and mysterious atmosphere of the 'Orient'. 'I just became totally absorbed in the book,' she exclaimed. This was the first book written by a new Muslim that she had read. As she became Muslim at a time

when there were few new Muslims in Sweden, she felt alienated both from society and the Muslim community and sometimes felt doubt about her choice to become a Muslim. ‘However, on reading this book,’ she says, ‘I became convinced of having made the right choice.’ She continues, ‘This story of Asad made me feel proud to be a Muslim. He criticises the Western world in a way that I can accept and also confirm as a Westerner.’ She observes that when Muslim intellectuals from the Muslim world write about the West they do so without any deep understanding of Western society, whereas Asad, as a Westerner himself, ‘understands what he is talking about.’

Convert writings in the 1970s and 1980s

In 1989, two Swedish converts wrote a book called *Islam Vår Tro* (Islam Our Faith), published by the Swedish publishing house, Bonniers. It was written in response to Salman Rushdie’s controversial book, *The Satanic Verses*, published by the same publishers. That the publishing house agreed to list a book on Islam written by Muslims seems to have been a strategic move to prevent any violent responses to the publishing of Rushdie’s book. It turned out to be a successful move as there were no demonstrations or official protests against Bonniers.

The two researchers in Islamic studies, Christer Hedin and Jonas Otterbeck, have both discussed the book. It seems that the book is not a survey of Islamic ideas from a ‘Swedish’ point of view, but a short version of an IIFSO book: Ḥammūdah Abdulati’s *Islam in Focus* (Hedin 1999: 225–226; Otterbeck 2000: 127). Otterbeck has noted that, although the two authors, Monjia Sonnius and Maryam Kanjah, have not explicitly mentioned that they have used this book as a model, it is found in the bibliography. He also points out that they have rearranged the chapters and that the sole contribution of the authors is a handful of small commentaries on the Swedish-Muslim context (Otterbeck 2000: 127). The two new Muslims’ use of IIFSO ‘rational’ apologetic literature indicates the influence this literature had on new Muslims in the 1980s. In the interviews with new Muslims, particularly those who converted in the 1980s or early 1990s, I encountered many ideas promoted by IIFSO and Islamic Foundation literature, where ‘rational’ and ‘logical’ explanations of Islamic phenomena were prominent. One example can be found in

the above-mentioned book, from the chapter 'Islam as a concept', in which the two authors talk about the universe and how to explain God's existence by looking at nature. They say:

Can we explain this enormous universe? We understand that nothing can originate by itself. Moreover, we observe that the universe exists and functions in a highly organised way, and it has lasted for millions of years. Is it then possible to claim that this is coincidental or that the existence of human beings and the whole universe is due to a mere chance? (The Islamic Information Bureau 1991: 9 [translation mine])

This passage is a direct translation of a shortened passage in Abdulati's book *Islam in Focus*, but it also transfers ideas common to other books in the IIFSO series.

Shi'a literature

Scandinavian converts to Shi'a Islam in the 1980s relied also on literature with a similar 'rational' and 'logical' approach to the Islamic message. Many of these new Muslims have greatly relied on literature translated into Swedish by the Iranian theologian, Morteza Mutahharī. Otterbeck has observed that Mutahharī's literature differs from the Sunni literature translated into Swedish, saying that Mutahharī's writings are 'rather sophisticated theological tracts written by a skilled theologian' (Otterbeck 2000: 120). Otterbeck's observation points to the fact that most books published by the IIFSO as well as The Islamic Foundation in the 1970s and 1980s were written by scholars in social or technical sciences and were not therefore grounded in traditional Sunni theology. Contrary to Shi'a theological literature that was translated into the Scandinavian languages, the literature for Sunni converts was built with a 'rational engineer' approach, rather than with theological argumentation. It is however important to note that many of the Shi'a theologians' Islamic views coincide with the modern 'engineer' approach in Sunni Islam.

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī

The 'engineer' approach might be one of the reasons for the split between this 'rational' trend and Sufism in the Sunni school in Scandinavia. Whereas some new Muslims, particularly those with a leftist background, have adapted the 'rational' approach, others have

opted for a more spiritual approach to Islam. In the 1980s, the thoughts of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) came to dominate this latter approach within the Scandinavian convert group. Most new Muslims, irrespective of approach, read and accept al-Ghazālī's ideas, though new Muslims with a more 'rational' approach do so in a less profound and comprehensive way.

It was the four-volume English translation, published in New Dehli in 1982, of Ghazālī's work *ihya' ulūm al-dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences) that became popular in Scandinavia. This translation is marked by misspellings and dense language and some new Muslims said this influenced their reading of the work. However, al-Ghazālī's thinking came to be widespread among new Muslims; his stress, for instance, on the importance of intellectual knowledge, which is expressed in chapter one (vol. I) 'Acquisition of Knowledge', was adapted by new Muslims of various affiliations. Al-Ghazālī's quote from Ḥasan al-Basrī: 'The ink of the learned will be weighed against the blood of the martyrs and then it will be found that the ink of the learned is heavier than the blood of the martyrs' (al-Ghazālī 1982: 19 (vol. I)), was often referred to in convert gatherings in the 1980s and the 1990s. However, some new Muslims, particularly from the 'rational' approach, started to criticise al-Ghazālī's work, as he has quoted hadiths without giving proper references and they see it as difficult to know whether the hadiths upon which he relied were authentic or weak. Khadija expressed that, although she appreciated al-Ghazālī's spiritual message, she felt that his use of legendary material rather than just the authentic hadiths and the Koran made her unsure of how much she could actually trust his writings. This is interesting in view of the fact that the Western educational system is largely based on critical thinking and problem solving, whereas the Muslim world lays stress on memorizing information (See Roald 1994). New Muslims will therefore due to their educational background, similarly as second- and third-generation Muslims hold a more critical attitude to the literature they read.

According to Larsen, there were only a few new Muslims, mostly women, in Norway in the early 1980s (Larsen 1995: 152). They used to meet in the house of the wife of one of the leaders of the South Asian Islamic movement, Tabligh-i-Jama'at. At that time, this woman had been Muslim for more than ten years and she led the meetings, selecting the literature to be studied. The literature was mainly published by the Tabligh-i-Jama'at and, similar to al-Ghazālī's, dealt

with ethical aspects of Islam. Kari, who used to attend these meetings, tells how they were marked by intense discussions between the followers of the Tabligh-i-Jama'at and those women who had acquired a more 'rational' approach to Islam from their personal reading. She observes how this schism in ideology reflected the direction of the participating women's husbands. Female converts married to Arabic-speaking men tended to have a 'rational' approach to Islam, whereas women married to Indo-Pakistani men tended to follow the spiritual approach of Tabligh-i-Jama'at, where political discussions were more or less taboo. The ideological schism between the two factions increased, and in the mid-1980s, the groups dissolved.

Literature in the 1990s

Although most new Muslims in the 1980s accepted what they read by Islamic authors, in the 1990s most became more discerning in their reading. This was mainly due to increases in both book publication and approaches to Islam. In 1980, Hjärpe wrote the book *Politisk islam* (Political Islam), in which he discusses the various Islamic directions of recent times. Hjärpe's analysis gives an appropriate picture of the Islamist movements in the 1970s and 1980s, but, on reading the book today, one realises how the Islamist movement has undergone rapid socio-religious changes in a short time span.

This change is reflected in the book publications of the 1990s. Whereas IIFSO and Islamic Foundation literature dominated the Islamic book market in the 1970s and 1980s, in the 1990s a great number of Islamic publishing houses emerged, particularly in Britain and the United States. It is significant that many new Muslims from Europe and the United States have started to publish books that are widely read not only by new Muslims but also by second- and third-generation Muslim immigrants. Some of these were translated into the Scandinavian languages and new Muslims started to be more active in writing books as well. Moreover, Islamic books in the English language became more widespread in the Scandinavian countries. This is probably a result of the general increase in Scandinavian educational standards, the English language becoming a well-established second language in Scandinavia.

The Islamic Foundation and, to a lesser extent, the IIFSO continue to play a role in the spread of literature in the Western world today. However the IIIT, Amana Publications and American Trust

Publications in the United States, and TaHa Publishing House in Britain have become prominent in spreading literature on Islam in the English language. International Islamic Publishing House in Saudi Arabia has also published some titles that have become popular in the Western world.

Below I will discuss some of the more recent publications, particularly from the above-mentioned publishers, using my interviews with Scandinavian converts. As there is a great variation within the convert group, I am not able to analyse all books read by new Muslims, rather I will select a few books that I find to be representative of the main trends. I will also discuss some of the audio and videotapes in the English language that have become widespread in the Scandinavian context. In my analysis, I will deal with four main understandings of Islam, three within the Sunni tradition: the 'rational' approach, the *salafi* approach and the Sufi approach; and one approach within the Shi'a tradition: the 'rational' approach, which is the most common among Shi'a converts.

Authors with a 'rational approach' to Islam were referred to most frequently in my discussions with new Muslims. This might indicate that most new Muslims belong to this approach, or that authors stressing the 'rational' aspect of Islam are more active in their writing. The fact that traditionalists believe most of the important books have been written already several hundreds years ago might have made adherents to this trend less productive in their writings. It seems that, as many of the Muslim leaders in Scandinavia affiliate to or sympathise with the Muslim Brotherhood, they tend to spread books supporting their ideas.

Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī

The five publishing houses, IIFSO, Islamic Foundation, IIIT, Amana Trust Publications and American Trust Publications publish literature that can be regarded as having a 'rational' approach to Islam. Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī's popularity has increased in the Western sphere and many of his books have been translated from Arabic into the English language. Bæk Simonsen has observed that Islamic literature rarely gave any guidance or instruction for day-to-day Muslim living in a non-Muslim society. Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī's *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (1993) is an exception. Written in Arabic in the 1960's and translated by the IIFSO into both French and English

in the 1980's, the main English edition spread into Scandinavia from 1993 onwards. Many new Muslims have referred to this book as one that has helped them see the connection between the lofty ideas of Islam and daily life.

In the book, al-Qaradāwī sees the contemporary writers on Islamic issues as falling into two groups. He parodies these two groups as those who almost seem to argue that 'whatever is legal in the West is *ḥalāl* [lawful] and what is illegal is *ḥarām* [prohibited]', and those who seem to see everything in terms of *ḥarām* (al-Qaradāwī 1993: 3). He says of the latter group:

If one of them were to be asked his opinion concerning music, singing, chess, women's education, a woman showing her face and hands, and similar matters, the most likely word to issue from his tongue would be *ḥarām* (al-Qaradāwī 1993: 3).

Al-Qaradāwī attempts to present a third way, which is not part of any particular school, but 'supported by arguments, proofs, and comparisons, utilizing the latest scientific ideas and contemporary knowledge' (al-Qaradāwī 1993: 4). It is probably partly this idea that dissuaded most new Muslims I interviewed from following a law school, and convinced them to adhere to the Koran and Sunna only. Whereas many scholars, particularly from the Arab world, have implied such an approach, al-Qaradāwī is one who has explicitly stated his independence in jurisprudential issues. In my interview with him in Qatar in 1998, al-Qaradāwī stated that he is following the 'middle way', avoiding extreme points of view in either direction. Al-Qaradāwī indicates a similar stand in his book, *Islamic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism*, published by IIIT. During my interviews with new Muslims I discovered that many recalled having read this book at the beginning of the nineties.

A principle to which many new Muslims often refer, and which I found originally in al-Qaradāwī's book, is: 'nothing is *ḥarām* except what is prohibited by a sound and explicit *nas[s]* [text from the Koran or hadith] from the Law-Giver' (al-Qaradāwī 1993: 14). He continues, saying:

It cannot be that Allah, may He be glorified, would create all these things, give man control over them, count them as His favours upon him, and subsequently inform him that their use is prohibited; how could this be when He created all this for man's use and benefit? Indeed, He has prohibited only a few things for specific reasons . . .

In Islam the sphere of prohibited things is very small, while that of permissible things is extremely vast (al-Qaradāwī 1993: 14).

Amal expresses that al-Qaradāwī's book on *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl* was one of the first books she read as a newly converted Muslim. At the time she read it, she says she felt enlightened; she was tired of Muslims talking constantly in terms of *ḥarām*. She explains how al-Qaradāwī's book gave her a day-to-day guidance in her new life as Muslim. Amal says, however, that al-Qaradāwī's book does not have the same significance today as it had at that early stage of her faith. 'Islamic ideas have developed so much over just the last decade,' she states, 'today I can react against some of his rather traditional ideas. As I acquire more knowledge and as I read many more books written by Muslims living in Western countries, I understand that al-Qaradāwī's views on various matters are not necessarily applicable today.' Despite this, she believes that al-Qaradāwī has played a major part in the modern development of Islamic thought; many ideas anticipated in al-Qaradāwī's books have entered into recent Islamic discourse.

In the book on *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*, al-Qaradāwī talks about food and drink, clothing, work, the relationship between man and wife, marriage and parenting, recreation, social relations, etc. has however been criticised, particularly by individuals affiliated to the *salafī* trend, for being too easy-going, i.e. permitting things they consider as prohibited. One example is the negative reaction to his view on music presented in *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*. Some claim that al-Qaradāwī permits musical instruments, which are prohibited by the Islamic law schools. When I looked into the matter, I discovered that al-Qaradāwī actually permits *singing*, a rather non-controversial issue, and does not discuss musical instruments at all. Al-Qaradāwī's tendency to focus on non-controversial points (as witnessed in this particular case) indicates a reluctance to go into challenging issues. This said, antagonists still condemn his views without proper investigation into what has actually been written.

Al-Qaradāwī's book, *Islamic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism*, anticipates the variety of approaches to Islam that emerged from the 1990s onwards. The book takes as its starting point the killing of Anwar Sadat by an extremist Islamist group in Egypt. Al-Qaradāwī begins his argumentation with reference to Koranic sayings that call for moderation on religious issues. He concludes by quoting the Koranic verse 'Do not exceed the limits of your religion' (4: 171)

(al-Qaradāwī n.d.: 2). He further warns against hair-splitting discussions that have become frequent in the Muslim community in Europe in the 1990s. It is obvious that al-Qaradāwī refers to and at the same time attacks the followers of the *salafī* trend. The *salafī* movement tends to draw attention to the Islamic creed through details, as well as approaching the hadith literature in a literal manner. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's book, in which he compares the recent controversy between the *salafīs* and the more 'rationalistic' trends with the historical debate between those who adhered to the hadiths (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) and those who accepted scholars' opinions (*ahl al-ra'y*), has to be seen in light of *salafīs'* emphasis on detailed discussions on Islamic theology (al-Ghazālī 1989). Al-Qaradāwī wrote a similar book in Arabic in 1990, which was published by the IIIT. The attention given to this controversy by scholars within the Islamist movement indicates an acceleration of the debate from the late 1980s onwards.

Al-Qaradāwī states that 'all these warnings against extremism and excessiveness are necessary due to the intrinsic and serious defects inherent in such a tendency' (al-Qaradāwī n.d.: 4). His criticism against 'excessiveness' is that it is 'too repulsive for ordinary human nature to endure or tolerate' and that even though some 'could put up with excessiveness for a short time, the majority would not be able to do so' (al-Qaradāwī n.d.: 4). He further refers to how the Prophet and his Companions urged that religious matters be made tolerable for people. Al-Qaradāwī compares contemporary happenings, such as how people have rowed in the mosque because educational films were shown with stories about the Prophet and his Companions promoting the middle way. Al-Qaradāwī's 'rational' stand is indicated in his call for a 'rational Islamic awareness based on an enlightened *fiqh* [jurisprudence] in the teaching of Islam' (al-Qaradāwī n.d.: 75). He explains what he means by such a *fiqh*, saying:

A *fiqh* of deep insight that does not concentrate on the marginal issues only, but on the essentials as well. A *fiqh* which relates, and distinguishes between, the part and the whole, the branches and the roots, the definitive and the hypothetical; a *fiqh* which seeks judgements from the original sources, not only from the branches (al-Qaradāwī n.d.: 75).

In this statement, al-Qaradāwī anticipates the development of the late 1990s: the renewed call for new interpretations of the Koran and Sunna.

During my discussions with Scandinavian converts, I discovered that many had read al-Qaradāwī's books, or were at least acquainted with his ideas through his television performances. Although few Scandinavian converts speak Arabic, and are therefore unable to understand his programmes, I discovered that new Muslims married to Arabic-speaking Muslims were informed about his ideas through their partners. In a survey I conducted in the south of Sweden and in Copenhagen in the autumn of 2000, I found that many Arabic-speaking individuals frequently watch his programmes. Somaya is married to an Egyptian. She speaks a little Arabic and often watches al-Qaradāwī's television performances on various Arab satellite channels. She also read the afore-mentioned two books of his, referred to above, in the early nineties and said that she appreciated them, particularly for their 'middle way' approach. She says:

For me Islam is logical and straightforward. When I look at how some Muslims enter into stupid discussions about minor things, such as the characteristics of God or whether to eat with a knife and fork or with one's hands, I feel very upset. When I read his book about *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl*, I suddenly realised how easy Islam was. His book about extremism led me into a more relaxed view on Islam. I think I might say that al-Qaradāwī made me understand my role as a Swedish Muslim; how to live Islam in Sweden as an ordinary Swedish citizen.

Some new Muslims expressed similar views, although others affiliated to the *salafī* or Sufi trends were usually critical of al-Qaradāwī's views. The *salafīs* regard him as 'too easygoing' and the Sufis reject his call for a new *fiqh*, believing every Muslim should adhere to the orthodox Law-School system.

Hasan al-Ṭurābī

Ḥasan al-Ṭurābī's booklet, *Women in Islam and Muslim Society*, is another publication appreciated by new Muslims within the 'rational' trend of Islamic thought.¹ In the early seventies, al-Ṭurābī wrote a manuscript on women distributed among well-known Islamists, such as al-Ghazālī (d. 1996) and al-Qaradāwī. It was first published in 1973

¹ I have discussed al-Ṭurābī's ideas elsewhere. See Ouis and Roald 1997; Roald 2001a.

and many proclaimed him an apostate due to his 'progressive' view on the role of women in Islam. I have discussed his book in detail elsewhere (Roald 2001a). In this study, I will refer to some of his ideas and discuss why they have become popular in the Scandinavian context. Various publishing houses have translated the booklet into English, sometimes using a different title. In 1991, the publishing house Milestones in London published it under the title *Women in Islam and Muslim Society*. In 1993, it then appeared simply as *Women in Islam* published by the Islamic Education Trust in Nigeria. In 2000, it was published by the Muslim Information Centre under the title *Emancipation of Women: an Islamic Perspective*. It seems that, ideologically speaking, al-Ṭurābī was ahead of his time and on the margins of the Islamic discourse when he wrote the book. He marked a watershed in bringing the issue of women onto the Islamist agenda. In the 1970s his ideas were far too revolutionary for an Arabic-speaking readership, whereas in the 1990s his ideas have become more or less the common stock of Muslims in the Western world.²

Al-Ṭurābī was a Masters and PhD student in Britain and France in the 1960s and it was in this period that the women's liberation movement consolidated itself and formed the ideas that would flourish from the late sixties onwards. That al-Ṭurābī was influenced by such developments in Europe, as well as the non-religious movements in the Muslim world, is evident from his statement:

The modern reality which faces Muslims, the social trends in a continuously changing world, demands an early initiative in order to control the change before it takes its own course, so that foreign trends are not assimilated and it becomes too late to carry through a rightly-guided Islamic reform (al-Ṭurābī n.d.: 42 translation mine)].

² The British convert, Michael Young, refers to al-Ṭurābī's book in an article he wrote in the Muslim monthly magazine, *Q-News*, in 2001. He contrasts al-Ṭurābī's book with born-Muslim behaviour in Britain. He complains that some female born Muslims he has met 'have been very stand-offish and overly prudish' (Young 2001: 31). Young says that this opposes al-Ṭurābī's statement: 'Muslims used to assemble freely and frequently; they were mostly acquainted with each other; men and women conversed and interacted intensively. But all these activities were undertaken in a spirit of a virtuous society. Islam allows for one to greet women or talk to them in decent and chaste language and with good intent' (Young 2001: 31).

Al-Ṭurābī's booklet has been spread among Scandinavian converts. In Norway, the English version was sold by the Islamic Information Bureau (Den Islamske Informationsforeningen), although it was also translated into the Norwegian language. The book was discussed at a summer camp outside Gothenburg in 1997 in Sweden, where Muslim women and children from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland were gathered. The camp administrators, who were mainly Swedish converts, decided that the Arabic-speaking women should live in one part of the camp and the Scandinavian-speaking women, mostly new Muslims, should gather in another part of the vast camp area. The leaders justified this 'ethnic' separation on the grounds that the midday and evening lectures were held in both Arabic and Scandinavian, and they saw the separation as the best practical solution. The underlying motivation, as expressed by some of the converts in our discussion, was that it is easier for new Muslims to socialize with other new Muslims, who tend to have similar ideas and outlooks.

In the evening lectures, the new Muslims discussed various Islamic approaches to women's issues. The papers used for discussion included extracts from Fatima Mernissi's *Women in Islam*, Ḥasan al-Ṭurābī's *Women in Islam and Muslim Society*, Jamal Badawi's *Gender Equity in Islam*, and a small booklet on women's issues published by a group called the South African Young Men. According to the participants, the women tended to reject the points of view of Mernissi for being 'too far away from Islam' and the South African Young Men for being too conservative. The views of al-Ṭurābī and Badawi, however, were unanimously accepted for their adoption of a 'middle way'. Some of the women expressed that their own ideas were confirmed by reading these books.

In his book, al-Ṭurābī calls for a new legislation concerning women. By looking at the Koran and the hadiths, he shows that many attitudes towards women are built on local customs rather than Islamic texts. He further acknowledges that oppression of women in Muslim society is a consequence of male power abuse, saying that 'the jealousy that men have for women always gives them a reason to strengthen their methods of oppressing and monopolizing women and to reinforce the conception that they are in possession of women' (al-Ṭurābī n.d.: 34 [translation mine]). Al-Ṭurābī also challenges the notion of men's responsibility for women's behaviour, seeing every person as being responsible for their actions. He speaks in terms of

counselling and respect in the marital relationship, turning away from the concept of men having the upper hand in family life (al-Ṭurābī n.d.: 17–18). Al-Ṭurābī further challenges traditional understandings of hadiths, pointing at alternative interpretations of women's role in society. Whilst other Islamists have tended to see women's main role as domestic workers, al-Ṭurābī refers to hadiths that show women have a wider role to play in society (al-Ṭurābī n.d.: 16). Furthermore, al-Ṭurābī sees women's political role as important and has looked into historical texts that show they played a significant role in the election of political leaders in early Islamic history (al-Ṭurābī n.d.: 16–17).

Jamal Badawi

Jamal Badawi's book, *Gender Equity in Islam*, is another that has been read by many Scandinavian converts.³ Badawi's views on women are also referred to in *Salaam*, the Swedish 'convert periodical', which will be discussed below.⁴ During my travels, I have discovered that Badawi's concept of 'equity', as opposed to the modern notion of 'equality', has broken through into the international Islamic discourse on gender. As the examiner of papers written in English by young Muslim girls attending an international conference in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, I discovered that the concept 'equity' was widely used by girls coming from Europe, Asia, Africa and the United States. Badawi explains 'equity' thus:

Equity is used here to mean justice and overall equality in the totality of rights and responsibilities of both genders, and allows for the possibility of variations in specific items within the overall balance and equality. . . . It should be added that, from an Islamic perspective, the roles of men of men and women are complementary and cooperative rather than competitive (Badawi 1995: 47).

For Karima, 'equity' implies that women should not be regarded as second-rate men. She claims that, in Scandinavian society, women are expected to take similar positions as men. However, as the social

³ I have discussed Badawi's ideas elsewhere. See Ouis and Roald 1997; Roald 2001a.

⁴ See for instance *Salaam* 5/95. In this issue, Jamal Badawi's article about women's role in society is translated into Swedish.

standard *is* the male model, women have to fight a great deal harder than men in order to reach these positions. Karima's argumentation reflects the feminist approach of seeing society as androcentric, with male behaviour and male characteristics as the standard.

Karima continues, saying that there has to be a consideration for what it means to be a 'woman'. She understands 'equity' in terms of accepting a certain 'maleness' and a certain 'femaleness', although, in my discussion with Karima, it was difficult to grasp exactly what consequences she felt an appreciation for 'maleness' and 'femaleness' might have on gender relations in daily life. She explains the two terms biologically, referring firstly to the differences between motherhood and fatherhood; and, secondly, to the physical disparities between men and women, which she feels play a role in daily life and in the choosing of professional occupations. Karima's argumentation is refuted by Amal, whose argumentation marks an academic perspective. She believes that the discussion of the term 'equity', as manifested in Islamic discourse, has an essentialist approach, which maintains 'dangerous socially repressive structures with women as victims'. She accepts the concept 'equity', but for her it involves 'justice in contrast to equality'. 'All human beings are different in perseverance and patience as well as their characteristics,' she states. She continues, saying, 'Just as I treat my children differently based on their particular abilities and qualities, so every human being has to be taken for their particularities. Human beings treated equally when presuppositions and premises are different leads to severe injustice.'

The difference in view between Karima and Amal is very much one of educational standards. Amal, who is highly educated, regards the gender issue in Western academic terms, whereas Karima, who is a teacher in primary school and has an educational background from teaching college, is less aware of the academic discourse on gender.

Many Scandinavian converts appreciate Badawi's book, mainly for its views on male and female roles, female testimony, divorce and child custody, his discussion on culture versus Islamic ideal, and his call for a 'fresh *ijihād*' (Badawi 1995: 46). Discussions between new Muslims often refer to the 'problematic issues' in the Koran, particularly men's role as 'managers', responsible for women; physical punishment; wives' obedience to their husbands; female testimony; and female inheritance (for a further discussion of these issues, see Roald 2001a). It is the verse 4: 34 that new Muslims regard as 'the

problematic Koranic verse'. More than one new Muslim has actually stated that it would have been easier to be Muslim if this verse were not part of the Koran. Asad's translation is:

Men shall take full care of women with the bounties, which God has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possessions. And the righteous women are the truly devout ones, who guard the intimacy which God has [ordained to be] guarded. And as for those women whose ill will you have reason to fear, admonish them [first]; then leave them alone in bed; then beat them; and if thereupon they pay you heed, do not seek to harm them. Behold, God is indeed most high, great! (Asad 1984: 109–110).

In Badawi's book, he deals with some of the 'problematic issues' raised by this verse, largely in a manner suitable to the Western context. Badawi, who is originally from Egypt, has lived in Canada for many years and his ideas reflect the cultural encounter between Islam and Western society. Badawi links male responsibility over women to male economic maintenance of the family. The issue Badawi does not discuss, which is raised by many new Muslims, is whether a woman gets this responsibility if she is the main breadwinner. In Scandinavia this is an important matter, as there is a high unemployment rate among immigrants. It is sometimes even easier for female converts to get a job than their immigrant husbands. The consequence is that many female converts are actually the breadwinners, their husbands being unemployed. In discussion, new Muslims expressed that the social roles should be reversed in this situation, and men should do the domestic work. This is, however, rarely the case. As many immigrant-Muslims' attitudes toward gender relations are based on traditional social roles, new Muslim women can encounter a double or triple burden of work, as they are the breadwinners, take care of domestic work and look after the children at the same time. This issue was particularly discussed during the summer camp in Sweden in 1997. Although Badawi does not discuss an eventual reversal of gender roles, many of the participants felt his statement, that male responsibility is linked to male economic maintenance of the family, paves the way for a more flexible approach to gender roles. With a change in social roles, the familial status of men and women should also change.

As for the Koranic statement that condones physical abuse of women, Badawi states that this is only acceptable in cases of a wife's

'lewdness' or if a wife refuses her husband sexually (Badawi 1995: 52). Ouis and myself have written about the fact that, although Badawi implicitly disapproves of men hitting their wives by referring to hadiths that condemn it, he does not problematize the issue. Rather he quotes the Koranic verse and the hadiths without discussing the relationship between the two sources and their relation to reality.

Badawi's promotion of women's right to divorce suggests a further empowerment for women in relation to traditional Muslim practice. He states that women have the right to divorce (*khul'*) but, as with the case of physical abuse, he does not problematize the matter. In the discussion at the summer camp it was discussed how Islamic scholars have stated that women have the right to divorce, but that, in reality, it is hard to get one, as few scholars would dare stand up to an angry husband. The discussion also touched upon other factors in the Muslim world that make it difficult for women to get a divorce despite their legal rights to one.

Badawi is most daring in his discussion of female testimony being worth half that of a man. He explicitly states that this rule only applies to one particular case, namely that stated in the Koran (2: 282), when writing promissory notes. He states that, according to the Koran a woman can testify against her spouse, in which case her testimony fully equates to that of a man (Badawi 1995: 33). By putting the two rules up against each other, he believes that the 'presumed "rule" [one male witness is equal to that of two women] is voided' (Badawi 1995: 35). Badawi further supports the issue of female judges, referring to the judgement of established Islamic scholars, such as Abū Ḥanīfa and al-Ṭabarī in early Islamic history (Badawi 1995: 19).

Badawi's views on matters of female testimony reflect the embarrassment many new Muslims feel when confronted with this issue. Karima read Badawi to prepare herself for the summer camp discussions and explains her happiness to have had an answer to her speculations about the matter:

It's so difficult when non-Muslims raise the issue of testimony in discussions or when I give speeches about Islam. Usually I do not really regard the matter as problematic as I am not faced with it in daily life. It is actually only in such confrontations that it becomes an issue for me and I admit that at times such discussions weaken my faith because they make me feel that Islam is not perfect. On reading Badawi's book I felt relieved; it gave me an argument both for my antagonists and for myself.

The topic to which most new Muslims referred when Badawi's book was mentioned was that of new interpretations and new ways of looking at Islamic issues. New Muslims from Scandinavia enter into the Islamic fold with different cultural traits to traditional Muslim traits; they are socialized in a way that asks questions rather than accepts established norms. Many of them express that they have had a hard time as Muslim converts, not being able to question such issues as gender relations and women issues. Laila says that, when she reads Badawi's book, she feels relieved by the way he opens up Islam for interpretation in new cultural contexts. She refers to Badawi's statement that scholars are, as all human beings, infallible and that the interpretations of the early scholars were influenced by their own cultural sphere and their specific circumstances. 'After reading this,' she says, 'I just felt relieved, as he said what I have been thinking but would not have not dared say aloud.' The ideas of al-Ṭurābī and Badawi must be regarded in view of the cultural encounter between Muslims and the Western world. Schreiter has pointed at feminist theology as being a substantial 'global flow' within the Christian religious sphere. The stress of these two scholars on new Islamic gender roles indicates the fact that feminist theology plays a role in the Islamic religious sphere as well. The two scholars' popularity in the Scandinavian Muslim convert community can be found in the idea of this global flow. However, it is also a result of the specific gender discourse found in the Scandinavian countries. All the three Scandinavian countries have a strong policy of 'equal gender opportunities' that has permeated society at large and even influences Muslim communities in Scandinavia.

It seems that new Muslims who are socialized into the ideal of 'equal gender opportunity', are attracted to al-Ṭurābī's and Badawi's ideas of adapting Islamic ideas on gender to a Western pattern. This is obviously a creolization of culture, in the sense that various cultural traits are being fused together, as explained by the Swedish anthropologist, Ulf Hannerz. He sees the creolization process as a continuous flow between a culture's centre and its periphery (Hannerz 1992). Furthermore this creolization of culture might be regarded in view of Said's idea that such a fusion of cultural manifestations is a common trait in all cultural units (Said 1993: xxix). In the Scandinavian context 'Western localism' is the 'standard' or the 'centre'. It is then not strange that new Muslims, with their internalized ideal of 'equal opportunity', easily adapt to such ideas and can incorporate them

into an Islamic frame, when presented by a well-established Islamic authority. Ideas that have been latent in their world view, perhaps even refuted at a certain period of time after their conversion, come to the surface and are re-established with Islamic overtones. The new Muslims' adaptation of Scandinavian gender issues tends to spread to the Muslim community due to the new Muslims' role as cultural mediators, which will be discussed in a later chapter.

Salaam

In 1986 two new Muslims living in Sweden started an Islamic periodical called *Salaam* (peace). From 1989, the Islamic Information Bureau (Den Islamiska Informationsföreningen) in Stockholm was responsible for the publication. *Salaam* has been distributed in all three Scandinavian countries and in Finland. New Muslims and born Muslims write in the journal, but the former have had a particularly prominent role both as writers and editors. Otterbeck, has written about *Salaam* as a Swedish Islamic phenomenon. In his content analysis of *Salaam*, Otterbeck has defined various recurrent issues, such as the compatibility of Islamic ideas with science, Islam as the religion of equality between men and women and between ethnic groups,⁵ Muslim practice versus the Islamic ideal, etc (Otterbeck 2000). Ouis has written an article about Islamic ecological thought in which she refers to articles in *Salaam* dealing with this issue (Ouis 1999).

Most articles in *Salaam* reflect topics found in IIFSO literature, such as Islam's compatibility with science, Muslim practice versus the Islamic ideal, Western practice versus the Islamic ideal, etc. Furthermore, the two initiators of *Salaam* wrote the book *Islam Our Faith*, previously discussed as largely a translation of an IIFSO book. Otterbeck indicates the close link between *Salaam* and the IIFSO and Islamic Foundation publishing houses, and he further links the Muslim Brotherhood to the Islamic Information Bureau. Otterbeck's view is reinforced by the fact that there was a series of articles in

⁵ Many of the articles dealing with this issue are written before the publication of Badawi's *Gender Equity in Islam* in 1995.

Salaam in 1991 about the Muslim Brotherhood and other reform movements in the twentieth century.

Salaam reflects specific 'Swedish' concerns, with its stress on gender equality, human rights issues, and ecology, all issues defined by Schreiter as 'global theological flows'. It further deals with specific Swedish immigrant issues. As the Islamic Information Bureau is linked to the Islamic confederation named the Swedish Muslim Council (Svenska Muslimska Rådet [SMR]), which is the official body for relation between the Swedish state and the Muslim organisations, *Salaam* often contains articles about this organisation's activities.

Otterbeck has noted how *Salaam* promotes such ideas as Islam being a 'logical' religion, Islam as a 'way of life', Islam as a 'rational' message, and Islamic ideas being compatible with reason (Otterbeck 2000: 165). He has further noted that the publisher legitimizes *Salaam* by stating that only 'authorized writers' are represented in the journal (Otterbeck 2000: 173). Many articles in *Salaam* are actually translations of articles from Islamic international periodicals. Some of these articles are written by the 'authorized writers' Otterbeck lists as being those whose books are translated by the IIFSO and the Islamic Foundation, namely al-Mawdūdī (d. 1979), al-Qaradāwī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1996), Muhammad Asad (d. 1992), Muḥammad Quṭb, Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966), and Aisha Lemu. It is also interesting to note that Bucaille, the French medical doctor who wrote about the Koran and science, is also one of these 'authorised writers'. Although Bucaille does not call himself a convert, Leif Stenberg, a Swedish researcher in Islamic studies, claims that '[a]fter reading Bucailles' texts, his religious affiliation can be of no doubt, and some of his texts can even be characterized as *da'wa* literature' (Stenberg 1996: 226). Ouis speaks of the 'rational' approach to Islam in terms of 'petro-Islamism'. She says that 'due to the massive body of information, this approach was internalized by Muslims (particularly new Muslims who had no former Islamic background) and came to appear as the one "true Islam"' (Ouis 1996: 14; also quoted in Otterbeck 2000: 237). The notion of one 'true Islam' is another feature of the 'rational' approach that is evident in IIFSO books as well as in *Salaam*. It is in contrast to the pluralism that existed in early Islamic history, when there was an acceptance of the fact that various law schools had different legal devices in their legislative practice.

Salaam's 'rational' approach to Islam as well as the notion of one 'true Islam' can be illustrated by the following example. One of the editors, a new Muslim, told me how she suddenly discovered that an article about Sufism, which she had selected for a coming issue, had been cut from the issue without her being informed. This censorship points at a form of content control in *Salaam* coming from above the level of editors, probably executed by the Swedish Muslim Council. Otterbeck has likewise observed that Sufism is ignored in *Salaam*, saying, 'When I have mentioned Sufism in interviews and discussions with persons linked to *Salaam*, the topic has mostly been treated with contempt' (Otterbeck 2000: 151). The 'rational' approach promoted by *Salaam* has played a major role in the spread of Islamic ideas in Scandinavia, and that many new Muslims have been involved in writing for *Salaam* indicates the publication's popularity among their number.

The issue of the status of women in Islam was frequently debated in *Salaam* in the early 1990s, due probably to the interest of the people active in writing at that time. Otterbeck has further observed that most early issues of *Salaam* contained articles about women, often linked to their role in the family (Otterbeck 2000: 194). He argues that the editors consciously attempted to counter the common image of the oppressed Muslim woman. He refers to his interview with one of the initiators of *Salaam*, who said that many people criticised *Salaam* for containing too much material about women. The other initiator has expressed on television that some men perhaps do not appreciate female converts' initiative in the media and in giving official performances. She says that 'the Swedish society is more interested in us [female converts] than in any of the Arab men one can find everywhere' (Quoted in Otterbeck 2000: 194).

Otterbeck notes that the articles on women in general deal with the ideal Islamic model compared to either the Swedish situation or the situation in the Muslim world, which are both often portrayed in negative terms (Otterbeck 2000: 198). It is interesting to see how some new Muslims in the early 1990s made critical remarks about Muslim men who practise the Islamic precepts. At that time the later differentiation of Muslim trends within the Islamist movement within Sweden had only been anticipated and critics of 'practising Muslim men' were rare. In 1990 one female convert wrote that many Muslim men tend to expect too much from their wives, often demanding even more than what is expected in Islamic jurisprudence (*Salaam*

6/90:7). Another female convert wrote an article in 1992, asking why so few men wear what she calls ‘an Islamic dress’ (*Salaam* 9/92). She continues, saying that when she asks men why, they would answer, ‘it is not good for *da‘wa* if one looks too deviant’ or ‘is it not enough that we are black-skulls (*svartskallar*) — should we look like desert sheikhs also?’ (*Salaam* 9/92: 14–15). She criticises this way of thinking for revealing a contempt for women, who must look like ‘ghosts’ while the men should look ‘decent and proper’ (*Salaam* 9/92: 15). She concludes:

What I want is to start a discussion about this topic [male dress], because as a woman I am forced to look different; I am forced to be proud of my religion and my dress. I believe it should be positive for Islam if men were also forced to have a similar attitude. First and foremost there are hadiths . . . that speak of the danger of imitating non-Muslim people (*Salaam* 9/92: 15 [translation mine]).

This article anticipates the kind of feminist ideas stated explicitly in Soraya Duval’s article from 1992. Duval, an Egyptian-Austrian student, pursued her postgraduate degree in Sweden and, during her stay, was active in the Islamic debate in Sweden. In 1992 she wrote an article in *Salaam* called ‘How can Feminism be united with Islam’ (*Salaam* 1/92: 3–8). In her article, Duval provokes Muslims by referring to ‘Ā’isha, the wife of the Prophet, as a ‘feminist’. She considers it necessary to unite feminism and Islam, as she believes that ‘feminism’ means empowerment for women. In her view, this female empowerment is ‘a struggle whose claims for reform are supported by both the Koran and the early Islamic traditions’ (*Salaam* 1/92: 6). Duval’s discussion and even some of the other articles in *Salaam* reflect the discourse of Islamic feminist theology where Muslim women, particularly in the United States, deal with new interpretations of women’s issues from the Koran and the Sunna. New Muslims, such as Amina Wadud, together with born Muslims such as ‘Azīza al-Ḥibrī and Riffat Hassan, are active participants in this debate (cf. Webb 2000). Some of *Salaam*’s articles might therefore be regarded as part of the global theological flow of feminist theology, where feminist ideas are presented in an Islamic frame.

Leirvik has observed that the Norwegian magazine, *Muslim*, edited by a Norwegian male convert, also dealt with women’s situation and women’s rights in Islam. Moreover, the magazine was often illustrated with images of working women in headscarves (Leirvik 2002:

120). The feminist global flow seems therefore to have a foothold among Muslim converts across Scandinavia.

One recurring theme is the difference between the ideal Islam and the practice of Muslims. Otterbeck has observed how many writers in *Salaam* tend to speak in negative terms about the Middle East (Otterbeck 2000: 150). This is symptomatic of the fact that most of the Swedish converts involved in the *Salaam* project were married to Arabic-speaking Muslim immigrants. This is also partly the reason for the periodical's 'rational' approach to Islam, which I have observed is more evident in the Arabic-speaking community in Scandinavia than in, say, the Pakistani or Turkish communities. However, I do believe there is a tendency among highly educated Islamists from the two latter groups to view Islam in 'rational' terms; the trend which Hjärpe has called 'engineer-Islam'. In the next chapter the relation between new Muslims and born Muslims will be dealt with more in detail.

As indicated above, *Salaam* promotes a 'human rights theology' similar to the Christian tradition. Moreover, one can sense an 'emancipation theology' on various levels: the idea that Islam emancipate human beings from all worldly shackles by rejecting materialism and consumerism (*Salaam* 3/95:15); the idea that Islam represents a way to liberate Muslims from social and political oppression in the Muslim world as well as in the Western world (*Salaam* 5/97:21); and recurrent theme of 'turning to the pure sources, the Koran and Sunna' (*Salaam* passim). In this last notion is an implicit statement that established traditional Islamic rules reflect an ancient socio-political system with particular cultural traits.

Otterbeck has observed that, in *Salaam*, 'Islam is . . . the green, ecological religion with a sound view on and responsibility for environment issues' (Otterbeck 2000: 148–149). Ouis, in her article in the anthology *Blågul Islam? Muslimer i Sverige* (Blue and Yellow Islam? Muslims in Sweden), has discussed what she calls 'Islamic eco-theology'. She has taken examples from *Salaam* where new Muslims have written poems in praise of God and nature. She points out some of the metaphors in the poetry that, she claims, could just as well have come from a textbook on ecology. She states that 'the relationship with nature becomes synonymous with the relationship with God in the Islamic eco-theology' (Ouis 1999: 242). Ouis views the poems presented in *Salaam* as typically 'blue and yellow Islam' (the colours of the Swedish flag), saying that 'Islam in a Swedish

context tends to be a “greener” Islam, which means an Islam more focused on the environment than in many other countries’ (Ouis 1999: 242). She continues:

This claim is supported by the fact that converts and the Muslim youth raised in Sweden constitute, to a large extent, those who are committed to environmental issues and who relate to ‘nature’ in general. There are obvious tendencies for ‘blue and yellow Islam’ to become a ‘green’ Islam (Ouis 1999: 242 [translation mine]).

Ouis has pointed to the fact that many writers in *Salaam* tend to see the green colour promoted by the Prophet Muḥammad as a symbol for nature, as with the green colour of the environmental movement. One new Muslim states in *Salaam* that ‘if green is the colour of the Prophet, then Sweden is the green country’ (Ouis 1999: 243). Ouis shows that one of the leading Swedish converts has been involved in the Swedish environmentalist party for years. She expresses that ‘it seems that there is a pride and a delight in the fact that “we Muslims were the first greens”’ (Ouis 1999: 243). Ouis further indicates that environmental ideas are not just a local phenomenon in Sweden; Swedish Muslims in general are influenced by global Islamic ideas. Many of the ideas presented by international eco-theologians are adapted into the global Islamic discourse. Ouis’ observation of how environmental ideas have gained a foothold, particularly amongst Swedish converts, confirms that ‘eco-theology’ is active as a global theological flow in the Scandinavian context.

Salaam is regarded by many new Muslims as a convert journal. This was particularly true in the late eighties and early nineties, when new Muslims were more in control of the published material. It was regarded first and foremost as a convert journal because it was written in Swedish, and at that time, few born Muslims were able to write fluently in the Swedish language. Furthermore, as many new Muslims wrote in the journal and were encouraged to write their convert narratives, convert issues were well represented in *Salaam*.

The IIFSO and Islamic Foundation literature have had an obvious influence on Scandinavian converts. Likewise, *Salaam* has spread to the other Nordic countries and its influence has therefore reached beyond the Swedish context. The influence of the ‘rational’ trend of twentieth-century Islamist reform movements on Scandinavian Muslims becomes obvious when reading *Salaam*. *Salaam* has concentrated on similar issues to those of the IIFSO and the Islamic Foundation.

Extracts from their books or articles by the same authors are often translated and printed in *Salaam*.

However, although *Salaam* represents a globalized approach to Islam, its particular Swedish approach is also apparent. Ouis' observation of how Swedish Muslims tend to regard Islam in eco-theological terms points at a certain localism within this global message. The stress on women's issues, with female converts writing about Islam with a 'Swedish' emphasis on equal opportunities for men and women in all fields, also indicates an influence from the cultural background of the new Muslims on their Islamic views. The call, either implicit or explicit, for new interpretations of the Islamic sources is recurrent in articles of *Salaam*. As claimed by the Muslim feminists, it is through new interpretations and new approaches to the Koran and Sunna that women can win their 'true' rights in 'Islam' (see for instance Webb 2000). Schreiter speaks in terms of how 'the Theology' has become 'theologies' and how some of these 'theologies' have become 'global theological flows' in the era of globalized ideas. The writings in *Salaam* are a good indicator of how these global messages have been interpreted in the local context of Scandinavia and have become part of an accepted, established local theology. It is interesting to note how new Muslims play a key role in this development of local theologies, as shown by the example of *Salaam*. Hannertz' theory of 'creolization', with a dynamic between centre and periphery, is also most obvious in the example of *Salaam*. Firstly, the discourse of the periphery: the 'rational' Islamic discourse enters the convert discourse. Secondly, the ideas of the centre: the majority discourses, such as human rights, feminist, and ecological discourses enter the Islamic discourse. Through convert writings majority discourses are incorporated into an Islamic frame.

Convert writings in the 1990s

Below I will firstly deal with a book written by a Danish convert. Secondly, I will discuss some of the books written by former German ambassador to Morocco, Murad Hofman. I will then go on to discuss two books written by an American and a British convert. These two books have been translated into Danish and Swedish and many new Muslims have read and appreciated them.

Aminah Tønnsen Echammari

Few Scandinavian converts have written books about Islamic issues, but Aminah Tønnsen Echammari, a Danish convert, is one. She started to publish in the late 1980s and she wrote about such issues as *jihad*, Islam as the religion of nature, gender roles and discussions of the Koran. The book I will discuss is called *Islam i europæisk klædedrakt* (Islam in European dress). This book contains passages and ideas from the author's earlier work and, although it deals particularly with the Islamic female dress, she also discusses immigrant and gender issues. An important aspect of Echammari's book is her 'feminist' and particular 'Danish/Scandinavian' approach to women's issues. But what is most prominent in her book is her critical view of born Muslims. Her approach to the socio-political situation in the Muslim world is particularly hostile, as she explicitly states that Muslim countries today violate the rights of women and children. She is concerned with the system of gender segregation in the Muslim world, the consequence of which might be a distorted view on the opposite sex, disrespect for human life, mutilation of girls, abuse of children, violence, rape and homosexuality. She further talks about the leaders of Muslim countries, depicting them 'self-appointed' and saying that 'they obviously believe that they can win respect and reputation from God and human beings by denying the whole of the population their rights to a life of dignity, freedom and reasonable social conditions' (Echammari 1998: 31). Her book is marked by generalizations that do not take into consideration the diversity of the Muslim world. She also tends to be unaware of the current use of the concepts 'Muslim'/'Islamic', as she refers to Muslim countries as 'Islamic countries', indicating these countries legislation and constitution as being based on the Islamic sources or the Islamic Law schools.

Echammari further discusses Islamic legislation and turns against the Law-School system, stating that those who adhere to a law school have gone against the flexibility of the early theologians. She further states that they have 'betrayed the spirit of Islam and hidden the faith's most beautiful parts behind an artificial veil of static regulations and rigid formalism' (Echammari 1998: 26). Echammari's approach is marked by a contradiction. On the one hand, she denounces the hadith material as being only a way to know about the customs of the Prophet and his Companions (1998: 27); on the other hand, she refers to hadiths to reinforce her arguments (1998: 18; 19; 44; 67;

104). Moreover, she argues in a manner similar to that of the Islamic scholars she criticises: by claiming her own views to be the one and only truth, instead of referring to the actual diversity of Islamic views, both in ancient times as well as the modern period, she follows in the Islamic scholars' footsteps. Her way of reifying 'Islam' also points at a lack of reflection. She states:

A real Islamic state is a state that combines immutability and change and offers the possibility for the individual to freely develop (1998: 23).

As for her view of the female dress, she claims that *hijab* (curtain, here: headscarf) is not an Islamic matter. She criticises Danish female converts in particular for defending the use of the headscarf. She claims that the modern form of the headscarf is not Islamic, but a phenomenon that started as a socio-political protest in some Muslim countries 25 years ago (1998: 42). She understands the Koranic verses on *jilbāb* (outer garment) and *khimār* (head covering)⁶ to be:

... a quiet and general appeal to everybody to dress and behave decently and respectably. There is no wording [in the Koran] that all women in the world should be uniformed, or that the dress should signalize a particular religious affiliation (1998: 49) [Translation mine].

The author's particular Scandinavian approach to women's dress is evident in the way she stresses the individual's personal choice and how this should always be respected (1998: 50). This approach echoes the results of the EVSS study, which observed an increased individualization in Europe as well as in the Scandinavian countries. However, Echammari fails to see that the same tolerance or respect for people's choices she promotes also has to include the individual's choice to *actually wear* a headscarf. Her criticism of the new Muslims who choose to wear headscarves does not convey the spirit of tolerance that she attests to promote. This quirk of the headscarf debate is a typically Scandinavian/European perspective, where the right to dress according to the choice of the individual does not always extend to wearing a headscarf.

Echammari's approach further points at Ahlin and Dahlgrens' suggestion of the human need to select components of meaning (Ahlin and Dahlgren 1999: 163). Her interpretation conveys the need to find pragmatic ways to 'live Islam' in a new context.

⁶ For further discussion of these terms, see Roald 2001a.

Echammari is obviously influenced by the writings of Mernissi. In the book's bibliography, Mernissi is represented with as many as nine works, and Echammari's arguments on the veil reflect those of Mernissi. Echammari's book is a reaction towards born Muslims as well as an attempt to renew Islamic precepts and principles. Her interpretations of Koranic verses differ greatly to those of Islamic scholars. In my interviews with Danish converts, I discovered that some were quite critical of her approach whereas others appreciated her daring approach to the source material.

Murad Hofman

In the late 1990s, new Muslims from outside Scandinavia published books that have been widely read by Scandinavian converts. Some of these books were translated into Scandinavian languages; many were read in English. Many converts have been reading books written by Murad Hofman. Hofman became a Muslim in 1980. He has written a number of books, among them an autobiography called *Diary of a German Muslim* (1987). In this book he presents short sequences from his life, from when he was a student of sociology in the United States in 1951 through his conversion to Islam and beyond. The book starts with a reflection on social research and how social scientists have 'discovered the "laws" governing all human activity and society' (Hofman 1987: 12) Hofman warns against such conclusions, saying:

However, we are not aware of the normative impact of sociological research: the more people read about what is 'normal' according to statistical data, the more they tend to adapt to this norm. Sociology is a self-fulfilling prophecy! (Hofman 1987: 12).

It is this 'new' way of looking at his own society that Hofman wants to convey to his readers. 'A convert to Islam', he says, 'will inevitably see his own country in a "new light". This in turn will force him into a dialogue with himself' (Hofman 1987: 11). It is interesting to note that Hoffman points at the fact that changes in religious affiliation also lead to changes in world view. This might be particularly true for new Muslims, due to particular ideas and attitudes towards Islam prevalent in the Western world.

Two passages in particular in Hofman's book point to how a new Muslim tends to assume a reflective position towards their own society. In discussing how two journalists portray orthodox Jewish

fundamentalists, he observes their favourable attitude towards social aspects of the group, such as laws governing food and female dress within the community. He quotes one of the articles, published in *TIME*, which speaks of gender relations in terms such as, ‘men honour their wives, and there is no observable infidelity’ and ‘women create an almost “Amazonian” sisterhood among themselves’ (Hofman 1987: 164). Hofman exclaims:

In other words, what in other circumstances would be branded as discrimination virtually finds approval as a positive differentiation of the roles of men and women. Hear! Hear! one is tempted to shout. But can one imagine how the very same phenomena would have been received by those periodicals if the fundamentalism under scrutiny had not been Jewish but Muslim? Against a Muslim background, the very same rules and traditions would have been condemned as hopelessly narrow-minded, fanatical, anti-rationalistic, obscure, and a violation of women’s rights to equal treatment (Hofman 1987: 164–65).

Hofman makes a similar point in his 1996 book, *Islam 2000*, which, like several of his other books, are directed at the Muslim community rather than non-Muslims. Here he claims that the Occident applies “‘a double standard” — to itself (and other world religions) and to Muslim affairs’ (Hofman 1996: 33). He says:

Let us take Western media as a prime example. When a terrorist attack is reported from outside the Muslim world, we may hear that ‘militants of the IRA’ or ‘members of the separatist ETA movement’ threw a grenade — never will we hear of ‘a Catholic fanatic’ or a ‘socialist fanatic’. Even the Sarin nerve-gas attack on the Tokyo Metro system in March 1995 was attributed by the Western media to a ‘radical’ sect, not a fanatical one. If, on the other hand, a grenade is thrown by someone in the Near East or in Algeria, the act is invariably attributed to ‘a fanatical Muslim,’ even if the Arab concerned was an Arab Christian or a Ba‘athist atheist (Hofman 1996: 33).

Another example of Hofman’s critical attitude towards Western society is his discussion of human rights. He mentions how the matter of excluding non-Muslims from the office of *amīr* (leader) and *khalīfa* (vicegerent) has been regarded in terms of a violation of human rights. He then draws a comparison from his own society: his own son, Alexander, who was born an American citizen, cannot become the president of the United States, because he was born outside American territory. Hofman states that ‘if this rule is not a violation of human rights it must equally be acceptable to reserve certain offices for Muslims in an Islamic country’ (Hofman 1987: 169).

The common new Muslim idea of 'real Islam' resonates with Hofman's idea that Islam is totally distinct from 'culture'. In his book, *Islam 2000*, he writes about an ideal Islamic society thus:

A world in which Muslims feel at home, not as citizens but as believers and members of a single ummah . . . A world where technology, practiced by genuine Muslims, loses its dehumanizing aspects . . . A world in which all praise and subservience is due to God alone . . . and not to the contemporary gods of beauty, youth, power, sex, money, popularity, status, and entertainment . . . A world not determined by the requirements of the economy and of high technology—efficiency, productivity, growth, and maximization of profit—but by an overruling concern for man and his physical, emotional, and spiritual needs (Hoffman 1996: 20).

The problem with Hofman's argumentation is that he overlooks the cultural influence on all religious manifestations, or, at least, he does not take such influences into consideration in this discussion. The various interpretations of the Islamic scriptures throughout history indicate strong local influences on Islamic theology. Just as Schreier has observed with Christian theological development, particularities rather than universalities mark the Islamic 'universal theology'.

Muhammad Asad played a role in Hofman's conversion. He wrote the preface to *Islam 2000*, in which he refers to Hofman's way to Islam as being the result of repelling Western materialism. This particular issue is more prominent in Asad's own writings rather than in the books of Hoffman. I understand Hofman's writings to reflect an intellectual search for truth. It is important to note that even Hofman, like many of the Scandinavian converts, was married to a Muslim before his conversion.⁷ The importance of the personal encounter with Muslims before conversion seems to be a result of the intellectual gap between the Muslim and the Judaeo-Christian and secular world views, which make many non-Muslims unable to appreciate positively the Islamic message without such a personal encounter. Moreover, Islamophobic attitudes promoted by parts of Western media also play a role in non-Muslims' attitudes towards Islam in the Western world.

Hofman goes on to discuss the relationship between Islam and Christianity. He claims that, as many modern theologians, such as

⁷ See Hoffman 1987: 49 where Hoffman speaks of Zekiye, his mother-in-law. This was in February 1980; he converted in September 1980.

Hans Küng, Matthew Fox and Karl Barth, have questioned the divinity of Jesus, there is a rapprochement of modern Christian theology to the Koranic view of Jesus. However, despite such optimism, he states that there is little reason to hope that Christians will turn to Islam, saying:

It is more likely that the imminent collapse of the established Christian churches will increase, in our multi-religious supermarkets, the demand for esoteric experiences. Alienated from these churches, many highly emancipated and individualistic former members, rather than embracing Islam, will act like the one who makes his own desires his deity (Hoffman 1996: 17).

In Hoffman's view, the battle line is not drawn between various religions, rather between 'God-believing people' on the one hand and those 'for whom the notion of God has increasingly become irrelevant and meaningless' on the other (Hoffman 1996: 17). In this statement, Hofman opens up the potential for dialogue between the various religions. In this context it is interesting to note that in Scandinavia, in contrast to, say, Great Britain, many of the Muslim participants in religious dialogue groups are new Muslims.

Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood

The British convert, Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood, is a prolific writer. She has a university degree in religious studies and was prior to her conversion a teacher in the public school. Her book production covers educational issues as well as a guide for teenager parents, a guide for married life and religious reflections. Her books have also been published by the mainstream educational press and some of them have therefore reached a wide audience. In the Scandinavian context three of her books were particularly mentioned by the informants in this study. Many converts had read *Living with teenagers: A guide for Muslim Parents* (1995a), *The Muslim Marriage Guide* (1995b), and *Thinking about God* (1994). The latter has particularly been influential in the Scandinavian context, where it has been translated into Danish and Swedish. Maqsood has visited Denmark and Finland, Finland twice, in 1997 and 1999, invited by one of the Islamic organisations. Finnish convert, Tarja expressed that Finnish converts appreciate Maqsood's books but she sees them as too simple for a long-time convert such as herself. Tarja believes that *Thinking about God* is suitable for a person who is on the brink of conversion, whereas she

herself found that she had passed the stage where the existence of God has to be proved.

In Maqsood's book on marriage in Islam she gives advises for Muslims who want to get married and those who are already married. She states that there are two keys to a happy marriage: to love God and 'to do a little sensible soul-search and analysis before embarking on such an important enterprise' (Maqsood 1995b: 15). One should, according to Maqsood, reflect on what one wants from a marriage and consider whether or not the proposed partner would be able to fulfil one's expectations. Maqsood goes into the issues of how a good Muslim marriage should look like, the characteristics of the wives of the Prophet, the characteristics of a good husband and sexual matters. She ends the book by giving 'a few rules for a happy marriage' where many of the common ideas usually presented by marriage counsellors are presented: never go to sleep with an argument unsettled, if you have to criticise, do it lovingly, never both be angry at the same time, etc. (Maqsood 1995b: 186–187).

In my discussions with new Muslims many of them exclaimed that they loved her book as they felt she had a female perspective. One Swedish new Muslim mentioned that Maqsood speaks of female sexuality in a manner few other Muslim authors do. Women as active sexual beings are rarely dealt with in other books she has read and Maqsood's book is therefore important for Muslims to read, she states. Most converts presented similar views whereas some of the highly educated converts saw her books as reproducing male conceptions of marriage. One Swedish new Muslim believes that Maqsood's statement that a wife should obey her husband except if he orders her to disregard Islamic principle is one of the example where Maqsood tends to repeat male ideas without analysis them thoroughly. 'What does it mean to disregard Islamic principles?' she says, 'who is to define what is Islamic and what is not Islamic?'. This convert's questions reflect an intellectual point of view where 'what Islam is' is not taken for granted.

It seems that Maqsood's writings are mostly appreciated by low-educated Muslims or by those who have recently embraced Islam. She tends to write in a simple way which suits a certain audience. She has been a teacher and her particular way of writing reflects the pedagogical method of teaching young people.

Jeffrey Lang

Danish and Swedish converts have expressed their appreciation for the writings of Jeffrey Lang, an American university professor of mathematics and convert to Islam. Lang's book *Struggling to Surrender* (1994) is an autobiographical journey into and through the Islamic landscape. The first part of the book tells about his conversion. The story is marked by an holistic perspective where emotional experience, realised dreams and rational deductions are mixed. After the conversion narrative, Lang dives into the Islamic message and discusses various issues from a Western convert's perspective. Lang, like many other Western converts, such as Amina Wadud (1992), Hofman (1996: 42) and the Scandinavian converts I interviewed, questions the common notion that the Koran and the hadiths have been given equal status among many Muslims. Lang starts his reasoning about the role of hadith in Islam with a role play:

'I find it hard to believe that the Prophet said that.'

'But, brother, that hadith is *sahih* [authentic]'

'Yes, I know, but do you think it's really true?'

'It's *sahih*! If you don't accept a hadith that has been classified as *sahih*, you're not a Muslim.'

'Why didn't anyone tell me that before I converted?'

On reading this passage, I recognised many discussions I have had with new Muslims, both in groups and individually. As many new Muslims embrace Islam without having a profound knowledge of the Islamic sources, new Muslims' reaction to many of the hadiths might be similar to that of Lang: 'I do not believe the Prophet could say such a thing.' As the hadiths reflect the historical socio-political situation of the first generations of Muslims, converts with a Western background have some difficulties adjusting to certain social ideas, particular when it comes to gender relations or certain punishments described in some of the hadiths. Lang is extremely careful in his handling of the matter of hadiths. The sensitivity of the issue is marked by Lang's introductory role play: 'If you don't accept a hadith that has been classified as *sahih*, you're not a Muslim.' Lang believes that, when new Muslims realise the sensitivity of the issue, 'they are pushed to rationalize too severe a doctrine' (Lang 1994: 114).

Lang's subsequent discussion is balanced and gives the impression he is walking on eggshells. He states that the Koran has been prioritized above the hadiths by Islamic scholars. Later, however, he admits that 'the lines between these priorities are sometimes obscured

in practice, as there is some overlap' (Lang 1994: 115). Lang claims that, contrary to the scholars' view, 'the inerrancy of the traditions is a popular belief among the Muslim masses' (Lang 1994: 114). He links this to the 'era of *taqlid* (imitation), when the doors to independent reasoning in jurisprudence were closed in favour of the unquestioning adoption of legal decisions arrived at by the four Schools of Islamic Law' (Lang 1994: 114–115). On the one hand, Lang expresses doubt about the inerrancy of the hadiths. On the other, however, he sides with the Islamic scholars whom he states do not equate the hadiths with the Koran. Lang walks therefore a middle line between 'returning to the Koran and Sunna' on the one hand and following the Islamic law schools on the other.

Lang's Western heritage is visible in his approach to the issue of women. It is interesting to note that, in the Swedish translation of his book, one of the Arabic-speaking scholars living in Denmark, who has been active in selecting this book for translation, found it necessary to write a one-page introduction to the book. In this introduction, he highlights particularly Lang's view of women, which he regards as slightly incorrect. Perhaps the Muslim scholar reacted to Lang's reference to a meeting in the youth session of one of the Islamic conferences in America. As men and women were sitting separately, one of the young girls raised the question of whether this separation of the sexes at conferences 'does more harm than good.' She continues:

The sisters are trapped back up here in the balcony, two thousand feet from the stage, while the men occupy the main floor. Therefore we have unequal access to the speaker and we have to fight to get our questions heard and addressed. . . . It leaves us with a feeling of inferiority and secondary status (Lang 1994: 128).

Or maybe it is Lang's acceptance of the notion of female leadership that causes the Arab scholar to react. Lang discusses female leadership from various points of view. He states that there is a difference between the concept of leadership in very early Islamic history and in the classical sources. According to Lang, whereas the early Islamic rulers had complete authority in all fields, the classical Sunni sources saw leadership in terms of administration only. He discusses the fact that contemporary governmental affairs are much more complex than they used to be and the decentralization of power to governmental institutions makes the ruler's duties less overarching. By comparing the hadith related to the Prophet which says, 'a people which

has a woman as leader will never prosper⁸ with the Koranic passage concerning the queen of Sheba, who is portrayed as a just ruler who sought advice from wise men around her, Lang concludes:

Due to the Qur'an's positive portrayal of the Queen of Sheba, and because the record of women leaders in the past and present has been rather good, in addition to the fact that this is now a widely accepted idea in Western culture, I would be very surprised if American Muslims were to disqualify women from political leadership (Lang 1994: 170).⁹

Lang's statement has to be regarded in view of 'global theological flows'. Moreover, as the issue of the role of women is significant in the Western context, it would be strange if many Western converts did not take a different stand to that of the orthodox law schools, which came into being in different cultural contexts and at a different time.

Lang actually discusses this matter in terms of culture influencing new interpretations, thus reflecting Yvonne Werner's notion that Scandinavian Catholic converts instigated the process of modernity (Werner 2000). As most Western converts are socialized in a cultural context that promotes the free choice of the individual, the converts might select similar ideas from the enormous body of existing Islamic views. It is interesting to note that it is in the chapter on family matters that Lang states: 'our viewpoints do not originate in a vacuum; they are a synthesis of our environment, background, experience, and personality' (Lang 1994: 136). Lang's attitude here indicates an acceptance of the social construction perspective and the notion that human beings constantly construct and reconstruct their own reality. Lang continues, saying that the applicable results of any human being's attempt to 'derive comprehensive guidelines for society' are 'always limited to a certain time and place' (Lang 1994: 137). From this statement, Lang's affiliation to 'the rational trend' of 'returning to the Koran and Sunna' instead of adhering to the orthodox law schools becomes apparent. He says further that

⁸ See al-Bukhārī, Book of Maghāzī no. 4073; Sunan an-Nisā'i, Book of the Manner of Provision, no. 5293; Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Book of Trials, no. 2188; Musnad Aḥmad, *musnad al-baṣriin*, no. 19542.

⁹ Lang's conclusion on female leadership must be regarded in view of al-Mawdūdī's writing in the 1960s, as well as Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's discussion in the late 1990s. Mernissi's discussion in her book from 1987 is another contribution to the debate on female leadership.

Muslims today should not only learn how early Muslims understood the divine word, but communicate the religious message 'visibly by how *we* live and conduct our affairs' (Lang 1994: 137). 'To do any less' he claims, 'would be to ignore its universal character and to distance ourselves — and even more, all succeeding generations — from the revelation's perpetual relevance' (Lang 1994: 137–138). Lang says:

I am very much aware of the fact that my views on the roles of men and women in Muslim society, and indeed on all the topics I have been discussing, are affected a great deal by my peculiar circumstances, as is true for anyone. And this is exactly why the process of review and interpretation must never cease. Virtually all Muslim revivalists, whether traditionalist or modernist, are convinced that through the ages many superfluous, burdensome, and cultural accretions have infiltrated Muslim thought and practice, and that we must re-establish the 'true' Islam (Lang 1994: 138).

There is a small contradiction in Lang's reasoning. On the one hand he speaks of the possibility for every new generation to understand the divine word in a particular way. On the other hand, he presents the concept of 'true Islam' as an eternal and absolute entity. The issue to raise, then, is what is this 'true Islam'? Lang only partly answers this question. In the continuing discussion, he points to the problem of 'returning to the Koran and the hadiths', saying that 'this also involves interpretation, and we are bound to differ on how to read them' (Lang 1994: 138). He sees the solution to the problem of distinguishing between 'true' and 'false' interpretations as coming from the combination of people from the traditional Muslim societies and new Muslims. However, he says that 'since converts are not grounded in the traditions of the faith, they are also likely to bring with them radical, alien ideas.' The solution to this problem is, according to Lang, for the larger community to test these convert ideas (Lang 1994: 138). Lang's reasoning reflects the idea of 'implosions', where new Muslims bring ideas into the Muslim communities that flow into the new culture of the immigrant.

Lang's general argumentation in his book is representative for many new Muslims with whom I have had discussions. The balanced view on the various topics represents a Western academic approach. Ideas are either accepted or rejected according to the discussions of various viewpoints. Many of the Danish converts I spoke to said that Lang's book reflected their own attitudes on various

issues. Lise, a female convert who had been a Muslim only three years at the time of our discussion, told me that she felt relieved after reading Lang's book. 'When I came to Islam,' she said, 'I felt I had to accept all ideas presented by the local Muslims.' She explains how she had her doubts about the ideas of a woman's role and the relations between husband and wife in the Muslim environment. When she went with her husband to visit his friends and their wives, she felt awful about the way women had to be in the kitchen all the time, making food for the guests with all the small children hanging around. The men, on the other hand, sat in 'peace and quiet' in the living room. She exclaimed that, as a Dane with a certain view on the role of women, she found it hard to adjust. 'However,' she said, 'as I became a Muslim, I felt I had to accept the Muslim ideas wholly and fully.' By reading Lang, however, she changed her view about the status of women in Islam. 'I partly returned to ideas on the relationship between men and women I had before I became a Muslim', she says, and continues:

I realised that there are alternative views. When I have discussed books with other converts who have been Muslims much longer than I have, I have discovered that they know more about the different viewpoints within Islam. Now it is legitimate for me not to accept everything that Muslims say is 'Islam'. I also realised how important it is for me to search for knowledge on my own. As my husband comes from an Arab country he has many traditions that he says are 'Islam'. Before I believed it, but now I want to be able to distinguish between what is 'Islam' and what are his 'Arab traditions'.

Before Lang's book was translated into Swedish some new Muslims assessed its suitability for the Swedish context. In my discussion with Olav, he told me he felt Lang's book was wonderful for new converts to read. 'New converts,' he said 'have so many questions and also reflections about Islam and in Lang's book many of these questions are answered.' He further observes that, as Lang is a Western convert himself, many of his thoughts and ways of reasoning are recognised by other Western converts. Maria also speaks of how Lang's approach is suitable to Western converts. She mentions how she has read many books translated from Arabic or Urdu and feels alienated from what these books say. Lang's book, on the other hand, has given her answers to many of the questions she has had during her ten years as a Muslim. It is particularly Lang's discussion of women with which she feels comfortable. 'He is so balanced in his

view,' she exclaims, 'he presents the various ways of thinking and he legitimates various points of view. Arab men, like my own husband, regard the headscarf as the be all and end all, whereas I believe it is important, yes, but not absolutely so.' She further says that, as Lang discusses most of the controversial matters surrounding the issue of women, he presents arguments not only against the non-Muslim world view but also against born Muslims' traditions, which 'are not always Islamic'.

Both Olav and Maria point at the importance of reading about or discussing Islam from an 'insider' Western perspective. As much literature is translated from cultural spheres vastly different from their own, new Muslims are presented with ideas that are often difficult to accept. It also seems that, as many new Muslims have an academic background, they appreciate Lang's balanced approach, in which various views are discussed instead of just one view being presented as 'the truth'. In other Islamic cultural contexts, the 'one truth' approach is promoted and appreciated. This difference in approach is probably a result of different educational methods. In Scandinavia the educational methodology is one of problem solving, whereas in many Muslim countries the method of memorizing texts is much more widespread (See Roald 1994).

Shi'a literature

Muslim converts belonging to the Shi'a trend also tend to read books with 'a rational approach'. A convert to Shi'a Islam complained that few books were written by Shi'a scholars in English or the Scandinavian languages and therefore Shi'a converts have to read Sunni literature. She does not feel it too big a problem, as she tries to 'think logically' when she reads. 'If I have some questions,' she says, 'I discuss them with my husband, who is able to consult literature in Arabic.' Another Shi'a convert states that she does not really read literature, as she feels that literature on Shi'a Islam consists mainly of 'bad translations'. She says she has frequent discussions with her husband and, whenever he reads a book, he discusses the contents with her.

It is particularly the books of Iranian theologian Morteza Mutahhari (d. 1979) that have been translated into the Scandinavian languages. The translated books deal with jurisprudence in general,

understanding of the Koran, martyrdom and Islamic movements in the 20th century. He has even written a book analysing the revolution in Iran. But it is his book on Islamic women's rights that is most widely read among Muslim converts. Otterbeck has characterized this book as having 'a familiarity with Islamic theology together with an apologetic use of "Western" research and European philosophy' (Otterbeck 2000: 121). In it, Mutahharī deals with all the 'problematic' areas pertaining to the issues of women and gender relations. He looks into various aspects of polygyny, as well as *mu'ta* marriages (temporary marriage). He further discusses how the biological differences between men and women have to be manifested in the rights and duties of the two genders. It is particularly the gender issue that might provoke reaction in the Scandinavian context. In Scandinavia, the scientific pattern of social constructionism in matters of gender relations is established even at a grassroots level; similarly biological argumentation is regarded in terms of 'biological reductionism'. In my discussions with Shi'a converts, most of those who had read Mutahharī's book expressed that they liked his 'scientific' approach. I asked how they reacted to his biological argumentation that concludes 'equality is one thing, whereas identical rights are something else' (Mutahharī 1996: 15). Margaretha accepts Mutahharī's argument, as it is important, in her view, not to follow all the 'whims' or every development in Scandinavian society. 'I love the freedom Islam gives me as a woman,' she states, 'I have the free choice to stay at home if I want, or I can work or study outside the home if that is what I want. This is in contrast to my husband, whose main duty is to provide economically for the family.' According to Margaretha, Mutahharī helps pave the way for women's freedom of choice. She believes that 'he accepts the differences between men and women which are actually there and influence daily life.' Lena, who also appreciated Mutahharī's book, expressed:

Why should we deny biological differences between men and women. These are facts that are so obvious. By denying them we just destroy our chances of living a nice and peaceful life. It is always women who get burnt out (*utbränd*) by working too hard. When my children are small I want to stay at home and devote my time to motherhood. Later, however when my children get bigger, of course I want to work outside the home and participate in society.

The Shi'a convert, Gunilla, states that she does not like to read books in English. She has acquired her Islamic knowledge through

an Arabic-speaking female friend. Adherence to Shi'a Islam involves the choice of a *marjī' taqlīd* (an authority to follow in matters of jurisprudence) and Gunilla's friend had chosen the Lebanese sheikh, Muḥammad Fadhlullāh. Gunilla therefore also chose Fadhlullāh, since most of her knowledge of Islam was based on his thoughts. Sheikh Fadhlullāh, like al-Qaradāwī of Sunni Islam, has a 'rational' approach to Islam. There are obvious similarities between the two scholars, despite certain dogmatic differences in their theological standpoints. Fadhlullāh's view on women is particularly noticeable in an Arabic-speaking context, where his ideas reflect those of al-Ṭurābī and Badawī (Fadhlullāh 1997).

The salafi approach

Naṣr al-Dīn al-Albānī

New Muslims adopting the *salafi* approach read mostly the Koran and the hadith literature. Sheikh Naṣr al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1999) has edited an enormous collection of the hadiths, which includes nearly all of the famous ones, and it has become the standard work of adherents to the *salafi* trend. The books most read by Scandinavian *salafis*, besides the Islamic sources, are *The Prophet's Prayer* by al-Albānī (English edition in 1993), and the three books by convert, Bilal Philips: *The Evolution of Fiqh* (1988), *The Fundamentals of Tawḥīd* (1990) and *The Methodology of Qur'anic Explanation* (1997). Many new converts, who have not yet decided on an adherence to a particular trend, but who see themselves as 'just a Muslim', read Philips' books. Books written by *salafi* scholars deal to a great extent with two issues: *tawḥīd* (monotheism) and the methodology of how to understand the hadiths.

By reading *The Prophet's Prayer* by al-Albānī, one becomes aware of how his refusal of the Islamic law schools started from his scrutiny of how the Prophet 'really' prayed. He explains how, during lectures on prayer, he realised the law schools all had their various ways of praying. He therefore turned to the many hadiths on the subject in order to 'fulfil his [the Prophet's] command, "Pray as you have seen me praying"' (al-Albānī 1993: iii). This search for the 'original' way to pray reflects an inherent wish to look for the 'one and only truth'. Al-Albānī's investigation into most of the hadith collections, which re-classifies the hadiths according to the ancient system of looking

at the reliability of the narrator chains (*isnād*), shows little care for the content of the hadiths. This is contrary to many other contemporary scholars, whose main aim is to look into the hadiths' content and judge them according to the main Islamic principles. Thus, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī found that some of the hadiths on women were not 'logical' according to the Islamic principle that the two genders have equal value (al-Ghazālī 1989). This methodology, which resembles the hermeneutical approach of Christian religious scholars, is called *'ilm al-maqāṣid* (science of the intention) in the Islamic context.

Al-Albānī's main argument in his search for the 'one truth' is that many of the widespread hadiths that promote differences of opinions among Islamic scholars, such as the hadith that says 'the disagreement among my Umma is a mercy', have no authentic narrator chains. In al-Albānī's view these hadiths are therefore not authentic hadiths. The hadith quoted above has been the main one legitimizing the existence of various law schools, as well as the acceptance of the differing opinions among Islamic scholars.

Convert writings within the salafī approach

Bilal Philips is a convert whose approach can be regarded in a *salafī* tradition. When I met Philips in the United Arab Emirates in 1998, I specifically asked him whether he regarded himself as an adherent to the *salafī* trend. He denied this, saying that he is 'merely a Muslim'. However, I have chosen to deal with his literature as part of the *salafī* literature, as I see similarities between his methodology and the methodology of al-Albānī. Although al-Albānī is much more careful to state the sources of the hadiths he uses and to discuss their authenticity, Philips' approach also rejects the law schools and turns directly to the Koran and Sunna. Many non-*salafīs* also look at the Koran and Sunna, but what is particular to the *salafīs*, and also the work of al-Albānī and Philips, is their literal interpretation of the hadiths.

Many new Muslims have read Philips' book *The Fundamentals of Tawḥīd (Islamic Monotheism)*, in the English edition. However, it is yet to be translated into Scandinavian languages. In the book, Philips looks into matters such as what it means to believe in a monotheistic God, and what *shirk* means? Philips defines *tawḥīd* as 'the realizing and maintaining of Allah's unity in all of man's actions which directly or indirectly relate to Him' (Philips 1990: 1). Philips' approach

is, on the one hand, to turn to the Koran and the hadiths in order to look into the meaning of monotheism. However, as I will show below, he tends to be selective in his use of Koranic verses. Philips also tends to condemn many Muslim practices that, according to him, commit *shirk*. It is particularly Sufis and adherents to Shi'a Islam whom he criticises.

He condemns, for instance, those whom he regards as having a pantheistic image of God, such as the Sufi scholar Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240), saying that he understood *tawheed* to mean that 'Allah is all and all is Allah' (Philips 1990: iii). 'Such beliefs,' he says, 'are classified by mainstream Islam as pantheism and, as such, *kufī* (non-belief)' (Philips 1990: iii-iv). He also terms such beliefs heretical saying that 'from the Prophet's time till today, all began their divergence from the point of *tawhīd*' (Philips 1990: iv). I encountered a similar emphasis on the importance of 'a correct understanding of *tawhīd*' during my fieldwork in Jordan in the 1990s. During a visit to a mosque run by *salafīs*, the first question posed to me was how I understood the Koranic conceptions of 'God resting on his throne' and 'God's hand is over the believers'. 'The right answer', in their view, was that the Koranic passages meant only that 'God rests' and 'God has a hand'. One should not try to explain 'how' or 'what'. This approach is similar to an ancient theological approach in Islam called *bilā kayf* (without asking why) promoted by, among others, Ibn Ḥanbal, the founder of one of the four law schools in Sunni Islam. Ibn Ḥanbal belonged to the trend called 'the people of the hadiths' (*ahl al-ḥadīth*), which indicates his heavy reliance on hadiths rather than on the intellectual deduction of Islamic legislation.

Philips' *bilā kayf* approach is obvious in his discussion of God's attributes. For *salafīs* it is important to distinguish God from human beings. In Christianity there is the conception that 'man is created in God's image.' Most Muslims refuse such a conception and *salafīs* in particular take a stand against it. Philips emphasizes the particularity of God as totally distinct from human beings, saying:

The fact is that the similarity between God's attributes and those of mankind is only in name and not in degree. When attributes are used in reference to God, they are to be taken in the absolute sense, free from human deficiencies (Philips 1990: 11).

Philips continues to differentiate the matter of *tawhīd* from heretical thoughts in matters of the Islamic creed. He quotes a hadith that

tells how the Prophet once, in the company of his Companions, drew a straight line in the dirt with a series of lines branching off from either side of it. He explained to his Companions that the straight line represented the path of God, and the branches represented various paths of misguidance in this life. Philips then quotes the Koranic verse: 'This is my path leading straight, so follow it. And do not follow the other paths or else you will be separated from His path' (Koran 6: 153) (Philips 1990: iv–v). He then quotes another Koranic verse: 'Most of them claim to believe in Allah but they really commit *shirk*' (Koran 12: 106) (Philips 1990: v). Philips links this latter Koranic verse to the above story of the paths, implicitly stating that the Prophet was referring to the deviant paths of various *believers*. Philips quotes the same verse later in his book but there he gives its historical context, as handed down by the early conveyors of hadith and historians. In its context, the Koranic verse pertains to the situation in Mecca where many of the Meccans actually knew about Allah as the highest God but still worshipped many lower gods. Philips translates the Koranic verse here in a different way: 'Most of them *do not believe in Allah except while joining partners to Him* (Koran 12: 106) (Philips 1990: 17 [my italics]). Philips translates the same verse differently in the two different contexts; in the first discussion using this Koranic verse to reinforce the hadith talking about the deviant paths of believers; in the second discussion, aiming to show that, although the pre-Islamic Meccans knew about Allah, they were still non-believers. It is important to draw attention to Philips' use of the Koran to pursue his particular ideology, namely to condemn certain understandings of Islam as *shirk*, implicitly leading to *kufi* (non-belief). Although it is primarily the Sufi understanding of Islam that Philips regards in terms of *shirk*, followers of Shi'a Islam are also accused of setting up 'rivals who share God's unique attributes and who, in fact, become gods besides Allah' (Philips 1990: 14). This is due to the Shi'a notion of the twelve imams.

Hans, a male convert, expresses strong criticism of Philips' Islamic attitudes. Hans became a Muslim five years ago and he is now in his early thirties. He emphatically states that Philips is 'hard' in his judgements. His main criticism is the way Philips looks at sinners in Islam. 'There is no logic in his reasoning,' Hans says. 'In Philips' view, a Muslim who sins should be expelled from Islam. This is not logical, as God forgives.' Philips' view in this matter to a certain

degree resembles that of the early Islamic sect *kharijites* who regarded anyone who committed a mortal sin an apostate from Islam.

It is also important to draw attention to Philips' view of new Muslims. He discusses new Muslims once in the book, in the context of their role in early Islamic history. He sees the reason for the early deviation of the concept of *tawhīd* as partly due to the new Muslims who embraced Islam during the expansion of the Muslim empire. He says:

It is only natural to expect that when the peoples of these lands entered the fold of Islam, they carried with them some of the remnants of their former beliefs. When some of these new converts began to express, in writings and discussions, their various philosophical concepts of God, confusion arose in which the pure and simple unitarian belief of Islam became threatened (Philips 1990: 3).

It is interesting to note that he does not view his own role as a new Muslim as 'threatening' to the Islamic faith. Amal, who has a higher education in social sciences, expresses her opinion about Philips, thus:

He is a typical modernist in his approach to Islam. The early animists had a more intimate relationship with their God or Gods as they believed he/she/them to be part of nature. The modernist or rather Christian approach to religion is that God is transcendent to nature, which is the approach Philips adopts. From the Koran I find many passages talking about God's closeness to human beings, such as His being closer to human beings than the vein, and His name being the Surrounder (*muḥīṭ*). I find that Philips does not mention these passages, preferring those that can be interpreted in terms of a distant and transcendent God.

Amal's statement must be regarded in view of Philips' belief that 'Allah is above the universe and its contents in a way which befits His majesty and He is not in anyway contained within His creation nor is it within Him, but His infinite knowledge, mercy and power operate on every particle within it without any hindrance whatsoever' (Philips 1990: 135). By scrutinizing the Koranic verses to which Philips refers in his discussion of the nature of God, it becomes obvious that Amal's claim of Philips' selectivity is well founded. Philips tends to use verses that confirm his claim of God's transcendence, disregarding those that indicate a more all-embracing character of God.

Amal is also critical of Philips' view on Darwin's theory of the development of the species. In his book Philips says:

Darwin's (d. 1882) proposal that man was merely a glorified ape was widely adopted in the theories of social scientists and philosophers of the nineteenth century as it provided a 'scientific' basis for the non-existence of God. According to them religion evolved from animism to monotheism along with man's supposed social evolution from an independent individual to a national state and his physical evolution from ape to man.

It is particularly this banal handling of Darwinism to which Amal reacts. However she also contests the implied rejection of the scientific paradigm of the evolution of the species. She sees Muslims' rejection of these theories as a 'putting their head in the sand' approach to the modern world. She refers firstly to the fact that Muslim scientists in early Islamic history knew about the evolution of the species although they concluded that man was not part of this evolution model. She continues:

Muslims today claim miracles. They find tomatoes where the expression *lā ilāha illa llāh* [the first half of the Islamic testimony of faith: there is no gods but God] can be seen in the middle of a cut tomato. Then they make a photomontage and spread the pictures all over talking about the miracles of God.

Do they not understand that *every* tomato is the miracle of God. For me the evolution theory is not a problem. We do not know what plans God has or what he has meant by His creation. I do not doubt the existence of God just because Darwin claims the evolution of the species. For me there is no contradiction between the two.

What are the implications of the concept of absolute *tawḥīd* as Philips portrays it? And what are the implications of rejecting the theory of the evolution of the species? The two issues are associated, as they both point to an exclusionist attitude toward the surrounding environment, be it Muslim or non-Muslim.

The exclusive stress on absolute *tawḥīd* might cause a split in the Islamic discourse of the Muslim approaches to the Islamic texts. This is also evident in Philips' repeated criticism of Shi'a Muslims and Sufi adherents. Moreover, Philips emotionally rejects scientific theories without being well acquainted with them, which incites in lower educated Muslims living in Western countries a hostile attitude towards their society. As his ideas are presented as the 'one and only truth', it is difficult, particularly for new Muslims or second-generation Muslims with little or no Islamic schooling, to have a balanced interpretation of his various ideas.

Philips has written two other books that are read by new Muslims in Scandinavia. They deal with the methodology of legislation and with explanations to the Koran. I will look mainly into *The Evolution of Fiqh* (1988), as this book has been most popular in the Scandinavian context. The book tells the story of the development of the Islamic law schools. On this matter, Philips clearly states '[i]n fact, the only infallible *madhhab* [law school] which deserves to be followed without any questions asked is that of the Prophet Muḥammad' (Philips 1988: 4). This statement reflects al-Albānī's call to 'fulfil his [the Prophet's] command, "Pray as you have seen me praying"' (al-Albānī 1993: iii). The book is unique in the English language as it gives information on the background to and the discrepancies between the law schools in a very pedagogical manner. It also discusses the various legal tools within Islamic legislation. Such information is mainly to be found in academic books to which not all new Muslims have access. Though this book starts in a balanced manner, Philips goes on to condemn those Muslim approaches that are different to his own. He says:

The irony is that, in light of our insight into the historical evolution of the *madhhabs* and concurrent development of *fiqh*, the true deviants from the teachings of Islam are not the so-called *wahhābī* and *aḥl-i-hadith*, but those people who would rigidly insist on every Muslim following one or another of the four *madhhabs* and on their believing blindly in the infallibility of all four *madhhabs*, despite certain glaring contradictions in their rulings on points of Islamic law (Philips 1988: 131).

Philips continues, modifying his critical approach:

Yet it must be acknowledged that those who advocate blind following (*taqlēd*), are often very sincere in their belief in the infallibility of all four *madhhabs*. Furthermore many scholars are included in their ranks.

This latter statement indicates a rapprochement between Philips' ideas and the classical scholars. In his conclusion he promotes a return to what he calls '*fiqh's* stage of flowering' in early Islamic history, saying:

This implies a reunification of the *madhhabs* with all traces of fanaticism and sectarianism removed, and the revival of *ijtihād* to make *fiqh* once more a dynamic, objectively deduced body of laws so that individual Muslim scholars and jurists may effectively and uniformly apply the *sharē'ah* in all parts of the Muslim world, no matter what the socio-political-economic conditions (Philips 1988: 142).

He sees that such a unification of *fiqh* will benefit both new converts and new-generation born Muslims by being spared ‘the perplexing effects of conflicting rulings of *madhhab* to *madhhab*’ and ‘the frustration of the sectarianism generated by *madhhab* contradictions’ (Philips 1988: 142).

Philips advocates a unified law tradition. It is not clear, however, whether he accepts differences in judgements according to context, even though he speaks in terms of variation of socio-political and economic conditions. Although Philips has been more balanced in this book than in the latter, *The Fundamentals of Tawheed*, he still fiercely promotes his own approach over all other approaches to Islamic law. Moreover, his call for a unification of all *fiqh* approaches does not allow for synthesis with other approaches, rather his own approach monopolizes the ‘unified *fiqh*’. As indicated above, Philips’ view is an exclusionist one, allowing little room for other understandings of Islam to take their proper place in the pluralist tradition of Islam.

New Muslims’ opinions about the value of his books differ. I found that new converts in particular, and often those in their early twenties, tend to appreciate his strict approach towards ‘one truth’, both in theological and jurisprudential matters. Those who converted in the 1980s or who converted in their late twenties, thirties or forties tend to dislike Philips exclusionist approach. This reflects the different attitudes at different stages of conversion as well as it reflects a general model of an individual’s growth to maturity. As for the former the exclusionist approach is common in the initial stage of conversion, when the individual rejects his/her former identity. During this period of rejection, the Islamic world view is active in the formation of a new Islamic identity.

The traditionalist approach

In the Arabic-speaking world the traditionalists are usually adherents to Sufism. In other parts of the Muslim world, however, this is not always the case. The geographical differences when it comes to adherence to various Islamic trends can be linked to the issue of language. Arabic-speaking Muslims have more access to the original texts because they are all written in the Arabic language. Outside the Western world, therefore, it is mostly in the Arabic-speaking

world that one finds the approach of turning to the Koran and Sunna. As for the West, the cultural mixture of Muslims from all over the world seems to have made this particular approach to Islam fashionable. In Western countries born Muslims and new Muslims both realise the great span of interpretations of the sources in their Muslim community. Turning to the Koran and Sunna can therefore be seen as an attempt to unify Muslims. However, the most extreme expression of this concept can encourage an exclusionist approach, as witnessed in the writings of Philips above.

Up until the late 1990s, few of the classic authors had been translated into European languages. These days, however, many traditional *fiqh* books, as well as books written by Sufi masters have been translated, particularly into the English language. This probably influences the adherence to the traditionalist approach in the European context.

As shown above, Jeffrey Lang pointed to a tendency for recently converted new Muslims to embrace traditional Islamic thinking. In Scandinavia, Sweden and Denmark boast a particularly high level of adherence to traditional Islamic ideas, usually borne out in Sufi Islam, which tends to stress the spiritual aspect over the 'rational' aspect of Islamic thought. I have chosen to regard this trend not in terms of 'Sufism' but in terms of 'traditionalism', because I regard Sufism either to be a methodological approach to Islamic spirituality (what Geels names 'intoxicated' Sufism), or the more advanced stage on 'the spiritual way to God', which includes adherence to the Islamic law and asceticism (*zuhd*). (Geels names this latter approach 'sober' Sufism) (Geels 1999: 93).

Convert writings within the traditionalist approach

Noah Ha Mim Keller

It is important to be aware that, with the exception of adherents to the *salafi* movement, many Muslim converts sympathise with the less extreme ideas promoted by traditionalist groups. Many new Muslims, for instance, read *The Reliance of the Traveller* by Aḥmad ibn Naqīb al-Miṣrī (d. 1368), an outline of the Shāfi'ī School of Law. The American new Muslim, Noah Ha Mim Keller, who has lived in Jordan for many years, has translated the book into English. He is the head of a *Shadhiliyya ṭarīqa* (Sufi order) in Jordan and he travels frequently to Great Britain and the United States where he has many

followers. Keller also has a close relationship with Hamza Yusuf (Imam Hamza), the American convert who has recently gained many followers, particularly among new Muslims and second-, third- and fourth-generation immigrant Muslims in the Western world.

Keller's book deals in detail with the rules and regulations of the Shāfi'ī School. Keller has translated al-Miṣrī's text and has added commentaries by a contemporary Jordanian Islamic scholar, in addition to his own. The author has kept the Arabic text running parallel to the English text throughout the book. Although many new Muslims regard it as an important work, some also express that they find it problematic, in that it does not contain the legal evidence for its scholarly judgements. 'To follow this book,' Khadija, states, 'I feel I am following another person blindly instead of following the way of God.' The need for new Muslims to know the legal evidence for any belief or proposition must be related to the Western Muslim communities, where Muslims from various regions present different judgements on most issues. Moreover, new Muslims are educated in a culture that promotes a problem-solving methodology. They would therefore react against a set of rules if they were not also given the reasons for the rules. As Keller's book presents the social context of the 14th century in Egypt (al-Miṣrī was born and lived in Egypt), many new Muslims feel that the social rulings in the book are hard to follow. Kari believes that she is comfortable with following the worship rules, such as fasting and praying, but she does not accept the social rulings *in toto*. It is no surprise in the Scandinavian context that she refers to the case of female circumcision (here: the removal of the prepuce), which is regarded as obligatory in the Shāfi'ī School. The national television channels in both Sweden and Norway have investigated the custom of female circumcision using hidden cameras. In Sweden female circumcision is forbidden in all its forms. In the television programme from September 2001, a Coptic priest and two imams were portrayed as 'helping' a young woman, who pretended to have a daughter whom she wanted to circumcise, by giving her references to people who could perform the operation on her daughter.¹⁰ We have to understand Kari's reaction in the con-

¹⁰ Johnsdotter, has scrutinized the television programme and her conclusion is that it was manipulated in order to show that young Somali girls are frequently circumcised in Sweden (Johnsdotter 2002).

text of these programmes. 'Although it is only a matter of removing the prepuce, I do not understand how this rule has come to be part of the Islamic law,' she says. She continues:

I have never seen anything about this [female circumcision] in the Koran. I also know that the hadiths, which some invoke when talking about the necessity of female circumcision, are non-authentic and not reliable. How can such a thing then be Islamic?

When I looked into the case I discovered that in the Arabic text the word *bazr* is used, which is the Arabic word for 'clitoris'. The fact that Keller has translated this word as 'prepuce' reflects his Western background, in which clitoridectomy is regarded as totally unacceptable (For a further discussion see Johnsdotter 2002; Roald 2001a). Although in this case Keller has modified a ruling according to a certain attitude found in Western countries many converts have expressed that they feel that particularly the social rulings in this book is based on a cultural pattern different from the social reality they live in.

Hamza Yusuf

Most Scandinavian converts in the traditionalist trend are familiar with the American convert Hamza Yusuf, who is better known as Imam Hamza. His audio and videocassettes are spread throughout the world. Hamza Yusuf converted to Islam in 1977 when he was 17 years old. It is interesting to note that his last name was Hanson, suggesting he might have Scandinavian roots, even though he claimed Greek ancestry in the lectures I attended. He is the son of two US academics. He wanted to become a Greek Orthodox priest but a near-death experience in a car accident changed his path and, after reading the Koran, he embraced Islam. Yusuf is the head of an Islamic Institute in California but he lectures all over the United States and in Europe. His fame has gradually increased and, when he lectures in the United States, thousands of people gather to hear him speak. To understand the extent of his popularity I will relate what happened during a Muslim convention I attended in September 1999 in Chicago, at which Yusuf was speaking. Whenever he was speaking, the organisers were careful to put him in the main hall, with no other workshops going on at the same time. On the penultimate day there was a panel session in the main hall with prominent scholars from outside the United States, such as the Ombudsman

of the Sharia court in Pakistan, Murad Hoffman, who usually draws a large crowd wherever he goes, and a prominent Jordanian scholar. When the session started, only the first row was filled in the hall that could hold approximately 6000 people. Suddenly one of the organisers came running in to ask the panel participants whether they would agree to change to a smaller room. He explained that Yusuf's talk had been allocated a small room, which was already overcrowded, with hundreds waiting outside. As the panel and the small audience went upstairs to the other room, hundreds of people came down to the main hall. The organisers even had to stop the escalators for fear of accidents. In the end it turned out that the organisers had made an error in the programme and Yusuf never turned up to the lecture. This event is a good indicator of Yusuf's popularity. One must ask, therefore, what need does he fulfil in the Muslim Umma?

In his speeches he discusses certain Koranic or Islamic concepts, which he looks at from religious and scientific points of view. As he is educated by traditional scholars and has had close contact with the Bedouins, he often refers to Arabic poetry, especially pre-Islamic poetry. He further indicates his mastery of the Arabic language by quoting either from the Koran, the hadiths or from Arabic poetry in Arabic and then translating into English. One of the secrets behind his enormous popularity seems to be his methodology. Yusuf can be regarded as a synthesis of traditional Islamic scholarship and Western knowledge. By applying scientific research to the Islamic paradigm, he confirms the idea that many new Muslims and second- and third-generation immigrant Muslims have of Islam as 'a logical' religious system. Moreover, as referred to in the *Guardian* (8/10-2001), Yusuf's manner of speaking 'has a rare cultural fluency shifting easily between the Bible and the Koran, taking in, within a few breaths, Shakespeare, Thoreau, John Locke, Rousseau, Jesse James, Dirty Harry and even, at one point, the memoirs of General George Patton.' By showing his mastery of the Western intellectual heritage, in addition to his Islamic knowledge, he legitimates his authority as an Islamic scholar in the Western world. Many first-generation Muslim scholars also refer to Western scholarship, however, their knowledge tend not to be as deep as that of Yusuf, who is socialized into this culture and has gone through an educational system built on these particular Western ideas. His credibility, therefore, seems to be higher, enhanced by his complete mastery of the English language.

One example of how he blends these two types of knowledge is taken from his lecture which I attended in London on the 20th October 2001, when he stated that the cosmos is a reflection of the unity of God. He began by stating that God is One and, coincidentally, hydrogen has the atomic number one. He explained the link between the two: God is the originator of the cosmos and all life on earth is connected by hydrogen bonding. This link is thus a reflection of the oneness of everything and is a sign of the unity of God. (Yusuf 20th of October 2001)

At this lecture he was apparently affected by the September 11th attacks on the United States. He was dwelling on the fact that the alleged aeroplane hijackers were devoted Muslims. His explanation of their behaviour was presented in psychological terms as he stated that these men 'were brought up in a loveless environment'. One might wonder where he got this information, which was stated as a fact even though I have not seen it in any of the official sources. He went on to analyse 'religious madness' in terms of the pre-Islamic famous poem, *Qays and Layla*, where the male protagonist, Qays, becomes *majnūn layla* (Layla's madman) because his immense unrealised love for Layla turns him crazy. Yusuf explained Qays' madness as a result of Qays catching a glimpse of Layla's beautiful face when her veil was blown up by the wind. 'This,' he stated, 'is why God is veiled for human beings.' In Yusuf's view one should not look for God's face because It will push human beings too far in their religiosity. He claimed that he had met people whose intense religious experiences had made their intellect and mental state suffer.

Yusuf's adherence to the traditional legislative system of Islam is particularly evident in his discussion on sharia. However, his approach is inventive as he does not believe that the traditional law schools' judgements should rule entirely. In general Islamist discourse, there is an assumption that the Islamic law schools are representative for certain socio-political and economic contexts, and not necessarily contemporary times. Yusuf presents this assumption by stating that the vast material of what today is regarded as sharia is constituted by *ijtihāds*. Thus he allows for the possibility of new interpretations in Islamic legislation, but in his view only particular people are able to interpret the Islamic sources in our society. 'If everybody interprets the rules and regulations of the Koran and Sunna', he says, 'there will be *favoda* (chaos).' He continues with a rhetorical statement: 'one reads a pamphlet on Islam and suddenly one becomes

a scholar.' There are numerous such rhetorical statements in his speeches and they often make people laugh. The audience is carried along with his argumentation without fully understanding the implications of what he is saying. Who are the particular people to interpret the Islamic sources? In Yusuf's view they are 'people with knowledge', but the question of 'which knowledge' further complicates the issue of who should interpret.

That there is a slight contradiction in his view on sharia, or at least people's understanding of his view, is obvious from the statement of Fuad Nahdi, the publisher of the monthly Muslim magazine *Q-News*. In an article in the *Guardian*, he says 'he [Yusuf] confronts what it is to be young, British and Muslim.' He continues:

He shows there is life beyond beards, scarves and halal meat. He inspires confidence that you can build Islam in the West from all the local ingredients. You do not have to include political or theological burdens from traditional parts of the Muslim world (*Guardian* 8/10-2001).

From this statement, it is obvious that Nahdi has accepted one part of Yusuf's message, namely opening up for new interpretations, but at the same time he rejects traditional Islamic legislation although this is a substantial part of Yusuf's approach to Islam. Nahdi perceives Yusuf's message to be one of invention and thus a refutation of the Law-School understanding of the Islamic sources. This points at the fact that every human being tends to interpret statements and texts according to their own biography that includes gender, cultural and educational background, class, religiosity and personal experiences.

In his London speech, Yusuf discussed the importance of tolerance as part of his post-September 11th mindset. The *Guardian* interview with him, he dissociates himself from earlier anti-American statements he made in pre-September 11th speeches. The journalist writes:

It is as though he has gone through a second, possible more radical conversion than the first from Christianity. He regrets speeches he himself has made in the past, peppered as they were with the occasional angry statements about Jews and America that are a staple of much Muslim oratory. Days before the September 11th killings, he made a speech warning that 'a great, great tribulation was coming' to America. He is sorry for saying that now.

'September 11th was a wake-up call to me,' he says. 'I don't want to contribute to the hate in any shape or form. I now regret in the past

being silent about what I have heard in the Islamic discourse and being part of that with my own anger' (*Guardian* 8/10–2001).

Despite this request for tolerance, Yusuf's own tolerance does not extend to other Islamic theological directions. In his speech in London, he attacked the reform movement of the 19th century, the *salafyya*, headed by Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh, blaming it for the problematic situation of the contemporary Umma. Although earlier in the speech he accepts the need for new interpretations, in this part of the speech he turns against new *ijtihād*, talking in condescending terms about *tajdīd* (renewal) and *ijtihād*, the main slogans of the *salafyya* movement. It seems therefore that Yusuf's request for tolerance is directed more towards non-Muslims than Muslims of different approaches.

It is interesting that Yusuf criticises modern Islamic understandings with the same terms as Hjärpe when he speaks of 'engineer-Islam', which he applies to the moderate Islamists. Yusuf however, applies this concept to 'extremist' Muslims. He explains to the *Guardian* journalist that he has examined the backgrounds of the extremists, saying that 'the consistent feature is that they have been educated in the sciences rather than the humanities'. He continues:

So they see things in very simplistic, black-and-white terms. They don't understand the subtleties of the human soul that you get, for example, from poetry. Take the *Iliad*, for example. It is the ultimate text on war, yet you never know whether Homer is really on the side of the Greeks or the Trojans. It helps you understand the moral ambiguities of war (*Guardian* 8/10–2001).

It seems that Yusuf lumps together all Islamists belonging to the 'rational' trend. He seems unaware, for instance, that Abdullāh 'Azzām, who was Usama Bin Laden's mentor during the Russian occupation of Afghanistan, had a Ph.D. in sharia. 'Azzām is regarded as a main protagonist in the development of the global *jihadic* ideology, which resulted from the Muslims' struggle against the Russians. In the above statement, Yusuf is generalizing, putting every 'engineer-Muslim' into a pattern of Islamic extremism. As many Arabic-speaking Islamists are actually engineers or have their educational background in the natural sciences, Yusuf's scepticism of their Islamic understanding might be one of the reasons why many of them are critical of his approach. Many Arabic-speaking first generation Muslims with whom I have had discussions actually refuse to acknowledge

Yusuf as a main authority in Islam. Another reason for their rejection of Yusuf's performances might be a general fear of losing control of their particular Islamic message: Yusuf's rejection of their understanding of Islam is a promotion of his particular 'way of truth'.

There were several Scandinavian-convert academics at Yusuf's lecture in London and one of them questioned his mystification of the Koranic concepts and traditional Islamic legal principles. They were critical of Yusuf's approach, which they saw as being unbalanced. 'The way he mystifies religious terms and concepts,' a female convert said, 'reminds me of the manner Christian, Jewish and Muslim male scholars have monopolized the theological sphere. By mystifying concepts and complicate theological matters they have excluded and even expelled many competent people who might have important knowledge.' She goes on to say that women in particular are excluded from taking part in actual Islamic legislation.

A Norwegian female convert, who has seen Yusuf on another occasion, describes his performance as an MTV-style presentation of the Islamic message. She tells how she was very excited to hear him, because as she had heard about him from many Muslims in Norway. However, after his lecture she was disappointed, saying:

I see his manner of presentation as marked by quick changes and jumps from one subject to another with no real internal structure. He started at A and ended up at Z. His speeches contain a mixture of personal experiences: 'when I lived with the Bedouins in Mauritania I acquired knowledge of the stars', to present the Koran as something mythical and unattainable: 'the word *hatta* in the Koran has 17 meanings, and here are two of them'. Then he switched to talk about how cool and simple Islam is by quoting the Koranic verse 'Today I have perfected your religion' in order to let the audience feel that they were invited to something 'cool'.

She continues:

As an academic, I was bored and I sat there with a critical eye on everything he said. However, I can understand that the youth are attracted by his rhetorical style. He moves from one subject to another, without going into depth on anything. His style appeals to emotions and give 'flashes' of experiences. On this level it reminds me of MTV, where superficiality represented by continuous change is preferred over depth and structure. One reason for his attractiveness to the youth might be that they, as a generation reared on TV, are made passive and enjoy that which they do not have to make any effort to understand.

Other Scandinavian converts have expressed more favourable attitudes towards Yusuf's performances. In general, it is possible to say that most Scandinavian converts who are aware of him regard him as a very competent scholar who is able to give present day Western Muslims a platform to stand on. Marianne states that 'his intellectuality and his way of discussing matters which are important for us here and now make him a much-needed Islamic scholar.' She continues saying that as a new Muslim it is difficult for her to trust Muslim scholars coming from a non-Western society. 'They do not understand our needs,' she says, 'their cultural backgrounds are so different from ours and they hardly learn our language and our culture in order to be able to understand and give us what we need.' Marianne's statement reflects many of the Scandinavian converts' remarks about Yusuf. Rolf has been active in distributing his cassettes. When I asked him why he thinks Yusuf is important for Muslims in Scandinavia, he answered that, although Yusuf is not a Sufi master, he represents the scholarly tradition of Sufi masters. He further states that the problem in Western countries today is the lack of an Islamic tradition. As everybody, in his view, can pick and choose from the Islamic sources in the way they want, 'the Western world is in need of a traditional scholar like Imam Hamza who can guide new Muslims,' he says.

It is important to regard Hamza Yusuf's performance as well as his particular approach in view of *da'wa* and not as being part of the intellectual Muslim elite. He is a rhetorician rather than an intellectual, as evinced by the fact that he does not write much. It is as a speaker on audio and videocassettes that he has come to Westerners converting to Islam and second- and third-generation Muslim immigrants. His speeches do not appeal particularly to first-generation Muslims, or to academics. Second-, third-, and fourth-generation Muslim immigrants are faced with different challenges and therefore raise different questions to the first generation. On the one hand, one can say Yusuf answers many of these questions. On the other, Muslims living in Western countries tend to feel a lack of proper Muslim leadership and Yusuf fills this need with his implicit claim of religious authority and his charismatic speeches. Charismatic Muslim leadership has a long history and, with the loss of the caliphate in 1922, Muslims living in non-Muslim countries have none or few authorities to which to refer. The desire for Islamic leadership in the Western world might be regarded as a main reason for Yusuf's popularity.

Reflections

It seems that literature read by new Muslims in Scandinavia does not differ fundamentally from literature read by Muslims generally in western countries. Scandinavian new Muslims tend to read general Islamic literature as well as literature written by converts from other countries, due to that few Muslims from within Scandinavia have produced written materials.

There has been a development of literature from the 1970s to the early twenty-first century. Whilst non-Muslim researchers have written Islamic literature in European languages, the IIFSO's translation project of books written mainly by Arabic-speaking Islamists has led to a spread of a certain understanding of Islam to Muslim converts in non-Muslim societies. Although Islamist books entirely constituted convert literature in the Scandinavian context in the 1980's, in the 1990's the literature of various directions mushroomed. The diversity of the Muslim Umma in general is reflected in the various directions in Islamic literature. As classical books by Sufi masters as well as classical scholars of the Islamic law schools are translated into European languages, the interest for the traditionalist approach to Islam grows. Similarly, as *salaḥī* literature in English and the Scandinavian languages is spread in new Muslim communities, many new Muslims have embraced this approach to Islam.

I have discovered that new Muslims' writings have grown in popularity in the Scandinavian convert community. New Muslims can recognise their own experiences in other new Muslims' writings. The spread of audio and videocassettes containing convert speeches in the English language has created a new media for new Muslims. Speeches, particularly by Hamza Yusuf, have become immensely popular among new Muslims, as well as second-generation immigrants in Scandinavian countries.

In my discussions with new Muslims many of them referred to literature promoting alternative views on gender relations, such as Badawi's and al-Ṭurābī's writings. The gender issue is of importance in the Scandinavian context, and converts are therefore influenced by majority society's view on gender. New Muslims therefore tend to reject views on women's role promoted by born-Muslims coming from various parts of the Muslim world. Badawi's and al-Ṭurābī's writings offer plausible arguments to new Muslims as 'Islam' is introduced into a new cultural context.

The next chapter will deal with the cultural encounter between new Muslims and born Muslims. How are new Muslims received by the Muslim immigrant community, and how do new Muslims look upon born Muslims?

CHAPTER SIX

NEW MUSLIMS IN SCANDINAVIAN SOCIETY

When I, a Westerner and former practising Christian, became a Muslim, I became just that; a Muslim, a believer in the religion of Islam, meaning someone who believes in the oneness of God as opposed to the concept of the Trinity and who accepts Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) as a prophet of God. I am the same person with the same name, wearing the same Western style of clothing (though now respecting the modest dress code of Islam) and eating the same style of food (though now making sure that my meat is ḥalāl). I have not rejected my country, its culture or tradition. I simply hold different theological beliefs now.

(Michael Young 2001)

By converting from Christianity, Judaism, atheism, or agnosticism to Islam, Western converts go through a socio-political and intellectual conversion as well as a religious one. The acceptance of ‘the Islamic world view’¹ often encourages solidarity with Muslim people all over the world. This solidarity often clashes with European and American socio-political and economic interest. Converts might come into conflict with their own countries’ stands on various issues, such as the reluctance to condemn the policies of the state of Israel towards the Palestinian *intifāda*, support for the bombing of Afghanistan after the September 11th, support for the United Nations boycott and the bombing of Iraq.

Moreover, acceptance of the Islamic world view might also lead to a change in the intellectual paradigm of the converts. The overarching ideas, perceptions and attitudes promoted by one’s nation state, such as national sentiments, political ideas and gender systems, tend to be modified in the conversion process. This does not mean that the converts become a sort of fifth column, because their own

¹ By ‘the Islamic world view’ I mean an overarching idea of Islam that includes all the various directions and understandings of the Islamic sources.

cultural experiences are often active in the interpretation of the Islamic sources. Thus converts' understanding of the social message of Islam is often in line with their original cultural experiences, as will be discussed in the next chapter. The socio-political and intellectual changes in the new Muslim are manifested in awareness, an outsider's perspective and reflectivity in the contemplation of one's own society, rather than in any threat to society's stability.

Male converts are less visible than female converts in Scandinavian society. The *salafis* and some converts belonging to the *ḥizb al-tahṛīr* tend to dress in traditional Arab clothes, such as *jilbāb* (an ankle-length shirt) and skullcap; others, particularly those adhering to Sufism, might wear a shirt covering the upper parts of the thighs and wide trousers; in general, however, male converts tend not to distinguish themselves from the rest of the male population in Scandinavia. In contrast, many Scandinavian female converts start to wear clothes that cover the whole body and the hair after embracing Islam. As part of the pattern of being 'more royal than the king' at the beginning of their conversion, many converts have a more rigid way of dressing immediately after embracing Islam. Converts who have been Muslims for several years, however, tend to be more relaxed with their dress. This does not mean that they take off their headscarves, rather they do not always wear ankle-length coats, instead knee-length tunics over a skirt or trousers, and they do not regard it as too severe if a hair or two sticks out from behind the scarf. Some female converts, however, wear neither the headscarf nor what has come to be known as the 'Islamic dress', rather they just take care to dress 'decently'; not wearing tight clothes or leaving any parts of the body uncovered.

Relation to the family

Many converts have expressed that they often feel guilty in their relation with their mother, father, brothers and sisters. Many parents see their children's conversion to Islam as being due to their failure as parents. "Many parents have expressed to me 'What have we been doing wrong?' Karima who live in the same town as her parents believes that she has become a better daughter after her conversion. 'Before', she says, 'I did not really take care of them, but as Islam tells me to respect my parents I really do whatever is

in my power to satisfy their needs.’” In her view her brothers and sisters do not make the same effort as she does, yet her parents still complain about her becoming a Muslim. Many converts have similar stories. Despite that Muslims do not celebrate Christmas, birthdays or other ‘Scandinavian’ traditions, many converts feel obliged to continue to attend these familial celebrations. On the other hand some converts have decided to break more thoroughly with family traditions and this break has often been traumatic. As converts change their diet, stop drinking alcohol and dismiss familial celebrations, many of the converts’ parents feel betrayed and start to act with hostility.

Converts have different experiences with their families and these experiences depend to a great extent both on the converts’ behaviour as well as on the families’ reaction. The interaction between the two parts has resulted in various patterns and it is therefore difficult to set up a certain rule on converts’ relation to their families.

‘Us’ and ‘Them’

The static understanding of Islam and Muslim behaviour is part of the pattern of an ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality pervasive in Western society. Depending on the viewpoint, ‘us’ can be majority society or the Muslim immigrant communities, and Scandinavian converts to Islam can be both ‘us’ and ‘them’ in both contexts. Amal, who gives lectures to both Muslims and non-Muslims, explains how she often feels confused. ‘When I give a speech to non-Muslims’, she says, ‘I often find I include myself in the *non-Muslim* group and talk in terms of “us”. Then, immediately after, I might suddenly say “us”, including myself in the *Muslim* group.’ She continues, saying that a similar thing keeps happening when she is with Muslims, particularly in gatherings with Muslims of various national backgrounds.

Amal’s experience indicates the dilemma of Muslim converts in the cultural encounter between Muslims and non-Muslims in Western society. On one hand, the new Muslim is part of majority society, sharing its experiences and world view; on the other, the new Muslim does not fully accept the Western world view, as s/he adheres to a broader Islamic world view. The convert, thus, comes ‘in-between’ in the cultural encounter between Muslims and non-Muslims, an encounter that is partly one of conflict due to the ‘us’ and ‘them’ relationship between them.

Converts' defensive attitude

'Western' arguments against Islam find their root, to a great extent, in the historical periods of political conflict between Christianity and Islam, such as the Crusades of the Middle Ages and the European colonization of the Muslim World from the eighteenth century onwards. The arguments are put forward by researchers and authors of fiction as well as by the popular media, such as films, magazines, newspapers and television (Said 1978; Berg 1998).

In early 2002, a Danish journalist called me. She wanted me to comment on a series of articles about Danish converts she had published in a Danish journal. One of the questions she asked me was: why are Muslim converts so defensive in their argumentation? On reading the text, I saw that one of her informants had referred to how she always had to defend Islam against 'prejudices'. The informant states:

One is always in the line of fire. There are, unfortunately, Muslims who oppress women in the name of Islam. Honour killings and similar events are associated with everybody who practises the religion. This irritates me a lot. But it also irritates me to meet people who see my headscarf and think: she is one of the oppressed ladies. This, I am not! I can decide for myself (*Juhl* 2002) [translation mine].

In my discussions with converts I have observed a similar defensive attitude. Converts who are, to a great extent, products of their own society, feel they have to choose sides on every single issue. Many feel that they are carrying the burden not only of the traditional understanding of Islam but also of the political actions of all Muslims across the world. Khadija states:

I do not blame Christianity for what Hitler did, neither do I blame Norwegian Christians for what happened in Burundi and Rwanda. I simply see these happenings as political expressions in particular periods of time and particular social contexts. Why do they [the Norwegians] then blame me for everything Muslims have done or do. I have accepted the Islamic scriptures but I cannot always accept and defend Muslims' actions. I am not willing to carry the whole Muslim world on my shoulders. I am a Norwegian Muslim and cannot be blamed for anything other than what I, myself, have done wrong.

In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks on the United States, many converts felt that they were being indirectly implicated in the crime. Converts have told me how they felt that many intellectuals

and reporters blamed the Scandinavian Muslims for not taking an official stand against the attacks. Annika expressed her surprise when some academics asked her to contact a newspaper in order to write an article condemning the happenings. 'I was shocked,' she said, 'how could this person even believe that I could have supported such actions. Should I ask him officially to renounce the Protestants who throw stones at small Catholic girls in Ireland because he belongs to the Swedish Protestant Church?' I have heard similar things from many other converts and on this particular matter, the various Muslim directions seem to converge. As Muslim converts tend to be regarded as a homogeneous group, most of them have similar experiences in their dealings with non-Muslims. Therefore, Muslim converts adhering to all directions adopt a similarly defensive stance against the attitudes of majority society.

In general, converts feel that they are blamed for Muslims' political actions, as shown above. Moreover, women converts have to defend their wearing of headscarves and must constantly show that they are reasonable persons and not intellectually deviant, as often assumed. And, last but not least, converts are regarded to be representatives for all Muslims living in their own countries, including those who come from problematic situations of war and poverty. Many Muslim immigrants in Scandinavia are often poorly educated and bring with them traditional understandings of Islam. As these Muslims are, by and large, marginalized in Scandinavian society, their social actions result more from their social circumstances than their being Muslim.

Reality for Muslim converts in the Scandinavian countries is, as Khadija expresses, 'a continuous struggle'. However, after further reflection, she states that she has probably had a more exciting life than she would have had if she had been 'a general Norwegian'. According to her, the multicultural influences in her life widen both her intellectual and professional horizons. 'My professional work benefits from me having multiple perspectives and I am able to see one thing from many angles,' she says.

Converts as immigrants

In my investigation of Muslim converts in Scandinavia I often encountered the phrase: 'I am an immigrant in my own country'. This

statement must be understood in various ways. Firstly, it addresses the issue discussed above of having an outside perspective on one's own society. Things that had previously seemed obvious and natural as members of a nation state suddenly become less obvious and more relative. This new awareness of one's own socio-political context might create problems in the social relations with family and friends. Secondly, the statement indicates the converts' feeling of being treated as a 'second-class citizen' in their native country due to majority society's hostility towards Islam and Muslims. Thirdly, as a new Muslim tends to identify her/himself with the immigrant community, there arises a feeling of alienation from majority society. A Swedish convert who was describing a visit to the doctor's office let slip the phrase: 'I was sitting in this waiting room, me and another immigrant'. The informant did not actually realise she had classified herself as an immigrant, and her expression indicates how, on a subconscious level, she sees herself as 'non-Swedish'. A fourth aspect is how some new Muslims have expressed that many in majority society tend to exclude them from being part of their own society. A story told by many converts, particularly women wearing a headscarf, is how some people, in the bus or in shops, would speak to them in a very slow and clear voice assuming they are 'foreigners'. Although in this case the attitude has not been one of hostility, rather the persons have been sympathetic towards them, the converts' feeling of being excluded from their own society has been strong.

Many converts view this emerging relativity in their understanding of majority society as a feeling of 'homelessness'. 'I do not really feel at home in Sweden,' says Somaya, who converted to Islam 12 years ago. 'When I am here, I long to go to Egypt, my husband's home country, but when I am there [in Egypt] I long to come back to Sweden after a while. I do not really feel at home anywhere.' This feeling of homelessness is also linked to the issue of being treated as a 'second-class citizen'. She explains that she feels uncomfortable being looked upon as a 'traitor' to Swedish society, where Muslims are looked down upon. This idea of being a 'traitor' pertains mostly to women converts. Few men in my investigation have understood the hostility from their native society in terms of being a 'traitor'. In my discussions with female converts, I have found that the notion of being a 'traitor' is linked mainly to the wearing of the headscarf, as the headscarf has become the archetypal symbol of male suppression of women.

The headscarf

In my previous investigation into women in Islam (Roald 2001a), I discovered how the headscarf triggers negative feelings in the non-Muslim population. In my discussions with converts I have observed how they can hardly understand and even get puzzled by the negative reaction from majority society to the matter of the headscarf. In a group discussion with Scandinavian converts we discussed the claim made by British Muslims that the Western reaction to the headscarf is a reaction to the Christian concept of covering the head. In the discussion the converts studied the particular biblical verses dealing with female covering. In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 11, verses 3–12, it says:

But I wish you to understand that, while every man has Christ for his Head, woman's head is man, as Christ's Head is God.

A man who keeps his head covered when he prays or prophesies brings shame on his head; a woman, on the contrary, brings shame on her head if she prays or prophesies bare-headed; it is as bad as her head were shaved.

If a woman is not to wear a veil she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for her to be cropped and shaved, then she should wear a veil.

A man has no need to cover his head, because man is the image of God, and the mirror of his glory, whereas woman reflects the glory of man.

For man did not originally spring from woman, but woman for the sake of man; and therefore it is woman's duty to have a sign of authority on her head, out of regard for the angels.

And yet in Christ's fellowship woman is as essential to man as man to woman.

If woman was made out of man, it is through woman that man now comes to be; and God is the source of all.

The Scandinavian converts compared the biblical and the Koranic texts and stated that although the two religious scriptures both commanded the use of a female headgear the contexts in the two texts vary. The Scandinavian converts discussed how the Koran does not link the use of female covering to male superiority. These biblical verses, however, they interpreted in terms of a power relationship between male authority and female subservience, which culminates in the covering of the head. In their view, individuals from a Christian sphere link the Islamic phenomenon of female covering to male power in a pattern of 'transcultural interpretations'. The issue of

female covering in Christianity has been understood in terms of female submission to men, and, by looking at Christian feminist theology, it is obvious that the female struggle for empowerment in the Western world has partly been a struggle against such traditional interpretations of the biblical texts. The struggle for female priesthood that made its breakthrough in Scandinavia in the 1950s is one example of how, through a hermeneutical methodology, the understanding of a Christian concept can change. It is thus a possibility that the resistance towards the Islamic female dress in the Western context is a reflection of Christian women's struggle against male sovereignty in their own historical context.

A literal reading of the Biblical text seems to provide a link between female covering and male superiority. This is in contrast to how Muslim women perceive that there is no link between female covering and male power explicitly stated in the Koran. I attended a group discussion with some Swedish female converts where there was a debate on what the Koran says about female covering. The person who led the discussion, referred to four Koranic verses. The first talks about how men and women should lower their gaze and be mindful of their chastity. In the same verse, women are told to 'draw their coverings (*khimār*) over their bosoms' (Koran 24: 30–31). 'This verse', she stated, 'indicates a religious reason for covering, as it talks in terms of purity (*tazkiya*), a concept which means religious purity.'² She continues: 'The guarding of one's chastity does not simply have a social purpose, that one for instance gets a good reputation, but also has a religious purpose: God will reward you for this.' The second verse addresses older women and it says that they 'incur no sin if they discard their garments' (Koran 24: 60). The third verse addresses the Prophet's wives and tells them that if they speak to other men they should do so from behind a curtain (*hijāb*) (Koran 33: 53). This, the woman expressed, is 'only for the Prophet's wives, as they had such a special status within the Muslim Umma as transmitters of the Prophet's actions and sayings'. The fourth verse is, in her view, the only verse that gives a social explanation for female covering. This verse states that women 'should draw over themselves some of

² In the Koranic verse it is in the first part of the verse, which talks about men being mindful of their chastity, that the term *azka* (*tazkiya* in another form) is used, but the formulation directed at women has a similar wording.

their outer garments (*jilbab*). 'That' the Koran says, 'will be better, so that they will be recognised and not annoyed' (Koran 33: 59). The female convert explains that, at the time of the Prophet, some male hypocrites took the opportunity to harass Muslim women and, when they were reprimanded, they would excuse themselves, saying that they believed the women were slaves or non-Muslim women. In her view, the covering in this context is a protection, as it shows that the women are Muslims and thus chaste.³ In her explanation and references to the Koranic verses, there is no direct link between the wearing of the headscarf and women surrendering to male sovereignty.

In view of feminist theories there is a problem in the converts' reluctance to link female covering to male sovereignty; in feminist theory the need of covering is in itself a result of male sovereignty and thus the underlying assumption of the Koranic command of covering is a patriarchal need of controlling female sexuality. The converts in this study, on the other hand, do not accept to be analysed in view of feminist theories. When I confronted them with the feminist view of covering during the discussion they claim that covering is a command from God to protect women not only from men, but rather from themselves. 'The headscarf makes me behave decently', one of the converts claimed, 'it creates boundaries for myself and makes me aware of God in my daily life'.

In their encounter with majority society, many converts feel that they are underestimated mentally and intellectually because of their headscarf. Khadija, who became Muslim 17 years ago, says she feels she has to prove herself intellectually in her encounters with non-Muslims. 'I often give talks and lectures about Islam to non-Muslims', she says, 'and every time I am faced with the question of the headscarf.' Khadija explains how she has experienced an aggressive attitude from a public that feels Muslim women are oppressed because of the headscarf. 'If it is true that we are oppressed, why are they aggressive. Shouldn't they rather show me sympathy if I am the weak person they believe I am,' she states ironically. In her view, the headscarf has become the visible symbol of Islam in general. She believes that, as non-Muslims' feelings of hostility towards Islam and Muslims are irrational, they channel all their bad feeling through

³ This explanation to the verse is also given by the Bernström, who refers to classical commentators to the Koran (Bernström 1998: 618).

this one visible symbol of divergence from their world view, namely the headscarf.

Women from Muslim backgrounds, who have turned their backs on the Islamic creed, also tend to regard the headscarf as the main symbol of oppression of women. In Scandinavia, there are organisations, consisting particularly of Iranian women, which talk against Islam, 'Islamic fundamentalism' and the headscarf. Iranian women have engaged themselves with these issues because most Iranians in Scandinavia actually fled from the Islamic regime in Iran. They have thus taken a stand against either Islam or against the specific understandings of Islam promoted by the Iranian regime. One woman who actively opposes Islamic ideas, particularly the use of the Islamic headgear, is Iranian-born Asrin Mohamadi, who came to Sweden as a 15-year-old girl. Mohamadi has been giving speeches against Islam and the headscarf all over Sweden and she often appears in television debates as well as being cited in newspapers. When Mohamadi gave a speech in the Academic Union at Lund University on the 1st of November 2000, she was reported to the police for 'agitating a group of people' (*Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 9/11–2000). It is of interest to note that the driving force behind this report to the police was a group of converts from the Muslim Women's Organisation in Lund. Halima Jönsson, a Swedish convert in the organisation, claims that she feels Mohamadi helps stir up 'a massive hate against those who wear the headscarf' (*Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 9/11–2000). According to *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, Mohamadi has expressed that 'Islam is a barbaric religion' (*Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 9/11–2000). Jönsson argues that there would have been a massive reaction if Mohamadi had made similar comments about other world religions or other groups of people. As a convert, Jönsson knows the cultural codes and conventions of Swedish society intimately, a knowledge she uses to draw her conclusion that verbal attacks on Islam and Muslims tend to be accepted more than criticisms of other groups.

The hostility towards headscarves in Scandinavian society is shown in various ways, but it is particularly evident in employment situations. A Swedish convert, who is trained as an assistant nurse, recalls one time she responded to a job advertisement. She was well received on the phone when the employer heard her 'perfect' Swedish, but when she came down for an interview she was told that she would only get the job if she removed her headscarf. This story is similar to many told by converts. However, it is not only converts with

headscarves who have difficulties finding employment, as covered women in general have a hard time finding jobs in Scandinavia. Many empirical investigations indicate that Swedish companies rarely accept these women in their work-force.⁴

Much of the self-perception of female Muslim converts is linked to the headscarf. Amal tells how she often gets a shock when she catches her reflection in the windowpane. 'The person I see in the mirror can't be me. I feel different from how I look', she says, 'and I cannot believe that it is me there in a long garment and a headscarf.' She continues: 'Inside, I feel so normal; just like everyone else. The reaction from people around me, however, makes me aware of my "otherness".' Psychologically speaking, Scandinavian converts' self-image is defined according to 'the Scandinavian standard'. Due to the fact that the Islamic way of dressing is different from this standard, converts are constantly reminded of their 'otherness'.

Amal further expresses that she always feels embarrassed if she has to meet people to whom she has only formerly spoken on the telephone. 'They hear my voice', she expresses, 'and they think that I am a 'normal' Swedish woman; then, when we meet, I get embarrassed by their embarrassment'. She also tells how she sometimes just tells people on the telephone that she is a Muslim.

I have had a similar experience with another convert. I was once going to an academic conference with a new Muslim from Scandinavia. We were going to have discussions with some of the other participants before the conference and my companion insisted that we phoned them first to say that we were Muslims. I argued that we should not announce our religious affiliation when Christians, Jews, or Buddhists would never think to do such a thing. I see this as an example of how negative attitudes towards women wearing the Islamic headgear can influence the psychology of new Muslims in their encounters with non-Muslims. If they are not first identified by a foreign accent, people are not prepared to meet a lady with a headscarf.

Many of my informants said that they are often treated in a disgraceful way because of their headscarves. One should draw attention to an investigation made by two Danish students at the Department of Education in Copenhagen in 2000. The two students dressed

⁴ An investigation done by Malmö University in 1999 showed that 19 of 20 companies in Malmö did not accept women in headscarves.

themselves in a black *chador* and covered their faces, leaving only the eyes uncovered. They then went to the inner city, to shopping centres and to some of the suburbs of Copenhagen. They were met by overwhelmingly negative attitudes: people scoffed and jeered them in all possible ways. They were taunted by such expressions as 'black devils', 'be careful, there are two terrorists', and 'one is tempted to pull their headscarves off'. It is interesting that elderly persons were the most hostile. One elderly lady even stopped, looked at them in a hostile way and stuck out her tongue (Berlingske Tidende 21/3–2000; Politiken 22/3–2000).

This extreme reaction might be explained by the fact that they were wearing black garments, which in the popular view connotes either the Iranian revolution or the particular Saudi view of women. In the Scandinavian context, the extreme reaction can also be explained by the fact that the covering of the face is regarded as the strongest symbol of male suppression of women. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that this investigation has been conducted in Denmark, where the Danish media tend to take a more hostile attitude than the Swedish and Norwegian media towards immigrants in general and Muslims in particular.

The interviews I have conducted with converts in the various Scandinavian countries indicate that hostile reactions towards women in headscarves is more common in Denmark and, to a certain extent, Finland, than in Sweden and Norway. For the sake of argument, I will put Sweden and Denmark on opposites ends of the scale; Sweden being the Scandinavian country with the least amount of openly expressed hostility towards Muslims, Denmark being the one with the most. As indicated above (Chapter Two), by following debates in the two countries' newspapers and television programmes, I have observed how the Swedish media is much more careful than the Danish media in expressing negative attitudes. In my discussions and interviews with converts from the two countries, I have discovered how Danish converts' accounts of life as a Muslim in Denmark indicate harsher attitudes from majority society than the accounts of Swedish converts.

Muna, who converted to Islam 10 years ago, tells how she often receives negative comments while walking with a headscarf in the streets of Copenhagen. Although many Swedish converts have similar stories, their stories are told with less intensity. By comparison with

Danish converts, I find that the Swedes refer less frequently to negative experiences with majority society. However, a similarity between the two countries is a general hostility from the elderly population.

The difference in approach in the Swedish context can be illustrated by the investigation made by Johnsdotter. In the late 1990s she put on a long garment and a headscarf and went to a big shopping centre outside Malmö in Sweden. Her experience was that people avoided looking at her. She related this to how handicapped persons are often ignored because they represent something strange or something different from the Swedish standard.⁵

The two social experiments are somewhat different as the students in Denmark had face veils, whereas Johnsdotter wore a headscarf only. Despite this, it is possible to sense a difference in approach between the two countries, which coincides with the difference in the media's approach in the two countries. One interpretation for the difference is that the media sets the standard for people's behaviour towards Muslims (as discussed in Chapter One and Two). The hostile attitude from the elderly people might be explained by the fact that immigrants are often described as being dependent on social allowances, whilst retirement pensions are often regarded as insufficient. Elderly people thus feel that what they have worked for all their lives is given to immigrants, who have not contributed to the society in the same way. The more general hostile attitude might be explained by the news coverage from Muslim countries, which emphasizes violent actions, conflict or oppression of women. Moreover, there is a double standard in the reportage of domestic news, where explicit mention is made of the ethnicity of immigrants who commit crimes, whereas Scandinavians who commit similar crimes are not referred to by their nationality or ethnic group. News coverage is thus, in itself, a source for hostile attitudes towards immigrants in general and Muslims in particular, as *the* immigrants group, as previously discussed.

In contrast to majority society's negative view on the headscarf, some converts say that it can have a positive effect, as people in shops, post offices, etc, recognise them and treat them nicely.

⁵ Personal communication with Sarah Johnsdotter, 1997.

Victimization

The issue of the headscarf is linked to a victimization of Muslim women in Scandinavian society. Some converts tell of how they have encountered a general tendency to victimize Muslim women and even convert women in Scandinavian society. 'We are not allowed to speak for ourselves in the official space,' Aisha expresses. 'Everybody else is talking on our behalf, as if we are not able to talk for ourselves.' She refers to what happened in the case of the Social Democrat MP who reported the main mosque in Stockholm to the police because she claimed it discriminated against women in its insistence that they are not allowed to pray in the main prayer hall. Aisha explains that, even though Muslim women themselves stood up to this report, the media did not pay much attention to them.

I was invited to participate in a radio debate on this issue, together with a Christian and a Jewish lady. During the debate, I repeatedly stated that it is not *forbidden* for Muslim women to enter the main prayer hall, rather *men* are denied entrance into the women's prayer place if this is a closed room. Moreover, I maintained that the total separation of the sexes in prayer is not stated in any of the Islamic sources, and, although traditionally speaking men and women have been segregated in mosques, there are no religiously based obstacles for men and women to pray in the same room. It was interesting to observe how the presenter of the programme did not take this statement into consideration, rather he continued to speak of the matter as an issue of Islamic dogma that demands strict sex segregation during prayer.

In a discussion group, other new Muslims referred to a similar example; a Swedish television debate about Muslim women's veiling (*Mosaik* 7/11–2000). In this programme, Iranian activist women, who were strong opponents of the headscarf, debated against converts and second-generation Muslim men and women. The main argument was that the headscarf is the symbol of female oppression and that women wearing headscarves are ipso facto oppressed. One of the women wearing a headscarf explained that it is for the one who wears the headscarf to know whether she is oppressed or not. It was noted, however, that, although this point was stated twice during the programme, neither the Iranian opponents nor the presenters of the programme paid any particular attention to it, thereby denying Muslim women the opportunity to speak for themselves. One convert

stated that this is a typical occurrence, as Muslim women are not taken seriously. 'Muslim women are always talked *about*,' she says, 'they are never allowed to define themselves.'

'Stigmatization'

Ervin Goffman, a social psychologist, discusses the term 'stigmatization' and identifies three different types of stigma: (1) abominations of the body, (2) mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, etc, (3) tribal stigma of race, nation, religion, etc. (Goffman 2001: 14). According to Goffman, all three instances of stigma witness to the same tendencies:

An individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him, breaking the claim that his other attributes have on us (Goffman 2001: 15).

Goffman further claims that 'by definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human'. In his view a stigma theory is constructed as 'an ideology to explain someone's inferiority and account for the danger s/he represents' (Goffman 2001: 15).

It seems that Muslim converts become part of such stigmatization, although they feel 'normal' and part of majority society. Some converts tell how they get embarrassed by being stared at and singled out in the streets or shopping centres; some even prefer to live in 'immigrant suburbs', where most inhabitants are Muslims. Others say they are generally not aware of being the focus of people's attention. Bettina was once walking with a teacher from her children's school when the teacher exclaimed: 'How can you stand to be the stared at in such a way'. 'Up to that point,' Bettina expresses, 'I did not even realise that people were staring'. Amal had a similar experience when she was out walking with a female colleague. Her colleague felt embarrassed by people staring and she made Amal aware of it. 'Only then,' she says, 'did I suddenly realise that people really looked at me. Had it not been for the realisation that I was nearly forty years old and not really attractive in my old lady's headscarf, I might have thought they found me appealing.' Amal's remark, although sarcastically expressed, points at a similar feeling of normality 'inside oneself' but sensing stigma 'outside' from other people.

This points to another aspect of stigmatization: new Muslims tend

to use it as a paradigm for interpreting social encounters. Amal tells how she used to go shopping with another Swedish convert. As people stared, the other convert commented: 'Look how they stare! It is because of our headscarves.' In Amal's view, however, it was due more to the fact that her friend was speaking very loudly about her personal matters. Such behaviour is not particularly common and Amal believes that people reacted to this behaviour rather than to their headscarves. Similarly, many converts might sometimes use the headscarf as an excuse for not getting a job when the truth might be that they were not up to the required standard. The headscarf creates a pattern of interpretation whenever one is treated badly in the official space, such as in the shops, or on the bus. But the reasons might not be overtly prejudicial; one's own behaviour or other persons' personal behaviour might cause others to react in a certain way.

The stigmatization of Muslims in Western society is linked largely to the marginalization of the Muslim community in Western countries. By contrast, I want to relate an experience I had while working in a small Welsh community in the mid 1990s. I was invited to give lectures and stay as a guest researcher at St. David's College in Lampeter at the University of Wales for six months, from autumn 1995 and spring 1996. The Muslim community at that time consisted of the owner of one of the big restaurants, undergraduates, MPhil and PhD students, university lecturers, and friends of students and lecturers. In this community, thus, Muslims were far from marginalized, in fact the Muslim community as a whole had a high-status position. As I went shopping, spoke with neighbours and interacted with the wider community, I discovered that people's behaviour towards me was totally different from the behaviour I have met with in other places in Europe.

Gender equality

The issue of the headscarf is closely linked to that of gender equality, with regard to which many female Muslim converts have expressed a feeling of being regarded as traitors. Somaya expresses that, although she felt that ethnic Swedes regard her as a traitor to the national cause, it is the matter of *jämställdheten* (gender equality or equal gender opportunities) that confronts her more often. This can be explained by the way *jämställdheten* in Sweden has become a national cause (see

Chapter One), and the notion of Islam as a religion hostile towards women might trigger negative feelings among non-Muslim Swedes.

In non-Muslim countries, the reaction and argumentation against Islam and Muslims vary according to the ideology of the countries. The emphasis on gender equality in the Scandinavian countries has formed an opposition to Islam and Muslims, because of the anti-theoretical 'Islamic gender system'. In the Scandinavian countries, many non-Muslims tend to regard the Islamic gender system as static. Whereas there is an awareness that gender relations in modern Judaism and Christianity are prone to change, Islam is regarded as having an unchangeable world view. As women in the Nordic countries, and particularly in Scandinavia, have struggled to obtain their equal rights and equal opportunities in wider society, many, particularly feminists, would regard a conversion to Islam as taking several steps backwards in the gender struggle and a surrender to patriarchal structures.

The idea of Islam as a religion hostile to women, promoting male interest on a large scale is a common notion in Scandinavian discourse. Many immigrants in Scandinavian countries originate from Muslim societies with strong patriarchal structures. They thus often bring with them a certain understanding of the Islamic social pattern built on these patriarchal structures. Converts tend to approach Muslim social patterns differently. As I will discuss in the next chapter, some convert women do adopt the cultural patterns and patriarchal structures promoted by their husbands and become 'cultural Muslims', but others reject such social patterns and start to investigate the Islamic sources independently of their husbands.

Many new Muslims have an awareness of women's rights inherent in their primary and secondary socialization. In discussions with converts, I have discovered how many of the ideas of female empowerment prevalent in majority society are expressed both in new Muslim gatherings and gatherings of new Muslims and immigrant women. These ideas, however, are not expressed in the terms of feminist thought. In a religious meeting lead by Amal, the issue of gender relations was discussed. Both female converts married to Muslim men and immigrant women attended. The women took as their starting point their own experiences of gender relations. A new Muslim married to a Turkish man asked what Islam says about domestic work. She complained that her husband never does any housework, even though they are both working outside the home,

and, since she takes part in the breadwinning process, which she does not see as being her *main* responsibility according to Islam, she wanted her husband to take some domestic responsibilities. In the following discussion, the new Muslims emphasized that sharing responsibility in all fields is 'the Islamic view'. It is interesting to note how this Scandinavian cultural notion has penetrated the understanding of the Islamic message in the Scandinavian context.

Various patterns emerge in cases where Scandinavian men marry born-Muslim women from Muslim countries. A Palestinian woman married to a Scandinavian convert expressed her gratitude for being married to a Scandinavian 'who has been taught gender equality from when he was little'. However, although I have discovered that many male converts tend to follow the pattern of equal social roles in their marriages, I have also observed how some are deeply rooted in a traditional understanding of gender roles. For instance, at a festival where Muslim women were taking care of the preparation and serving of food, the convert men did not offer their help whereas some of the first-generation Muslim men did.

Intellectual reflectivity

The headscarf is the most visible symbol of religious affiliation and it directs attention to Muslim female converts; by comparison few male converts are observed. In my discussions with male converts I have observed that their main problem with majority society is the socio-political and intellectual discrepancy between their way of thinking and the way of majority society. Although the same can be said for female converts, it seems that this has been eclipsed by discussion of the headscarf and the strong reactions to this visible symbol of Islam. Jesber expressed:

When I read newspapers and have discussions with my family and non-Muslim friends I sometimes feel as if I am on an alien planet. Although our ways of thinking are so similar, we are so far away from each other at the same time. I appreciate Danish society and its values, such as democratic ideas, equal opportunities for everybody, rich as well as poor, and human consideration for the weak in society, as these are also my values as a Muslim. But, as I have one foot in Danish society and one foot in 'Islam', I am able to look at the Danish society from an outside perspective and I realise that their [the Danes'] values are only meant to be for certain people, i.e. the Danes.

Jesber points to how the new Muslim gets 'the outsider's view' as s/he becomes aware of social structures in her/his own society that had hitherto been invisible and impalpable as an insider. The new Muslim is able to see 'obvious social truths' or social structures as they are, namely to a great extent social constructions in a certain social context.

Many new Muslims have expressed similar experiences, where they acquire a reflective approach to their own internalized world view. This is probably the first stage of reflectivity reached by Muslims at an early stage of their conversion; the shift in world view causes a change in the structure of thinking. The second stage of reflectivity, which often comes at a much later stage of conversion, is when the new Muslim starts to see her/himself in a reflective way. Above I showed how Amal, while catching a glimpse of herself in the shop window, was reminded of the discrepancy between her internal understanding of herself and her appearance, which differs from 'the standard' in Sweden. She suddenly came to see herself as others see her, thus taking a reflective attitude to herself.

Ouis expressed in an interview with her that the new Muslims' reflective perception of themselves often leads to an ironic standpoint at a later stage in the conversion process. She has observed how new Muslims joke and make ironic remarks about themselves, their community and also about majority society, in a different way to that which she has witnessed in other social and cultural contexts. She compares new Muslims' ironic attitude towards themselves and their community with that of the Jews in Jewish folklore tradition, who had a similar attitude towards themselves. She concludes that people who do not fit into majority society often tend to take an ironic view of themselves.⁶

I have observed how the new Muslims' change of world view tends to make some of them reflect on their own society as well as the Muslim community. The Swedish researcher on Islam, Mattias Gardell, has put forward a claim that the dialogue of religion might lead to a relativization of one's own religious faith or world view. This, he believes, is due to the fact that many religious representatives observe that other religions' claim for *one truth* is just as strong as their own (Gardell 1996). I discussed this aspect of relativization

⁶ Personal communication with Pernilla Ouis, 1999.

with religious representatives in a study group on the dialogue of religion in the south of Sweden. Amal, who has been active in various dialogue discussions stated that, as a convert to Islam, she had had to change her social paradigm as well as her religious direction in a short time span. 'A convert to Islam has to be reflective about her own society as she embraces the new world view', she says. 'The relativization of religious truths cannot make me less religious as I am already aware of the relativity of all world views as well as all religious truths.' I have above indicated Amal's reflective view of herself as a Muslim woman with a headscarf in non-Muslim majority society. Her reflective view of herself as well as her faith might, on the one hand, be a result of the conversion process; new Muslims tend to have experienced 'the truth' of various world views and religions. On the other hand, it might be a matter of education; in society in general, it is mostly highly educated individuals who acquire a high level of self-perception and self-reflectivity. Moreover, the new Muslims' reflective attitude towards their society, their community, as well as towards themselves seems to be linked to their 'otherness' and to the feeling of not fitting into their own socio-cultural context.

Reflections

New Muslims tend to see themselves as 'immigrants' in their country of origin. This, they claim, is due to the fact that majority society changes its attitude towards them. New Muslims feel that they have to defend Islam and Muslims and this defensive attitude might sometimes turn into an apologetic discourse. As Muslim converts feel marginalized in their own society, the feelings towards majority society might turn into hostility. One example of such hostility is the *salafis'* view of Scandinavian society in terms of *kāfir* society. In the present study, I found that Denmark harbours Muslim groups most hostile towards society. Here, the great adherence to the political Islamic party *hizb al-tahrīr*, which boycotts elections, etc., is an example of such hostility. In Sweden and Norway there is a less pronounced hostility, due probably to the fact that Muslims in these societies are less marginalized.

The headscarf has come to the forefront in the debate on Islam. The headscarf is seen as the symbol *per excellence* of Muslim men's oppression of women. Moreover, the headscarf has also become the

indication of the victimization of Muslim women. Although the Scandinavian countries have not prohibited the Muslim headscarf in the official space, as have, for instance, France and parts of Germany, new Muslims regard the headscarf as an obstacle in the way of their getting jobs or higher positions in society.

The change of perspective, which is obvious in the new Muslims' cross-cultural experiences, causes new Muslims to take up a reflective position on their own society and themselves; they feel part of the social context but at the same time different from it. This 'otherness' allows for one to look at oneself and one's social context from an outside position. The gliding between various identities, where new Muslims see themselves as both 'us' and 'them' at different times indicates how the cross-cultural experience enlarges the cultural horizon. It might be a positive experience to be able to look at oneself and one's society from an outside perspective, as it gives the individual manifold perspectives in their view of the world. I have observed how many new Muslims seem to have become aware of this beneficial position at a later stage of the conversion process. In contrast, at an early stage of the conversion process many new Muslims tend to be more 'royal than the king', rejecting 'old values' and adopting 'new Islamic values' *in toto*.

As I have dealt with the Muslim converts' encounter with Scandinavian majority society in this chapter, I will now turn to look at their encounter with the Muslim community. How do born Muslims and first- and second-generation immigrants regard new Muslims? What are the new Muslims' attitudes towards the Muslim community?

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEW MUSLIMS' ENCOUNTER WITH BORN MUSLIMS

To be honest, I remain in Islam very much in spite of — and not because of — my experience with Muslims.

(Michael Young 2001)

The Scandinavian converts' encounter with the Muslim world and Muslim communities in Scandinavia is one of varied success and pain, depending, as Olav expressed, 'on which society or which Muslims you deal with.' New Muslims give various versions of this encounter and, as with most social interactions, the new Muslims' encounter with Muslims seems to depend on the social actors on both sides in the cultural encounter. Below I will discuss various expressions of new Muslims' encounter with born Muslims. These experiences differ as new Muslims do not have homogeneous educational statuses or personal experiences. Their level of participation in Muslim communities and in majority society also differs. Their affiliation to varying Islamic directions further influences new Muslims' attitudes towards born Muslims. My main focus in this chapter is to stress the aspect of 'process' that I found is a frequent factor in Muslim converts' experience with born Muslims.

Born Muslims' acceptance of new Muslims

New Muslims witness various patterns of acceptance by Muslims in general. Some feel themselves abandoned in an alien world, whereas others speak of entering a friendly and compassionate environment. Of the 116 respondents, the majority were ambiguous saying that they felt both accepted and ignored/rejected by the 'born Muslims'. 21 respondents said they felt accepted, 20 felt that they were not accepted into the Muslim community, whereas the rest expressed some kind of uncertainty. These figures must be regarded in view of the fact that new Muslims tend to change their attitudes towards born Muslims as time goes by. In my interviews and discussions with

new Muslims, I have discovered that the first encounters with the Muslim community are usually perceived in more positive terms than those at a later stage of their journey of faith. Many respondents spoke in terms of change. This became apparent during the interviews as I realised how new Muslims experience their immersion into the new socio-cultural context as an ongoing process.

It is important to compare the above figures with those of a related issue: when asked how they felt that they were *received* by the Muslim community, the great majority of new Muslims expressed that they were well received; only 5 respondents claimed to have been poorly received. The discrepancy between the two figures indicates a tension between *reception* and *acceptance*. In my interviews, I discovered many new Muslims felt that born Muslims greeted them in an exuberant manner; they frequently invited the new Muslims to their homes, gave them presents, etc. At first, new Muslims perceived all this as a sign of being accepted within the group. However, as time goes by they become aware that a good reception does not necessarily mean that one is wholly accepted into the new faith community.

Aisha, who belongs to the 'rational' trend, states that there is no homogeneous Muslim approach to Scandinavian new Muslims. 'Some,' she says, 'accept you as an equal whereas others think you are "off", [i.e.] a convert can never be a "true Muslim"'. She believes, however, that most 'born Muslims' oscillate between 'liking' and 'disliking' and it differs from person to person how one accepts and receives a new Muslim.

One reason for asking the above questions is that non-Muslims raise these issues of reception and acceptance. My informants said they sense a certain assumption on the part of non-Muslims that new Muslims will not in any way be accepted or well received by the Muslim community. By contrast, most informants have a positive story to tell. 'I am treated like a queen' is a common expression. Many new Muslims tell how they often are met with the phrase: 'You are much better than us [the born Muslim], because you have chosen your religion yourself.' This first encounter is thus often one of pride and many of the new Muslims feel well *received* by his/her new faith community.

Many new Muslims also tell of an increased self-confidence when they turn to Islam. On the one hand, they explain this to be a result of belief; awareness of God's encompassing mercy and the general spiritual relationship with God creates a strong self-confidence. On

the other hand, some regard this increased self-confidence as a result of social acceptance and reception within the group. On an etiological level it might, however, be easy to explain the strengthening of self-confidence in terms of a general psychological development of the individual.

The sympathetic attitude of many born Muslims, particularly in their first meeting with new converts, has to be regarded in light of the general hostile perception of Islam and Muslims in non-Muslim society, and in consideration of the power relationship between Islam and the West. Since Islam and Muslims are depicted in negative terms by the West, it might strengthen the self esteem of Muslims when Islam becomes a choice for someone from within the Western ideological sphere.

Muslim communities versus Muslim societies

In general I have observed that when Muslim converts talk about born Muslims they tend not to distinguish between Muslims from the Muslim world and Muslims from Muslim communities in Western societies. This might be one reason why converted Muslims describe their cultural encounter with born Muslims in such diverse ways. When some new Muslims talk generally about 'born Muslims' they hardly make a distinction between those who form an integrated part of Muslim society and those who are marginalized in Western society.

Most Scandinavian converts' experiences with born Muslims are based on the Muslim diaspora, which is marked by segregation and alienation from majority society, and comprises many lower educated Muslims. The policy of the Scandinavian states towards immigrants in general and Muslims in particular has also, as shown above, been one of paternalistic 'caretaking'; the material needs of immigrants are 'taken care of', but full integration into major society has been difficult. Moreover, the segregation in Scandinavian society that keeps 'ethnic' Scandinavians from interacting with ethnic communities, and the marginalization of Muslim communities in Scandinavian society, have created a situation where immigrant Muslims rarely define themselves, rather they are defined by majority society. Bearing this marginalization in mind, the cultural encounter between Muslim converts and the Muslim community is likely to be one where class and social and educational status play a vital role in the formation

of mutual perceptions. The new Muslims' impressions of Muslims must be understood in terms of this specific immigrant situation, for 'the Muslim' *per se* becomes, for new Muslims, a Muslim immigrant rather than a successful Muslim in Muslim society.

The Muslim social system

In the questionnaire, many of the respondents spoke of the Muslim social system as one of the reasons for their conversion. Some spoke in terms of the contrast between the Scandinavian social system, where social relations tend to be dissolving, and the 'Muslim system', which secures each individual's well being. Some new Muslims spoke about their personal experience and how they were more or less incorporated into a Muslim family at the time of their conversion. A female convert who converted in the early 1980s talks about the Arabic-speaking family who practically adopted her at the time of her conversion. When she converted to Islam she lived alone in a flat. One day she was out walking when a young immigrant woman with a small child in a stroller stopped her. She got to know the lady, who was divorced, and soon visited the family, which consisted of her mother, her father, her two brothers, four sisters, her son and herself. The new Muslim was immediately accepted by them. During her first fasting month as a Muslim, she was eating at the family's house every day and was even persuaded to sleep there. The family was big, consisting of nine more or less grown-up members and a baby. The flat was small, with two sleeping rooms, a living room and a kitchen. Despite the small flat, she always felt welcome. In the first two years after her conversion, she went in and out of the house like a family member. 'I loved this family', she says, 'they really took me to their heart. A family in this country would never have done such a thing.' Her great attachment to this family must be seen in view of the fact that she felt very alone at the time of her conversion. She had turned her back on old friends, they did not accept her choice and she was afraid of remaining in old reaction patterns if she continued to have contact with them.

The convert relates the difference between the 'Swedish' and the 'Muslim' way to the issue of 'individualism' versus 'collectivism'. She states that 'as Sweden is an individualistic society, everybody cares for themselves and their immediate family.' In contrast, she sees the

Muslim' way as caring more for the group. She describes a family event that occurred during one of her visits. One of the girls, who at that time was eighteen years old, went into the sleeping room and remained there for a while. After about ten minutes the mother started to call her and ordered her to join the group in the living room. The new Muslim says she reacted negatively to this happening at that time and now reacts even more to such situations. 'I am used to being able to retreat to be on my own when I want to. I would never have stood for someone denying me this right,' she exclaimed. Her experience illustrates the process many new Muslims go through. At the beginning of the conversion process, the Muslim social setting, with its close familial relations, is regarded in a favourable light. However, as times go by, the new Muslims tend to appreciate the social system into which they were socialized, and, to a certain extent, reject the Muslim social system. In a way one can say that one's own background claims its 'right' over the individual.

This new Muslim's change of perspective, however, is not the experience of all new Muslims with whom I have had discussions. A small minority of converts relate the opposite experience, where the 'Muslim social system' is approved, even after many years of being a new Muslim. In the investigation, I found that it was mostly new Muslims within the 'rational' trend and those with higher education who were most critical of Muslim communities. This might be a result of the fact that many practising Muslims in Scandinavia are poorly educated, and the criticism might be linked to social issues such as class and education. Moreover, as many born Muslims in Scandinavia often have little knowledge of the Islamic sources, new Muslims soon acquire more Islamic knowledge than many born Muslims.

Culturalization of new Muslims

According to this study's findings, many new Muslims turn to Islam as a result of an encounter with Muslims. This seems to create a tendency among new Muslims to become culturalized into an existing Muslim cultural environment. Thus, becoming Muslim can mean becoming a Turk, an Arab, a Pakistani, etc. Suddenly one starts to eat particular food, adhere to particular cultural assumptions, follow a particular cultural praxis, etc. This particularization might continue

or it might metamorphose into a more universal attitude of Muslim belonging that attempts to distinguish between 'Islam and cultural practices'. Aisha explains:

When I first embraced Islam I thought I had to be an Arab, I had to eat couscous and so on. Then, after a while, I turned in the opposite direction: 'I *have to* eat [Swedish] meatballs.' At the end of the day, one ends up somewhere in between. Suddenly I realised that I can be who I am even though I am a Muslim. I use to say that God has created every human being and He has created me as I am. That means people like me can be Muslim and I do not have to change my personality. After a while a Swedish Muslim can distinguish between what is cultural practice and what is 'Islam'. We can understand what parts of the Arab or Pakistani culture we have to adapt to and what to reject.

A Danish convert underwent a similar realisation and, during a lecture she gave in the spring of 2002, she expressed:

I always wanted to be Danish. I often heard from the born Muslims that to be a 'real' Muslim one has to be an Arab, or a Pakistani, or a Turk. However, I always felt that I am Danish.

Many new Muslims enter the Islamic fold with little knowledge of what the Islamic sources say. By contrast, some have journeyed long to enter into the fold of Islam. They have read the Koran and often some books about Islam. For some, the process has taken many years. Others, however, have testified to how their first steps towards becoming a Muslim were spontaneous ones taken after discussions with Muslims or after having read some books in Scandinavian or English. It is particularly in this latter group that one finds new Muslims who become cultural Muslims. With the benefit of hindsight, many new Muslims look at their first period as Muslims in amusing terms. 'I just became totally fanatical', Kari stated. 'We [the new Muslims] threw out the television set and we started to talk about wearing face veils. When I look back on it I can hardly believe it was me.' The weekly gatherings in Norway in the early 1980s consisted mainly of new Muslims, some of them unmarried at the time. One of the participants in these gatherings tells how, during this period, many of the new Muslims started to direct themselves towards the Asian community and particularly the ideology of the Tabligh-i-Jama'at. Their food became mainly Asian, and their perception of Islamic gender relations became modelled in a Tabligh

fashion, as found in the books they were reading. All in all, Islam tended to be viewed in terms of Asian particularism.

Similarly, women who married a Muslim or had a boyfriend at the time of conversion and who embraced Islam after discussions with their husbands/boyfriends tend to culturalize themselves into the cultural pattern of their partners. Lise tells how, when she married her Moroccan boyfriend, she became a Muslim only weeks after the marriage. Soon she found herself wearing Moroccan clothes, making only Tajjins (traditional Moroccan food cooked in shallow earthen pots), having mainly Moroccan women or female converts married to other Moroccans as friends. She even started to pick up words from the Moroccan dialect of the Arabic language. However, although she is still partly within this Moroccan framework, she expresses that after 15 years of being a Muslim she tends now to be more distanced towards the Moroccan cultural framework looking rather towards the Islamic sources for Islamic guidance.

Muna, who is married to a Pakistani man, speaks of her development from a cultural Muslim back to her old 'Danishness', now calling herself a Danish Muslim. Muna tells how she started to wear *sharwāl* and *qamīs*, the traditional Pakistani dress, when she converted in the mid 1980s. 'For me, this *was* Islam at that time,' she says. 'My husband used to bring me the Pakistani clothes. However, although he never told me to wear them, it was my own feeling that I was more Islamic in these clothes. I even used to wear them at work,' she says with a smile. For the last few years Muna has worn trousers, a long shirt and a scarf that covers the hair and neck. 'This is how I dress today,' she says, 'I am a *Danish* Muslim and not a *Pakistani* Muslim.'

Many of the new Muslims in this study mentioned the phenomenon of changing their name. As one turns Muslim, one of the first issues raised by born Muslims is what 'Islamic' name the new Muslim would like to have. The idea is that conversion to Islam changes the whole direction of one's life. Most new Muslims speak of how born Muslims tell them that their conversion heralds a new life, which they begin with a pure and blank slate. An Islamic name is thus a symbol for this new life. Most new Muslims try to find names from the Koran, or name themselves after important Islamic personalities, such as the Prophet, the Caliphs or important Companions of the Prophet. Some change their names officially, whereas others

use their 'Islamic' name only in Muslim gatherings. However, not every new Muslim agrees to change his/her name. Michael Young, a British convert, has expressed his experience with the Muslim community in the article 'Frustration of a convert' in the British Muslim magazine *Q-News*. He says:

Another gripe I have is the ignorance of many born Muslims about what they believe to be the necessity for a convert to adopt a so-called Muslim name. When I took my Shahada (profession of Muslim faith), I was asked not whether I wished to choose a 'Muslim name' but what name I wished to adopt. Not knowing any better at the time, I did reluctantly choose a new name, and I used it briefly in Muslim circles. However, I did not change any of my official documents. Only later did I discover that there is, in principle, no requirement whatsoever to change one's name (Young 2001: 31).

Most new Muslims, like Muna, change their views on Islam and Muslim cultural traits. Muna explains her culturalization as a result of 'ignorance of Islam'. She expresses:

When I became a Muslim I did not know anything about Islam. It was my husband who taught me everything. The ideas he transmitted reflected of course the Pakistani traditional understanding of Islam, as he did not have much knowledge himself. So as I embraced Islam I thought that everything Pakistani made me more Islamic. It was not until I started to read books about Islam that I understood Islam in universal terms and came to regard myself as a Danish Muslim.

During discussions at a summer camp for women, Aisha expressed that new Muslims tend to go through stages of development in their relation to the Islamic message. The audience grasped this idea immediately and the expression 'it was when I was at this or that stage' has become part of the Swedish convert discourse ever since.

Most new Muslims who remain in a Muslim 'cultural' sphere are from the exclusionist groups who aim to separate themselves from majority society as well as from many other Muslims outside their group. This demarcation is most obvious in the *salafī* trend, in which the male members frequently have quite long beards and use traditional Arabic clothes, such as *jilbāb* (an ankle-length shirt) and a skullcap, and the women frequently wear either a long headscarf or face veil. Even in the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* and adherents to Sufism some male members use traditional Arabic clothes, but to a lesser extent than in the *salafī* movements.

Language

Many new Muslims said that they often feel excluded by the born-Muslim community due to language problems. Aisha emphasizes that if the new Muslims do not know Arabic they feel like outsiders. She points out that, firstly, in the Arabic community the main language is still Arabic, although many of its members have been in Scandinavia more than ten years. Secondly, the new Muslim is told all the time that if one does not understand Arabic one cannot possibly understand the Koran. 'What they imply,' she claims, 'is that we cannot understand Islam. They mystify Islam in order to keep it within an Arabic sphere.' Aisha continues, saying that she understands that it is difficult for immigrants to come to Sweden. She believes that for immigrants 'everything in Sweden is different and strange,' and the Swedish situation differs from, say, Great Britain or the United States. 'Many Muslims know English, but Swedish is difficult to learn,' she says, 'and in Sweden it is hard to integrate into society.' She continues:

We are so sulky here in Sweden. The Muslims sit daydreaming about their homelands. They keep themselves busy with building houses in Morocco or Turkey. They do not contribute anything to this society. They are frustrated and we converts get frustrated as the Muslim Umma, which we are always told about in such idealized terms, never materializes.

It is obvious that the issue of language in the Muslim community causes conflict. Just as Aisha speaks of herself as an outsider in the Arab community, Arabic-speaking Muslims have expressed how they feel alienated from the Swedish converts due to the fact they 'speak Swedish all the time'. This 'us' and 'them' relationship caused by language differences is less conspicuous in countries such as France, Great Britain and the United States where a higher proportion of immigrants speak the language of the host country. As Aisha pointed out, there is an awareness among new Muslims of the difficulties Muslim immigrants face in the Scandinavian context, firstly when it comes to the Scandinavian languages and, secondly, due to the segregation in Scandinavian countries.

The importance of language for the integration of new Muslims into the Muslim community may be illustrated in the example of a Swedish female organisation I have frequently visited. In this organisation are active both new Muslims and born Muslims who speak

fluent Swedish. I observed how these born Muslims tend to be just as critical towards other born Muslims as the new Muslims. Furthermore, in some of the Muslim congregations where the working language is Scandinavian, I have the impression that there is a much wider understanding between born Muslims and new Muslims than in nationally or ethnically homogeneous congregations.

Change

In the questionnaire I asked in an open-ended question: whether the new Muslims had changed the view on the Muslim community, and if so, why? Of the 116 respondents, 24 said that they had not changed their view on Muslims, whereas 87 said they had. Although one might assume that these 24 belong to the newly converted group, this is not the case. I was myself surprised by this result. I had expected something different, as new Muslims frequently describe their conversion as an on-going process, especially in their relationships with other Muslims. However, this result indicates the complexity of the Muslim convert community, where many assumptions about new Muslims do not always apply.

Of the 87 who had changed their view on the Muslim community, 31 respondents regarded this change as a positive one, whereas 56 respondents had become disappointed in the born Muslims. Half of those who had experienced a positive change had been Muslims less than five years. This is an important variable, as these converts have lived through the increased Islamophobia in Western society since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Their ideas of Islam and Muslims prior to their conversion were thus probably coloured by negative attitudes conveyed by the media and society at large. Their immersion into the Muslim social sphere will have allowed them to experience a different reality with more positive connotations.

Most of the 56 respondents who had had a negative change, on the other hand, had converted before 1989 and many had been Muslims more than 15 years. Most of them even adhered to a 'rational' trend of thought. These new Muslims' change towards the Muslim community is an important finding. It indicates a development of the Muslim convert from a 'particularist' to a 'universalist' stand. In the process towards a universal understanding of Islam, 'Islam' is no longer regarded in view of what the born-Muslim hus-

band or wife says 'Islam' is, rather it is looked upon in much broader terms. This broader understanding of Islam takes into account the various understandings of the many immigrant representatives and the many views presented in literature on Islam and Muslims.

'Islam' versus 'Muslims'

In my interviews with new Muslims I went into further discussion about changing views and attitudes towards the Muslim community. I found that convert traditionalists, not just adherents to a 'rational' trend, tend to become more critical of the born-Muslim community. As for *salafī* and *ḥizb al-tahrīr* adherents, their criticisms of majority society seem to make them more sympathetic towards the born-Muslim community. However, in further discussions with them I discovered that their criticism towards other Muslims became more apparent. Their criticism must be seen as different from those of 'rational' Muslims and traditionalists; I found that it is based on a general exclusionist attitude towards Muslims belonging to other directions and is not explicitly directed towards born Muslims. Below, I will therefore mainly concentrate on new Muslims from the 'rational' trend and 'traditionalists' in order to locate inclusionist and exclusionist attitudes towards the born-Muslim community.

I found a main problem for new Muslims to be that their reading of the Koran and books about Islam tends to provide them with an idealized image of what 'Islam' is and what a Muslim should do. In this image, peace and harmony prevail at all levels of society: a Muslim should not be angry; s/he should act decently at all times; the Muslim husband should treat his family with the best manners; the Muslim mother should always be patient with her children; the Muslim ruler has to fulfil certain conditions; and nobody should suffer from hunger in an ideal Muslim society. The reality is of course somewhat different from this idealized image of Islam and Muslims.

Another problem is that most literature on Islam and Muslims tends *not* to distinguish between this ideal and social reality. When Muslims speak about Islam and when Muslim authors write books about Islam the starting point is usually a discussion of what 'Islam' *should* be, couched in terms that suggest 'Islam' *is* all these things. As many new Muslims, particularly those who have recently embraced

Islam, listen and read they perceive this normative perspective as reality. When new Muslims look at born Muslims from this idealized perspective the Muslim reality brings chaos into the newly established view of the world. Some new Muslims deal with this problem by comparing lower educated Muslims with higher educated Muslims, the latter being the ones who know and practise 'the right Islam'. This is a notion conveyed by many highly educated Islamists. Many new Muslims refer to the fact that Muslims, particularly the practising Muslims, in Scandinavian countries are very poorly educated and tend to follow their cultural practices rather than what is prescribed by the Islamic sources. The problem with such reasoning is that it assumes lower educated Muslims are not able to follow the Islamic injunctions. Highly educated Muslims, on the other hand, are believed to be on a higher spiritual level. New Muslims tell how travels abroad and encounters with practising Muslims of various educational backgrounds show them that this assumption is wrong.

There is a wandering narrative to which new Muslims frequently refer. The story describes a European male convert who travelled to a Muslim country. When he arrived and experienced the Muslim reality he exclaimed, '*al-ḥamdulillāh* (Praise be to God) that I knew about Islam before I knew the Muslims.' This story is often related to Muḥammad 'Abduh's alleged saying, that 'in Europe there is Islam but no Muslims, whereas in the Muslim world there are Muslims but no Islam.' Whether these stories are true or not is less important than the fact that they indicate a real tension between the Islamic ideal and the Muslim reality as experienced by Muslim converts. Larsen's investigation into Norwegian converts further indicates the tension between ideal and reality and one of her informants, a male convert, actually talks of being disappointed with Muslims. He used to work with refugees and came into contact with Muslims through his work. He mentions how some of the Muslims he came to know were 'good Muslims', but, after his conversion, he became more and more disappointed with Muslims in general. He says that 'the Muslims did not really disappoint me to such a degree that it has been discreditable to Islam. I have however, not felt much of the social warmth everybody is talking about' (Larsen 1995: 122).

Similar ideas are put forward by the Swedish convert, Adam, in his interview with Magdalena Östling. Adam lived abroad as a child and he admits that this might have been a reason for his conversion, as he always felt himself to be an 'expatriate Swede'. He explains

how he feels alienated from most Muslim immigrants in Sweden. He sees himself as having a more intellectual relationship to Islam and has found others like himself in Egypt. However, he does not see Muslims in the Muslim world as being more attractive than Muslims in Sweden. He says how he applied for work in some Muslim countries, but admits 'if I had got a job in Saudi Arabia or Libya or somewhere like that, I would never have converted. Their version of Islam, or the way they deal with Islam, is repugnant to me.'

The interview with Mariam in Larsen's study reflects Adam's ideas. Having lived in Pakistan for nearly two years, she states that 'Islam does not live in comfortable circumstances in Pakistan.' She tells how she observed that Hindu rituals are incorporated into the Islamic creed and practice and, by way of example, she points at the devotion to saints. She also refers to hostile attitudes towards women in Pakistan that she perceives as being a result of Hindu influences. She explains:

A woman's position and her rights, as described in the Koran and Sunna, are not honoured. Very often there are forced marriages and some are not allowed to see their spouses before the wedding. Divorced women, whatever the reasons for the divorce, are not supposed to remarry. A similar case for widows; her life is over. Islam encourages the opposite. In Pakistan a widow dresses in white, just as the Hindus do (Larsen 1995: 112 [translation mine]).

Kari tells how she feels the way she has been brought up is more in harmony with the Islamic precepts than the parenting she has observed amongst both Muslims immigrants and Muslims in the Muslim countries she has visited. She considers the Scandinavian upbringing to encourage respect for the individual that results in human beings with high self-esteem. She contrasts this with her perception of how children are brought up in born Muslim families: 'When children do something wrong they are punished in front of sisters, brothers and friends and thus humiliated.' She adds that she has observed similar methods in schools in Muslim countries. 'When I lived in my husband's home country and my children attended schools there, I often had to speak with the teachers so that they would not publicly punish my children.' She says:

We converts can take what is good from our own culture and incorporate it into the Islamic framework. First and foremost we have to

show born Muslims how the individual must be treated. Born Muslims treat the individual in a collective manner, whereas converts are more Islamic in their way of showing respect to the individual.

Kari continues, saying that new Muslims have to remind the born Muslims that one cannot have a good community without sound individuals. She gives an example from when her son was smaller and went to school in a Muslim country. She had tested her son's knowledge in the evening before he had a test. When he got the test back he had obtained ten out of ten questions, but the teacher had written on the test paper: 'the one who cheats is not from us'. 'My son came home that day an older man' she says. She explains the teacher's behaviour as the result of a suspicious attitude that she claims to have met in other schools and in society in general in the Muslim world. 'Suspiciousness very often leads to humiliation of the suspected victim', she claims. In her view this behaviour is contradictory to the Islamic way: 'In Islam one has to criticise one another in a nice and decent way.' She continues, saying that 'born Muslims, especially men, feel like they want to revenge all these collective punishments and the times they have been officially humiliated . . . Born Muslims are not team workers because they have not been allowed to be individuals.'

Kari continues her criticism of traditional Muslim practices. She claims that Muslims are more successful in their upbringing of girls than boys, saying:

Muslim boys are not taught to be responsible. Boys are elevated all the time and the result is that we now have a generation of men who are incapable of taking on any responsibility. In contrast to this there are many Muslim women who are carrying too much responsibility. This is contrary to what Islam says about men being the head of the family, and thus the most responsible.

Kari connects this idea with her argument that the Muslim world accentuates the collective approach over the individual. 'There are various consequences of the lack of consideration of the individual,' she says. 'Men are to be the imam or leader of the family, but how can a person be considerate towards one's family if one has never been taught to show consideration for anybody. The result is that one will become a dominating tyrant.' She continues to speak of Muslim men in general and of Arab-speaking men in particular, saying that, in her experience, they do not accept the fact that other

people might have different opinions than them. Moreover, they feel threatened if people, particularly women, are critical of them, or present new ideas. However, rather than promoting women as victims, she sees that women play a crucial role in keeping men in this state. 'It seems,' she says, 'that we women are actually trampling on ourselves all the time.'

In Kari's view, the fact that men are not taught to show consideration for others has consequences beyond family life. 'Bureaucracy and corruption in the Muslim world,' she says, 'is founded on the fact that the individual is not considered properly. The individual, thus, does not comprehend that there are always consequences of one's actions and behaviour. We have to learn that our actions and our behaviour have consequences and that other people pay for what we do.' She points to the example of how, in the Muslim world, she sees women being very careful to keep their houses clean, but, at the same time, throwing garbage outside their houses that attracts a lot of rats. 'The action of throwing away garbage has consequences for other people who have to put up with rats and all the diseases they carry.'

It is interesting to note how Kari, throughout the interview, speaks in terms of 'us' and 'them', attributing bad social traits to the 'them' group and good ones to the 'us' group. However, what is most conspicuous in her ideas is the way traditional Muslim practice is regarded in terms of being 'un-Islamic', whereas many Scandinavian practices become 'Islamic'. This seems to echo the same dynamic I have observed between various ethnic Muslim communities. Pakistanis, for instance, tend to regard some of the 'Arab cultural practices' as un-Islamic. Conversely, Arabic-speaking Muslims reject certain Pakistani cultural practices as being un-Islamic, despite their claim of Islamic authenticity. The process of modernity in the Muslim countries has forced through a concept of 'one true Islam'; the ancient acceptance of a multiplicity of contextual Islamic understandings has been rejected in favour of dividing practices and behaviour into the categories: 'Islamic' and 'un-Islamic'. The post-modern paradigm, with its acceptance of pluralism and 'great' and 'small' narratives, has broken through in the Muslim world as well as in Muslim communities in Western countries, particularly in Europe and the United States, where an awareness of the plurality of understandings and interpretations of the Islamic sources stems from the convergence of

Muslim immigrants from all over the world. Despite this awareness, however, the notion that traditions are either 'Islamic' or 'un-Islamic' lingers on.

Many new Muslims have said that it is hard not to link Muslim behaviour with the Islamic ideology. When one sees 'bad' Muslim behaviour one tends to relate this to the faith. Karima states that 'sometimes when I see how Muslims behave, I feel that my faith is getting weaker. How can Islam be true if people who follow it can behave in such a nasty way.'

Some new Muslims who have bad experiences with Muslims have left Islam or become weaker in their faith, which has forced other new Muslims to distinguish between Muslims and Islam and even leave their partners in order to be able to keep their faith. Astrid was married to her Arab husband for nearly fifteen years when she divorced him. She is critical of her husband's behaviour, which she links to the way he was brought up. She sees immigrant Muslims as products of a pedagogical model that allows the well being of the collective to dominate. 'However,' she says, 'men as individuals always take their rights, whereas women are always told to care about the community and, thus, refrain from claiming their rights.' She sees the reason for such behaviour to be that society tends to support men's rights. She goes on to compare the difference in thinking between immigrant Muslims and new Muslims:

We, the converts, take as our starting point the individual. If a person is religious, the person will choose for him/herself the right thing to do. In the traditional thinking of many immigrants, however, the individual is forced to take the 'right' choices without considering the diminished divine reward that results from such forced choices. I believe that Islam actually puts heavy weight on the individual's freedom of choice. The more I read the Koran, the more I see the individualistic perspective that I believe has been suppressed during history.

Astrid's statement reflects the Scandinavian stress on individualism evident in the EVSS study. The 'creolization' of cultural traits is also evident in her statement. She refused the immigrant understanding of Islam and started to read the Koran through her own cultural filter.

Astrid has been a Muslim since the early 1980s. She speaks in terms of having gone through various stages in the conversion process:

I became a Muslim when I met my former husband. He opened the door to my Islam. While living with him, I always followed what he

told me to be Islam. Little by little, I discovered that his Islam always supported his rights, whereas I was required just to give and give. Since I became a Muslim, I have felt I had to be somebody else. Now that I am divorced, I feel I have found myself again and I have the possibility of understanding the Koran in a different way.

It is interesting to note that Astrid actually states that 'as many men tend to understand Islam in a way that is beneficial for them, I feel I also have the right to understand it in the way I feel it right.' Astrid's history can illustrate the story of many other new Muslims who embraced Islam by marrying an immigrant Muslim and ended up divorcing, though still keeping to the Islamic creed. She speaks of stages in the conversion process, stages of which many other new Muslims speak as well. The feeling of coming back to 'herself' is also typical of many Muslims who found Islam through a love affair with an immigrant Muslim and ended up divorced. Many of these women tend to marry other Muslim men and, as they then enter into the new marriage loaded with Islamic knowledge, they feel more secure in their own understanding of Islam and thus less easily influenced by their husbands' understandings of Islam.

In the Swedish Islamic journal, *Salaam*, the trend of looking negatively at the Middle East or born-Muslims' general behaviour, coupled with such common expressions as 'Muslims have forgotten Islam' or 'Muslims have misunderstood Islam', seems to be a way of defending Islam as an ideal. Helena Benaouda, a Swedish convert who has been active in the Islamic Information Bureau, has been writing frequently in *Salaam*, from the late nineties to the present day. In 1999, she wrote an article with the headline: 'One is attracted to Islam and afflicted by Muslims (*Man dras till islam och får dras med muslimerna*). In this article, Benaouda discusses a convert's daily life. Although she is particularly critical of born Muslims, she also directs critical remarks at some male converts for having adapted 'bad born Muslim behaviour'. In the article, she does not explicitly mention the issue of women, rather she speaks in general terms. It is obvious, however, that much of her criticism is directed at male Muslim behaviour. Her criticism is implicitly stated. She says that many Muslims tend to distort Islam to a 'mixture of cultural and traditional slops with elements and ideas which sometimes are completely unacceptable and therefore un-Islamic' (*Salaam* 5/99:10). She further states that many new Muslims continue to keep to Islam despite, rather than because of, Muslim behaviour. She says:

The foremost reason for persisting is that we know we have found the truth. The logic of Islam cannot be compared to the daydream of a husband/wife who suddenly takes a trip down memory lane and gets into his/her head that the only Islamic country is the homeland (where the dictator is worshipped together with other gods of worldly material). They may speak about letting, say, the paternal grandparents or a boarding school raise the children. For what purpose? Everybody understands that children who grow up without their parents are rarely kept in check or raised in the best way, unlike children living with their parents (*Salaam* 5/99:10–11 [translation mine]).

Benaouda points at a problem that many female converts have brought up during discussions. Since born Muslims in Scandinavia are, more often than not, refugees, they live with the pathos of their refugee situation, with its longing for an idealized homeland, and the rootlessness and restlessness of not belonging anywhere. This longing might for instance be expressed in terms of sending their children back to their homelands to go to schools, as Benaouda refers to.

Despite *Salaam's* criticism of born Muslims, there is a stress on the equal rights of all ethnic groups and human beings. One female convert writes in *Salaam* how 'Islam does not acknowledge any national borders between Muslims that should influence the status of the various groups' (*Salaam* 8/91:5). In the same article, she writes how all Muslims have the right to be received and accepted as equal members in the Muslim community. She objects to nepotism and favouritism and believes that, in order to maintain unity, one has to carefully select the right imams, teachers and officials in the congregation. She speaks particularly about the situation of new Muslims. She states that, when new Muslims enter into Islamic organisations, there is a risk that born Muslims see them as representing their own particular interpretation of Islam, which born Muslims regard to be a mixture of Western ideas and Islam, rather than 'pure Islam'. Due to such assumptions, many born Muslims will therefore not accept new Muslims' activities. She further believes that Muslim congregations rarely care about new Muslims or offer male and female converts any help or support (*Salaam* 8/91:3–8). This article implicitly criticises born Muslims' dealings with new Muslims. The writer feels that new Muslims' 'Islam' is not as acceptable as born Muslims' 'Islam'. There is a mutual criticism between the two factions. Both sides tend to see the others' understanding of Islam in negative terms. The 'us' and 'them' way of thinking actually contradicts the mes-

sage promoted by the convert's article that promotes the idea that all human beings are equal.

I would like to take the opportunity here to look a little closer at the debate between one 'true Islam' and many contextual 'Islams' (discussed more profoundly in Chapter 9) and how Muslims relate to this complex issue. Kari is concerned about the gap between Islamic ideal and the Muslim reality. As she moves within two geographical spheres, the Western world and the Muslim world, her reference to the 'Muslim situation' is sometimes targeted at the Muslim world and sometimes at the Muslim immigrant situation in the Western world. She criticises Muslim immigrants who live in the Western countries but have no knowledge of the Western society. She says:

In immigrant families, the parents, who often have neither knowledge of how Norwegian people live nor of Norwegian society in general, tell their children about what the Norwegians do or do not do in a negative way. As the second-generation [immigrants] who are more in contact with society see that what their parents tell them is not true they will lose their trust in the parents.

It is particularly the 'Islamic' justification of this prejudice that concerns her. She states that many of the practices and behaviour patterns to which children of first-generation Muslims are exposed in Norwegian society might be 'Islamic', whereas many of the practices and behaviour they see at home are 'un-Islamic'. 'I have much more trust in the third-generation Muslims,' she says, 'as they will get the best from both cultural spheres.'

The tension between the Islamic ideal and the Muslim reality is manifested on various levels. Firstly, there is the tendency of looking at other Muslims and their behaviour in view of the ideal picture of what Islam *is*, as discussed above. Secondly, there is the tendency of looking at oneself in view of this ideal picture.

Many new Muslims have observed how they come to understand the complexity of the relationship between the ideal and reality when they perceive other Muslims' behaviour in view of an idealized picture of Islam. The story of Astrid illustrates this process. She tells how, soon after her conversion, she started to sense the discrepancy between the image of Islam and the way Muslims behave. In the beginning, it was easy for her to rationalize the matter away; she would assume that the Muslims around her were not 'good' or 'real' Muslims. After

some years, however, and after having obtained a broader idea of Muslims in general she understood that very few were actually 'good' or 'real' Muslims. This made her doubt the truth of Islam, as she started to judge Islam according to Muslim behaviour. This went on for a while. At the time I conducted the interview, she had, in her own words, come to 'intellectually grasp and accept the discrepancy between ideal and reality' and she said 'human beings are never perfect, but it is necessary to have a lofty ideal to try to live up to.' Aisha, who converted nearly 20 years ago, has arrived at a similar conclusion on this matter. She states that 'yes, I have changed my view of Muslims. I have discovered that they are human beings and not supernatural creatures.'

A further issue in the discrepancy between ideal and reality is expressed by another female convert who relates how her disappointment with born Muslims was also tinged with a feeling of betrayal. She remarks sarcastically; 'On entering Islam we are told to throw out the wine, shoot the dog and divorce our non-Muslim husbands. In other words we, the converts have to indiscriminately leave behind all our cultural baggage, whereas after a while we discover how the born Muslims tend to keep their cultural expressions.'

It is interesting to note that the case of female converts who at the time of their conversion to Islam are married to non-Muslim men. The question of the validity of such a marriage has been raised with the European Council for Fatwas and Research (*al-majlis al-urubī lil-iftā' wa al-buḥūth*) headed by al-Qaradāwī. After many sessions the Council agreed that women who were already married to non-Muslims could remain married as long as the men were not opposed to their conversion. This *fatwā* is actually opposed to the general Islamic rule that a Muslim woman can never be married to a non-Muslim.

Gender issues

It is the gender issue in particular that frustrates many new Muslims, with its discrepancy between Islamic ideal and Muslim reality. Muna exclaims that, when she reads books or listens to lectures about Islam and women, the emphasis is on how respected Muslim women are and how 'Islam gives women their rights'. However, in contrast to this idealized picture, she feels that immigrant Muslim men, particularly of the first generation, rarely pay due respect to women.

Aminah, one of the Norwegian converts in Larsen's investigation, reinforces this perception. She says that in the mosques in Norway many of the Muslim men have 'a poor perception of women'. 'This can make one feel inferior,' she says (Larsen 1995: 88). Aminah, who is married to a Tunisian, has the impression that born Muslims want new Muslims to enter into their culture rather than their religion. She feels that Muslims look for external signs of devotion in women, like mastery of cooking Arab food and obedience to husbands. 'If you are not obedient to your husband,' she says, 'you will fall down the social ladder. The most important thing is obedience to the husband, cooking coming second. The born Muslims demand I become like them: an Arab Muslim.' Mariam in Larsen's study, whose husband comes from Pakistan, expresses a similar view. She feels that, in order to be accepted as a Muslim, she has to adapt to the various cultural traits of Muslim countries. She further feels that born Muslims demand more from new Muslims than from other born Muslims. 'If you do not keep strictly to everything, you are easily branded a non-Muslim', she says.

Fatimah, who is also part of Larsen's investigation, reinforces the view that Muslims tend to pay attention to external things and symbols. She says that Muslims emphasize the way of dressing, which must be 'decent' and 'right', and 'they also appreciate subservience.' It is important to look at the difference in perception of religion between a Scandinavian Christian/secularized context and a Muslim context. In the Scandinavian context, religion is regarded in view of faith and private religiosity (Karlsson and Svanberg 1997). One can also observe how Lutheran Christianity has, to a certain extent, been de-ritualized; Lutheran mass, for instance, has fewer rituals than the Catholic mass. The Swedish historian of religion, Tord Olsson, has pointed out how comparative religion in Sweden has been influenced by a Lutheran theological discourse where faith or belief has become prominent. He points to various projects on religions that have incorporated this specific view: *Faith and Knowledge*, *Faith and Sciences*, etc. (Olsson 2000). In view of Olsson's observation, it seems that the Scandinavian converts also tend to regard religion in a Lutheran spirit, in terms of faith and personal belief, rather than in terms of practice and rituals.

In contrast, the external signs of religiosity in the Muslim context, the ritual prayers, the fasting, the wearing of special dress for women, men's headgear, etc., are all visible signs of religious practice that

many born Muslims regard as just as important as belief in God. Many Scandinavian converts mentioned that they feel the stress on practice and rituals is problematic. In a meeting where new Muslims were discussing various Islamic matters, the topic of the ritual prayer came up. 'Why should I pray when my mind is occupied by something else,' expressed one newly converted Swedish new Muslim. 'I do not obtain any reward from God if I just go up and down without any concentration on Him.' Another convert who embraced Islam in the eighties said that for her the prayers are important rituals. She explained that there are times when she feels that her prayers are mere outward signs of religiosity, but there are other times when they are more devoted. 'If I do not maintain the five prayers a day, I will not even manage to pray during those periods when I am more relaxed. The relationship with God will then disappear.' She sees the prayer as a way to maintain a relationship with the Divine: 'the society we live in is so anti-religious we will easily forget the whole thing if we do not have something which keeps us in touch with God.' I sense a tension between two concepts of religion: what the newly converted woman calls 'the Muslim way of concentrating on outward symbols rather than what is in the heart', and the second convert's appreciation for the rituals and outer symbols 'that keeps us within the realm of Islam.' The difference between the two ways of looking at religion is also manifest in the debate between religious faith and religious practice. There are, for instance, various ways of understanding the Law of Religious Freedom in the Scandinavian countries. Whilst Scandinavian majority society understands this law in terms of freedom of belief, immigrants and particularly Muslim immigrants understand it in terms of freedom of both religious belief and practice. The variety of views on the Muslim woman's headscarf is an example of the tension between the different understandings of religion. Whereas many Muslims see the freedom to wear a headscarf as a religious freedom, majority society tends to see the headscarf as restrictive in socio-political terms.

Mixed marriages

Marital relationships between new Muslims and Muslim immigrants can be complicated, as reinforced by Karima, who says that there are many who live in problematic marriages. She explains the problems to be a result of the fact that the male immigrants often have

a 'traditional view of Islam', whereas new Muslims 'keep to the Scripture'. 'We have not added anything to Islam,' she says. This is an expression I have often heard in my discussions with new Muslims in Europe. It is interesting to note how Karima sees her own 'Islam' as purely scriptural, and therefore purified from any cultural expressions. She does not see herself as a cultural being with an understanding of Islam that is, to a great extent, decided by her own cultural context.

The most problematic issue for new Muslims married to first-generation Muslim immigrants is to face the discrepancy between the reality of their own married life and the Islamic ideal of marriage as it is presented in books and general Islamic ideology. Many female converts whom I have interviewed have the experience of living in unhappy marriages with immigrant born Muslims. In the 1980s I observed that there was a common notion that if the man and the woman in a marriage were both practising Muslims and had knowledge of Islam there would be no marital problems. In the nineties, however, with the development of various factions of Islamism, and the realisation of the pluralism of Islamic thought there is a new awareness that human beings' experiences are separated from their religious commitment.

New Muslims' are constantly fighting the idealized image of Islamic marriage. Although most of them find their marital problems are more a result of cultural clashes between Arab, Pakistani or Turkish attitudes and values and Scandinavian attitudes and values, some tend to blame Islam. According to Scandinavian converts, there are two possible outcomes if the marriage dissolves, both common within the convert community: one sticks to the Islamic faith and marries another Muslim; or one turns away from Islam, blaming the religion for their partner's misbehaviour.

In the convert community, I have observed how many accept the idea that Muslim women tend to be subjugated to men. The difference between this understanding and the majority society's understanding of this issue, however, is that the new Muslims in general do not blame Islam for women's disadvantaged role in Muslim society and Muslim communities in Western countries. As discussed above, there is a tendency amongst converts to distinguish between the religious message and the way Muslims adhere to such a message. Within this discussion of Muslim women's position, I have discovered an ambivalent attitude in the new Muslims' perceptions of their own

role within the Muslim group, particularly when it comes to marital relations. Is it a benefit or a disadvantage to be a new Muslim in such a relationship? Some female converts look at their own position as being more advantaged than that of born-Muslim women. In Larsen's investigations, Fatimah expresses that her husband sympathises when she wishes to move freely in society. She says:

I believe that if he had married a woman from his own country she would not have obtained the same rights that I have as a Norwegian. I think she would have been kept at home more than I am. They [born-Muslim women] are so used to it that they do not react to the fact that men are outside the home most of the time and the women mostly stay at home (Larsen 1995: 101 [translation mine]).

Bettina describes the time she lived for two years with her husband's family. She understood at an early stage that women were not supposed to leave the house area (the house was surrounded by a big garden) without having particular affairs to attend to. However, as she was used to coming and going as she pleased and, as her husband never demanded she stay at home, she just left the house as she wanted. 'I was lucky', she says, 'as they viewed me differently to the women from their own country. Often they would say, "You are a foreigner, so you are different" and they accepted my "different behaviour".' She believes this has to do with her husband's attitude. He openly showed that he accepted her behaviour and that he trusted her, therefore, she believes, her husband's relatives were afraid to involve themselves and cause problems in the family.

In a problematic relationship with a born Muslim the situation is somewhat different. Annika believes that she, as a new Muslim, is more disadvantaged than born Muslim women because a new Muslim does not have a family to support her/him in case of problematic family affairs. She claims that, in Muslim countries, a woman can turn to her family if she has a problem with her husband, whereas new Muslims do not have anybody to turn to in times of trouble. 'The Muslim family will support their daughter,' she states, 'and the husband has therefore to take care if he wants to maintain the marriage.' Karima echoes this notion of the familial support of born Muslim women in their marital relationships. She tells how she has had hard times with her husband for years. Although she lives in the same town as her parents she is reluctant to involve them in her domestic problems. 'I am a Muslim,' she says 'and I do not want them to know about our problems, as they are so prejudiced

against Islam.' She goes on to tell the story of a friend who is a born Muslim and had been married for two years when her husband started to behave in an unacceptable way. 'He did not even hit her,' Karima says, 'he only had some strange ways of behaving that my friend did not accept.' She continues to tell how her friend's family supported her fully through the whole process of divorce and how they stripped the husband of everything in the apartment. She also tells of another born-Muslim friend who, when she married a man from her parent's homeland, was given total support. Her father even told her that if she had some problems with her husband she should come to him immediately. 'If I had a Muslim family behind me,' Karima says, 'my husband would never dare to treat me badly.'

The issue of social support networks is further affected by the fact that many new Muslims, particularly women, break off contact with their family and friends when they become Muslims. Most of the converts I spoke with made this break as a result of demands and pressures from their husbands. Social scientists in Western countries have looked at the particular situation of male immigrants, observing that, when they arrive in Western countries, their role as the economic provider and head of the family changes. This is particularly true when it comes to immigrant Muslim men who marry women from majority society. These men are often unemployed, whilst their wives continue to work and become responsible for supporting the family economically. This change in role creates a sensitive situation where many men feel inferior to their wives. This leads to a power struggle in the relationship, where the husband has to assert openly his dominance by, for instance, denying his wife certain things. Another reason for immigrant husbands' desire to cut off contact between the convert wife and her family might be that he is afraid the family will influence her to turn her back on Islam. This is due to the anti-Islamic attitudes in majority society. In many Muslim countries, women are regarded as men's responsibility¹ and the husband might therefore feel it is his duty to keep his wife within the realm of faith.

¹ See for instance al-Turābī 2000. In most Arabic literature on Islam the attitude of men's responsibility over women is expressed. Moreover, when an Arabic-speaking Islamically inclined man marries an uncovered woman, it is usual to express that 'he will make her wear *ḥijāb*' (*huwa biḥajjabha*). This expression implies a view that husbands are responsible for their wives' religiosity.

The new Muslim loses his/her old social network through conversion to Islam and the husband provides a new social network (Larsen 1995). Many female converts are then dependent on their husbands. The husband is the one who defines 'Islam' to the new convert and this definition of Islam is, as discussed above, usually based on the husband's cultural attitudes. Many new Muslims have professed how, at the beginning of their conversion process, they felt lonely and had only their husbands' to turn to about Islamic issues.

I have, however, observed a change in this pattern. As the convert community has grown, new converts now tend to build a new social network within the convert community at an early stage of the conversion process. This influences the Islamic attitudes of the new converts as they are socialized into a convert pattern of ideas and attitudes instead of an immigrant one.

The tension between Islamic ideal and reality is also important for the new Muslims' own behaviour and their own lives. Some new Muslims have expressed how they have had difficulty living up to the Islamic ideals or what they have been told are the Islamic ideals. It is particularly the issue of women's role that causes problems. As many new Muslims are married to first-generation immigrants, they encounter certain gender ideals which are presented as being Islamic, such as women being generally responsible for children and domestic work. However, some new Muslims have confessed that, when they discuss Islam with both Muslims and non-Muslims, they sometimes suddenly realise that they themselves talk in idealizing terms. Amal gives an example, saying that the Muslim ideal of being a housewife does not appeal to her at all, yet she is sometimes aware of how, particularly with non-Muslims, she speaks of how important it is for the mother to be at home with her children. In a discussion at the summer camp, one of the new Muslims expressed that in Scandinavia, it is difficult to stay at home with the children, as the family in general is dependent on two salaries to maintain a decent lifestyle. 'It would have been possible for me to be a housewife in a Muslim country,' she claims, 'as most other women are also at home and I would not feel so lonely and bored.' Another woman spoke about the advantages of the extended family in Muslim countries, where women in the family are co-operating and the domestic work and the responsibility for the children becomes less burdensome. As some women had actually lived for periods in such extended families, a heated discussion broke out where some defended

and spoke up for such a system whereas others with less positive experiences of such a system criticized it. What came out of this discussion was that even the success of the extended family system depends on the individuals who constitute it.

Another issue that arose from this discussion was that some of the new Muslims saw it as a problem that they could not easily live according to one's ideal. However, by being able to blame the Scandinavian system for hindering one's attempts to live according to the ideal, they could rationalise their own 'shortcomings'.

New Muslims as threats to born Muslims

Some of the Scandinavian converts have expressed that they feel born Muslims look at new Muslims as a threat. It is interesting to note that the activists among the new Muslims are those who most strongly maintain such a notion. Aisha believes that there is an ambivalent attitude among many born Muslims towards the new Muslims. On the one hand, new Muslims are important in that they 'confirm the Islamic faith' in a new environment; on the other hand, the active Muslim converts are perceived as a threat to born Muslims' position in society. She explains the new Muslims' role in 'confirming' the 'born Muslims' thus:

The born Muslims do not really know how to treat us converts, They realise that it is important to involve us in their activities, as we know things that they do not know, but we are not really involved in earnest. We are like figureheads or decorations that are useful when there is a need to show that 'indeed we have active women' or 'indeed we have Swedish Muslims.' This is particularly true for women. We might easily feel that we are being used; even though we are required to talk to the newspapers or to various ministers or whatever, we do not get to know what is really going on. Once we have done what is expected, it is 'out you get', in a way. We are not really involved. Once we have done our bit, we must go back to our corner.

In Aisha's view, new Muslims have to 'go back to their corner' because they are seen as a threat to the born Muslims. She believes that, on the one hand, the new Muslims 'know' the society, and, on the other, it is not too hard to obtain a fairly reasonable, sound knowledge of Islam. In her view, most Muslim immigrants do not have a deep knowledge of Islam when they come to Sweden. She

even believes that most of them have less knowledge than a typical Swedish convert who has been a Muslim only a couple of years. 'Of course we constitute a threat to them' she says, 'we are the newcomers and they come with their heavy Arabic traditions only to be moved aside by us recalcitrant converts.'

It is particularly on gender issues that Aisha feels born Muslims are most threatened. 'We present notions that they [the born Muslims] do not believe belong to Islam, such as the liberation of women,' she says. 'As there are so many un-Islamic traditions in Muslim countries, we, the converts, are saying that the born Muslims are wrong and we are right. It is obvious that we, particularly the women, become a threat to them.'

Aisha's words echo a notion common to many new Muslims: though new converts are usually accepted and welcomed with enthusiasm, a tension soon develops between born Muslims and new Muslims, as the latter develop and their knowledge increases. At this stage some of the born Muslims come to feel threatened. It is necessary to discuss this feeling of threat in terms of the immigration situation in Scandinavia. Immigrants in Scandinavia in general are made to feel inferior in terms of their status in society. As there is a lack of integration of Muslims, born Muslims regard themselves as the specialists of Islam, 'the one area they control,' as expressed by Aisha. Thus the issue arises of who can define 'Islam'. As born Muslims tend to define Islam according to their understanding, their practice and their behaviour, new Muslims who witness how Muslim immigrants from various parts of the world have different understandings, practices and behaviour, tend to look at the Islamic sources in a new way. As Karima has stated: new Muslims 'keep to the Scripture' and they 'have not added anything to Islam'.

Due to the fact that some new Muslims, who are active in Islamic work in one way or another, feel a certain antagonism from the Muslim community, particularly from the leadership, they tend to form their own Islamic space, consisting mainly of new Muslims and some second-generation Muslim immigrants. By creating their own discussion groups and socializing mainly with each other, new Muslims' social space tends to be segregated from much of the immigrant communities' activities.

New Muslims as rebels

As discussed in Chapter Four, some new Muslims embrace Islam as a result of a rebellion against either the immediate family or general society. As there is a negative image of Islam in majority society, conversion to Islam seems to be a strong rebellious act. I have observed, however, that the act of rebellion is not only part of conversion to a religion; many new Muslims continue to 'act rebelliously' in the new religious context. Amal stated that, as a convert to Islam, she had had to change her social paradigm as well as her religious direction in a short time span. She also said that 'a convert to Islam has to be reflective about his/her own society as s/he enters a new world view'. These two factors, rebellion and a high degree of reflectivity, mean that many new Muslims are active in formulating new interpretations of Islamic concepts in the Scandinavian context. In discussions with new Muslims, particularly those with a higher education, I have come to realise that their Islamic views are in a process of change. As discussed above, many of the new Muslims' views on issues such as children's education and gender relations differ greatly from the views of born Muslims. Their opposition to the established immigrant notion of 'what Islam is' might be regarded as rebellious. As many active new Muslims are in a position to reformulate Islamic concepts in the Scandinavian cultural context, their view might have a penetrating force, particularly in the convert community, as well as for second-generation Muslims.

The conversion process in stages

In Rambo's model of conversion, he tends to emphasise pre-conversion stages; in this study I concentrate on post-conversion stages. In the Scandinavian convert community, I have found a three-stage conversion process relating mainly to the time after conversion. This conversion process deals largely with new Muslims' relations to the born Muslim community. It also, however, has psychological aspects, its stages being 'love', 'disappointment' and 'maturity'. It is important to note that I have observed a similar three-stage process among Muslim converts in other European countries.

New Muslims are socialized into a certain cultural context, but, by converting to Islam, there is a total shift of 'cultural truths'. This

paradigm shift can be related to Flinn's 'turning away' stage in the conversion process. He says that 'turning away is an about-face, resulting from fundamental conflicts that are overcome only by an intellectual, moral, religious or social conversion to a new set of ideas and behavioural norms that will make sense of the whole' (Flinn 1999: 58).

By applying Elias' social psychological model (Elias 1994) on the convert situation, it is possible to regard the convert as going through a cultural shift that might put him/her in a contrasting cultural position, where s/he becomes critical of the his/her cultural group and tends to look in positive terms at the Muslim group. This is a problematic process as it might alienate the convert from the previous in-group. At the same time, it might be difficult for the new Muslim to adapt Muslim cultural traits *in toto*, particularly as this culture, behaviourally and ideologically speaking, is to a great extent founded on patriarchal and traditionalistic ideas alien to many societies in the Western world.

In respondents' answers and in my discussions with new Muslims, I have sensed how many new Muslim converts tend to be enthusiastic about Muslims and Muslim cultures shortly after conversion. However, many of these become more critical of Muslims as a group after a while. The shift of cultural belonging might cause new Muslims to experience a sudden shift of perspective at the beginning of the conversion process. However, as time goes by, the social structure into which one is primarily socialized tends to resurface, particularly if there is a wide gap between the various cultural traits of the competing paradigms. In meetings with reverends, priests and other key persons who deal with converts in various religious institutions and associations in Sweden, many of them highlighted a tendency in converts in general 'to fall in love' as a first stage of the conversion process. The first stage of a love affair is often described in a similar way: a lover tending to shift her/his attention from daily affairs to the object of passion with an almost uncritical attitude. As the passion cools down and daily life intrudes again, one can look at the other person in a more critical way. The American convert Jeffrey Lang (see also Chapter Five) talks of his post-conversion story in similar manners. In his book *Even Angels Asks* (1997) he describes the first five years after his conversions:

The first three were marked by steady progress in the direction of radical conservatism and intolerance of those points of view that differed

from mine. The fourth year was a one of disillusionment, when I seriously questioned the course I had been following. The fifth year began a time of recovery, a period when I sought to reconcile my true self with my faith (Lang 1997: 201).

The stage of 'falling in love'

The initial phase of conversion, where one can be 'more royal than the king' is evident in the new Muslims' discussions. Many new Muslims tell of how, in the beginning, they tended to be emotionally obsessed with the new religion. Furthermore, they wanted to practise every little detail of the Islamic precepts. Some of the new converts spoke of how they would sit and read Islamic books every spare moment they had. 'I just want to learn every single Islamic rule and start to practice everything I have learnt at once,' exclaimed a twenty-one-year-old girl, who had been a Muslim just six months. Other new converts have expressed similar sentiments. I also discovered in my discussion with new Muslims in general that many laughed when they recall their first period as Muslims. As referred to above, Kari said she became 'fanatical' at the beginning of her conversion process; she wanted to throw out the television set and even thought of wearing a face veil. The phenomenon of absolutism seems to be a universal one among new converts to Islam. A leading British academic convert, Tim J. Winters, has termed the phenomenon 'convertitis'. He explains this:

The initial and quite understandable response of many newcomers is to become an absolutist. Everything going on among pious Muslims is angelic; everything outside the circle of faith is demonic, the appeal of this outlook lies in its simplicity. The newly arranged landscape on which the convert looks is seen in satisfying black and white terms of Them versus Us, good against evil (Winters: www.islamfortoday.com).

The American convert, Saraji Umm Zaid, points at the dangers of extremism and absolutism. Adopting Winters' term 'convertitis', she explains it to be a 'highly contagious disease, which spreads rapidly among converts to Islam' (Umm Zaid: www.islamfortoday.com). She also refers to the phenomenon as 'insta-scholar', giving the example of 'the Insta-scholar Jane who took her *shahāda* (the profession of faith, i.e., embraced Islam) last week'. She writes:

She was a "regular American" who studied a little Islam, hummed and hawed over the dress and dietary codes, decided it was the truth,

and accepted it into her life. Many sisters in the community looked forward to helping Jane learn the basics of Islam, such as the *salāt* [prayer], the five pillars, the six articles of faith, and so on. Now, this week, we see Jane has changed her name to “Aisha”, is wearing full *niqab* [face-veil] (black only), buying everything (even potato chips—which she may stop buying as it is “imitation of the *kufar*” [non-Muslims]) from the halal market, getting into interfaith debates at her job, using a *miswak* [a small stick to brush the teeth with], telling the other sisters [Muslim women] what they “ought to be doing”, and what they are “doing wrong”, and considering accepting marriage proposals to be a co-wife (www.islamfortoday.com/ummzaid02.htm).

She goes on to describe the ‘symptoms of convertitis’, saying that the convert ‘who is suffering from this terrible disease is easily recognisable within the community’. She expresses:

You will notice a radical change in appearance, almost immediately: from “regular clothes” to full *niqab* or *kufi* [male scarf] and *thobe* [long and wide male garment]. Often walking around with *miswak*. Starts peppering their language full of Arabic-isms they either don’t really know or can’t pronounce. Almost immediately, they talk at great length about their “Islamic identity” and their “Muslim-ness”. In every incident, they will see an “anti-Muslim” bias that didn’t exist previously (and probably doesn’t exist currently). They often argue points of Islamic *fiqh* [jurisprudence] with anyone and everyone—from the fellow new *shahāda* to the valedictorian of al-Azhar (of course they do not know what “*fiqh*” is . . .). The most serious symptom is that everything is black and white: what they view as good is truth, and what they don’t understand is bad, *bid’a* [religious innovation], *ḥarām*, whatever. They view themselves as the sole practitioners of “True Islam”, and pass into judgement millions of others (www.islamfortoday.com/ummzaid02.htm).

I was referred to this text on ‘convertitis’ by a new Muslim living in Britain. On reading the account by Umm Zaid, I recognised the phenomenon; the text fully confirms my own experience with new converts in their first stage of conversion, the ‘falling in love-stage’, in Scandinavian society.

The stage of ‘disappointment’ or ‘rejection’

After a while, when the first ‘intoxication’ has worn off a little, many new Muslims realise that they have bitten off more than they can chew. All the new rules and regulations they want to introduce into their life might be felt to be too much. Moreover, at the beginning

there is a tendency among new Muslims to look into the cultural Muslim expressions as 'the true Islam'. After reading books and having discussions with other Muslims, they realise the difference in Islamic expressions across various Muslim countries.

This second stage of the conversion process is strongly linked to a disappointment with born Muslim behaviour and ideas. As with the story of Astrid above, who started to judge Islam according to Muslims' behaviour, many converts tell how they have suddenly realised that Muslims cannot live according to the lofty Islamic ideals. At this stage, some new Muslims tend to turn away from Islam as they feel too disappointed.

At this second stage of the conversion process, the convert might also get the feeling of being both 'insider' and 'outsider' in his/her own society. Just as it is difficult to wholly identify with the immigrant Muslim community, the shift of perspective has made it hard to identify fully with the group of origin. Moreover, a discrepancy develops between the way majority society defines the convert and the way the convert perceives him/herself. The difference between the outer and inner conceptions of the self is illustrated by Amal's reflections. She discusses the difference between her inner self-perception and her visual experience of herself wearing a headscarf; she feels startled when she occasionally catches a glimpse of herself in the reflections of a windowpane and feels that it is another person she sees. 'The person I see in the mirror can't be me', she says. She explains this feeling by pointing at the fact that she does not constantly feel herself to be a Muslim. The discrepancy between self-perception and the person's social status, as defined by majority society's view of Muslims and Muslim converts, might lead to a confusion of one's own identity. However, in my experience with Muslim converts, new Muslims choose either to remain within the Muslim cultural paradigm (being cultural converts) or, like second-generation Muslim children, develop 'integrated plural identities', where there is a harmonious transcultural oscillation between various patterns of identity (Østberg 2000).

The third stage of 'maturity' or 'understanding'

The third stage is when the new Muslim realises, as Aisha did, that Muslims are 'human beings and not supernatural creatures', and, like Astrid, come to accept intellectually 'the discrepancy between

ideal and reality'. At this stage many new Muslims tend to search for new understandings of Islamic ideas and attitudes, and it is at this point that many new Muslims actively start to shape a new understanding of Islam according to the particular cultural context they live in. This stage can be named the stage of 'maturity' as many new Muslims have expressed that they feel they have come 'back to themselves'. Many have stated how they discovered that 'in reality' they are Scandinavian individuals living within an Islamic frame.

This notion of coming back to oneself; being both Scandinavian and Muslim, is illustrated by Sissel Østberg's concept of integrated plural identities. Such notions of cultural shifts and plural identities are linked to the question: how does one maintain a religious world view? Berger and Luckmann speak in terms of plausibility structures, where a religious person has a plausibility structure which is necessary for the maintenance of 'a symbolic universe' (Berger and Luckmann 1967). The Swedish sociologist of religion, Eva Hamberg, has discussed how a person's plausibility structure might be disrupted by migration. She discusses various factors in the migration situation and concludes that, because an immigrant loses all contact with her/his own group or with like-minded individuals, it might be difficult to maintain belief in her/his original 'symbolic universe', as s/he is not surrounded by a supporting structure that makes this belief plausible.

Hamberg's discussion of immigrants' plausibility structures can be applied to new Muslims' situations. As 'religion' involves not only belief but a complete symbolic universe, the shift to a new belief must incorporate a new plausibility structure. Hamberg regards the plausibility structure in static terms, saying that in the immigrant situation it might be disrupted (Hamberg 1999: 27). In contrast to her view, however, the plausibility structure seems to be in a state of flux and therefore might change according to context.

The influence a new plausibility structure has over the new Muslim depends on his/her life situation. If the new Muslim is living in an environment comprising only born Muslims belonging to one particular culture, that particular plausibility structure has a stronger effect on him/her. However, a Muslim convert who has less contact with born Muslims and more contact with non-Muslims will be less influenced by the particular plausibility structure to which s/he belongs. A third alternative is more common: new Muslims of similar cultural backgrounds mix and create a merged plausibility struc-

ture built mainly on the Islamic sources, but mixed with the new Muslims' pre-conversion cultural context. In this case, it is possible for new views and ideas to emerge, built on deconstruction and reconstruction of cultural concepts both from majority society and Muslim cultures.

However, although most converts reach the second or the third stages of conversion, some 'remain behind' in the first stage for a long time. It is particularly adherents to the 'extreme movements', such as the *salafīs* and those of the *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, who remain in this first stage. Followers of such movements behave in a similar fashion to many converts in the first stage of 'falling in love with Islam', where one adheres to every little Islamic precept. This stage is best illustrated by the example of the *salafī* trend, which promotes the idea that every single Koranic verse or hadith should be acted on in a literal way. This direction can be regarded as a particularization of Islam, as it reflects 'Arab culture' at a certain period of time, namely the 7th century.

An important finding of this study is that Scandinavian converts who embraced Islam in the late 1990s do not necessarily go through these post-conversion stages. Those who converted in the 1980s and early 1990s were usually socialized straight into an immigrant Muslim context, but the growth of the convert community has helped new converts to be socialized into Islam through other new Muslims. Thus, the 'new' converts jump directly into the 'old' converts' cultural sphere and internalize convert conceptualizations directly, without having to go through the culturalization process into the Muslim immigrant community. It is thus the convert plausibility structure that creates the 'symbolic universe' of the new converts. The development of these post-conversion stages, thus, tends to differ according to the time a person embraces Islam, as well as the quality and size of the convert community in the person's area.

Reflections

New Muslims tend to criticise born Muslims for claiming their own cultural traits and social organisation to be 'Islamic'. However, just as Muslims from various parts of the world tend to understand Islam according to their own cultural backgrounds, Scandinavian converts enter Islam loaded with Scandinavian cultural baggage. Thus they,

like born Muslims, interpret the Islamic message through their own cultural filter. As the Scandinavian cultural experience is quite different from the cultural experience of Muslim countries, or European countries like Turkey, Bosnia and Albania that have, historically, contained Muslim communities, an 'us' and 'them' relationship arises between new Muslims and born Muslims. Many converts also feel that they have been forced to leave behind them their cultural baggage whereas born Muslims legitimate their own cultural expressions as being 'Islamic' and therefore valid.

The convert community is not homogeneous. Many new Muslims tend to be culturalized into their spouses' or friends' cultural contexts. Whilst some remain within this cultural sphere, others turn, through a three-stage conversion process, back to their own cultural context. The first stage is one of 'falling in love with Islam', where one wants to practise every Islamic precept. The second stage is where one discovers, firstly, that this is a difficult task in the modern world; secondly, that there is a discrepancy between the Islamic ideal and Muslims' actual practice; and thirdly that 'the ideal Islam', as it is illustrated in Islamic books, is often different from the understanding of Muslims from different parts of the world. The third stage comes when the new Muslim realises that Muslims are human beings like everyone else, and that it is possible to understand Islam in a Scandinavian framework. I have discovered that most converts go through this three-stage conversion process. A small minority, often belonging to extreme movements, tends to 'remain behind' in the first stage for a longer period of time.

I have observed that the culturalization process of the individual into a certain Muslim context as well as the development of an individual's conversion process depends to a great degree on such factors as the person's character, personal experiences, age, educational background and the degree of participation in majority society.

In the next chapter the issue of the new Muslims' role as cultural mediators and bridge-builders between majority society and immigrant Muslim community will be discussed.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NEW MUSLIMS AS MEDIATORS BETWEEN THE MUSLIM IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY AND MAJORITY SOCIETY

Kipling said that East and West can never meet, but we, the Western converts to Islam, are living examples that he was mistaken. We are the bridge between East and West.

Bettina

In both Sweden and Norway there are Muslim councils who function as umbrella organisations for Muslim organisations. In Denmark there are plans to establish a similar council. These councils are supposed to work as general intermediaries between Muslim communities and majority society; the Muslim leadership meets with government or leading organisations when necessary, including times of emergency. In Norway, some new Muslims are members of the Council and the leader (2002) was a female convert. In Denmark some of the promoters for establishing a council are new Muslims. In Sweden, however, most members are first-generation males who usually work and act mainly within Muslim communities. With few exceptions, the Muslim leadership, even at a local level in all the three Scandinavian countries, tends to comprise born Muslim men from Muslims countries. Often they have little knowledge of Scandinavian languages.

One must raise the issue, therefore: how important is the role of new Muslims as intermediaries between Muslim communities and Scandinavian society? Is the particular position of new Muslims' who have 'one foot in each culture' beneficial for the creation of a fruitful dialogue between the two cultures? In her research on Norwegian Muslims, Lena Larsen has highlighted this aspect of the role of new Muslims in Western countries. She believes that new Muslims can be seen as intermediaries between Muslim communities and majority society on various levels. Below I will look into the various ways new Muslims act as bridges between the Muslim community and majority society.

New Muslims as bridge-builders

In the aftermath of September 11th there was an interview with Hamza Yusuf, an American convert to Islam, in the British newspaper *the Guardian* (8th of October 2001). The interview starts off with the story of the FBI agents who wanted to run a check on this well-known Muslim preacher in California:

A few days ago, for reasons that remain rather unclear, the FBI decided to pay a call on the home of Ḥamza Yūsuf. 'He isn't home,' said his wife. 'He's with the President.' The FBI agents did not seem to believe her; they called the White House to check. 'He's got 100% security clearance,' said the voice at the other end. The FBI agents did not return (*Guardian* 8th of October 2001).

The article tells of Yusuf's meeting with President Bush, where 'he advised Bush that the military term 'Operation Infinite Justice' was blasphemous to Muslims' (*Guardian* 8th of October 2001). Yusuf approved the new slogan 'Infinite Freedom' and joined in the accompanying prayer, 'God Save America'. In his speech outside the White House, Yusuf stated that 'Islam was hijacked on that September 11th, 2001, on that plane, as an innocent victim' (*Guardian* 8th of October 2001).

The journalist also mentioned Yusuf's position on the 'War against Terror' and that his meeting with President Bush might upset many Muslims, particularly radical Muslims. On 17th October, 2001, Yusuf was a guest on a programme on MBC, the Arabic-speaking satellite channel based in London. When asked why he agreed to meet President Bush, he answered that he went in order to explain the Islamic position on the terrorist matter. He continued, saying that even the Prophet Moses went to speak with Pharaoh in a nice and decent way in an attempt to make him understand his point of view. By talking in these religious terms, he legitimated his intervention, by which he had also fulfilled his duty as a citizen belonging to a minority religion.

Most of us had probably heard how Muslim intervention resulted in a change of name for the military operation against terrorism. Few, however, heard that it was an American convert to Islam who had personally advised the president on this change. This story indicates how Western new Muslims can become a bridge not only between majority society and Muslim immigrant communities in

Western countries but between the Western and Muslim world as well.

In Yusuf's case we see how he suddenly turned more 'American' in the time of crisis after September 11th. Prior to the attacks on the United States, Yusuf had often condemned America and the American way of life. In the newspaper article the journalist states that it is as though Yusuf has gone through 'a second, possibly more radical, conversion than the first from Christianity' (*Guardian* 8th of October 2001). The journalist writes:

He regrets speeches he himself has made in the past, peppered as they were with the occasional angry statements about Jews and America that are the staple of much Muslim oratory. Days before the September 11th killings, he made a speech warning that 'a great, great tribulation was coming' to American. He is sorry for saying that now (*Guardian* 8th of October 2001).

It is possible to look at Yusuf's 'second' conversion in relation to the stages new Muslims go through in their ongoing conversion process. As many Scandinavian converts have professed, they start out being 'more royal than the king', but, having gone through various stages, they end up coming back to their roots, thus becoming 'Danish', 'Swedish' or 'Norwegian' Muslims. This Muslim identity involves similar personalities and similar attitudes to those they had before conversion, but with an added Muslim dimension. The terms 'Swedish Islam', 'Danish Islam' and 'Norwegian Islam' are common, particularly among educated Scandinavian Muslims who have been Muslims for quite a number of years. The development through stages might be the result of an educational development, or a personal development, or, in the case of Yusuf, a shocking event that made him change his perspective overnight. Yusuf's change can be regarded as a change from Muslim to 'American Muslim', a distinct American message now included in his understanding of Islam.

New Muslims in Britain

The idea of Muslim converts as 'bridge-builders' between various cultural contexts was a recurring theme in my discussions with new Muslims. The British convert to Islam, Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, who is a linguist, stated that one of his main tasks is to be a bridge in British society between Muslims and non-Muslims. For a certain time

he held the position of General Secretary of FAIR (Forum against Islamophobia and Racism), the British counterpart to the American organisation CAIR (Council for American-Islamic Relations). The two organisations are lobby groups taking care of certain Muslim interests in the two countries.

Henzell-Thomas' high position in the Muslim community in Britain is interesting in view of the fact that few British converts have an official role mediating in wider British society. The Conversion Project Group at Lund University, of which I am part, visited Great Britain from the 10th to the 17th of June 2001. During this visit we met representatives from many interfaith dialogue groups. In one of the meetings I raised the issue of Western Muslim converts being bridges between majority society and Muslim communities. I discovered, to my surprise, that in Britain representatives from the Muslim organisations in most interfaith dialogues were mainly first- or second-generation male immigrants. This is in contrast to my experience of Scandinavia, where new Muslims have a key official role to play in interfaith dialogues as well as in dialogues with majority society. Looking at the news coverage of the BBC World Service reinforced my impression of the subdued official role played by British converts. In the aftermath of September 11th, many Muslim representatives were interviewed and asked to participate in discussion programmes. Despite the fact that many different Muslim representatives have been invited to these programmes, I have observed only a few new Muslims on them. Those I have seen are the more famous converts, such as Yusuf Islam, the former singer Cat Stevens, and the American Muslim preacher, Hamza Yusuf.

There are various reasons for the differences between new Muslims' official roles in Britain and Scandinavia. Firstly, the aspect of language: many Muslim immigrants in Britain fully master the English language and many first- and second-generation Muslims in Britain are highly educated and their ideas and opinions are presented in an adequate manner for both a Muslim and a non-Muslim audience. In Scandinavia, immigrants' lack of a mastery of the language of majority society limits their understanding of social structures as well as the social and cultural codes of the society they live in. Furthermore, their lack of knowledge of the Scandinavian languages influences the eloquence and coherence of the message of immigrants in their official performances.

Secondly, the aspect of gender roles: the role of women in Muslim

communities is quite different in Britain and in Scandinavia, due to variations in the constitution of the Muslim communities. The largest immigrant Muslim community in Britain consists of people from South Asia, whilst the Scandinavian countries each host different Muslim communities. Mary, a British female convert, stated that on the Indian subcontinent, there is in general not enough room for women to pray in mosques, despite the fact that the Islamic sources state that women have the right to go into them. This is, in her view, symptomatic of the weak role of women in Muslim communities in Britain, who have little to say both within the community and officially as Muslim representatives in majority society.

Thirdly the aspect of majority society's influence on immigrants' activities: the social structure of Muslim communities depends not only on cultural aspects within the community, but on the interaction with majority society as well. The equal gender opportunity policy in Scandinavia has had, in my view, a greater impact on Scandinavian than British society. As most new Muslims are women, their contributions are encouraged in Scandinavia more than in Britain.

The active role played by Scandinavian new Muslims results, to a great extent, from the slightly exclusionist attitude in Scandinavian society towards non-European immigrants. This exclusionist attitude is manifested, for instance, in community segregation, with immigrants tending to live in big suburbs outside the inner cities, whilst Scandinavians live in other parts of the town. Moreover, as few immigrants master the social and cultural codes of Scandinavian society, new Muslims can present ideas in a manner acceptable to the Scandinavian society. An example is the issue of gender relations, one of the most sensitive issues in the dialogue between majority society and Muslim communities. Born Muslims, particularly Arabic-speaking representatives who actively interact with Scandinavian society, would present women's issues as 'women have the right to study, to work, to go out, etc.' On hearing this, a Scandinavian audience would question why these are presented as 'rights' at all; in the Scandinavian context they are a given. Thus the presentation of women's rights in this way might cast suspicion over the Muslim perspective. A new Muslim on the other hand would basically say the same thing but present it in a different manner to appeal to majority society. This makes it easier to accept ideas coming from a Muslim with a Scandinavian background than a Muslim coming

from non-European society. Converts' higher credibility in majority society is brought up by Bettina, who often gives lectures to teachers, social and medical workers, police, etc. 'In a way,' she says, 'I believe non-Muslims believe me more than they would believe an immigrant who says the same thing.' She continues:

This has firstly to do with their perception of *me*. I am indeed a Muslim but I am a less 'dangerous' Muslim than an immigrant Muslim. Moreover, the pattern of 'us' and 'them' certainly applies, but I am regarded as both 'us' and 'them'. Secondly, the majority society's acceptance of my ideas has to do with the fact that I have fully mastered the cultural codes of this society and the language of majority society. This means that I would say things in a way that they accept and understand, whereas a Pakistani or Arab saying similar things might sound strange to non-Muslims' ears. This is particularly true for issues of men and women and gender relations. But the most important aspect is that I, as a convert, have both the insider and outsider perspective. I can therefore see Muslims as a diverse group and I am able to discuss this diversity objectively instead of branding certain things 'un-Islamic', as many born Muslims would do.

As discussed in Chapter One, Scandinavian society is concerned with equal opportunities (*likestilling* [Norwegian]/*ligestilling* [Danish]/*jämställdhet* [Swedish]) for men and women and these terms have become key concepts in official Scandinavian discourse. Scandinavian society also has a strong legislation on women's rights. Most Muslim converts in Scandinavia are women, and their argumentation on women's issues has become more credible than that of first-generation Muslim males. Moreover, as Scandinavian female converts have been socialized into the equal opportunity policy some of them have internalized the message of the importance of female leadership and their social, political and economic participation in all areas of life. So it is not strange that the first woman who became a leader for the Muslim community in a Western country is a Norwegian new Muslim, who was elected head of the confederation of Muslim associations (ISLAMISK RÅD NORGE [ISLAMIC COUNCIL NORWAY]) in October 2000.

Highly educated new Muslims as mediators

Larsen has stated that the new Muslims' role as bridge-builders between Muslim communities and Norwegian society depends greatly on their status: their level of education and their social acceptance in society (Larsen 1995: 180). The frequent intercessions of Yusuf

Islam and to a certain extent Hanzell-Thomas in the official debate might be regarded in view of their high status in British society; the former was formerly a famous pop star, the latter is part of the British intelligentsia. Hamza Yusuf's intercession, however, is probably due to his high status in the Muslim community, where he is one of the few Muslim leaders in the United States to have thousands of followers both from the convert community and from born Muslim communities.

In Scandinavia a similar trend can be observed. New Muslims function on various levels in society, and, as in Britain, new Muslims who have a role as an intermediary between Muslim immigrant communities and wider Scandinavian society are mostly highly educated. As academics they have the ability to promote a balanced view of Islam and Muslims that might be accepted by majority society. They also tend, due to their educational background, to distinguish between 'ideal Islam' and 'Muslim practice' and between various understandings of Islam. By this, non-Muslims might more easily understand the complexity and the problematic issues of Muslim communities in Western society.

One area where Scandinavian new Muslims have interceded between majority society and the Muslim community is the issue of male circumcision. The issue of circumcision of boys was raised in Sweden in 2000 and 2001, due to the implementation of a new law requiring male circumcision to be performed by professional nursing staff with proper anaesthesia. Some individuals within the organisation *Save the Children* proposed they should support a law prohibiting all circumcision of boys, regarding such a practice to be against the Declaration of the Rights of Children. During *Save the Children's* annual meeting in 2001, the issue was discussed and five motions were presented. Four of these motions proposed a prohibition of male circumcision. Ouis, who is a member of *Save the Children*, presented the fifth motion. In this motion she argued that both Jews and Muslims are marginalized communities in Swedish society and a prohibition would increase their marginalized status. She further said that if a prohibition went through there is a danger the children could suffer mistreatment at the hands of uneducated staff. She proposed to accept the new law and take care that it be implemented in a proper manner. The annual meeting accepted her proposal and voted against a total prohibition of circumcision of boys (Rädda Barnen 2001). In my discussion with Ouis she sees her role as pivotal in this case.

Save the Children is a prominent NGO in Sweden and a proposal for the prohibition of circumcision of boys might have put pressure on the Swedish legislating authorities. The new Muslim's role as mediator between majority society and the Muslim community is evident in this case.

As mentioned above, Bettina stated that new Muslims have both the 'insider and the outsider perspective', can see Muslims 'in terms of diversity' and are 'objectively' able 'to discuss this diversity'. I would, however, question her belief that new Muslims in general have an insider and outsider perspective. Although many Muslim converts have higher education, some are also lower educated. Furthermore, regardless of education, individuals who become 'cultural Muslims' will adjust to their partners' understanding of Islam, at least in the first stage of their conversion process. New Muslims at this stage, particularly those with lower education, will have difficulty distinguishing between various forms of Islam. Larsen has observed such a tendency (Larsen 1995: 167). She claims that in matters of *fiqh* the understanding of Norwegian converts, where women form the majority, depends largely on their husbands' understanding. She discusses this matter in terms of the 'significant other', saying that the husbands often play the role of the intermediary when it comes to Islamic knowledge. She has observed how new Muslims' image of Islam is coloured by the 'understanding of Islam' prevalent in the husbands' environment. In her view 'the new Muslims, by acquiring the knowledge of the husband, do not become socialized into any particular group, rather [their secondary socialization is] into the husband's understanding of "the Islamic reality"' (Larsen 1995: 167). This type of new Muslims would hardly discuss Muslim diversity objectively, rather they would see diversity as divergences from Islam.

It is interesting that Larsen talks about women who adjust to their husbands' understanding of Islam, whereas in my study I found that the reverse is also true. Larsen completed her study on Norwegian converts in 1995, and, at that time in Norway, there were few male converts. In the 1990s, however, the number of male converts grew. The Danish convert, Abdul-Wahid Pedersen, for instance, believes that lately more men than women have been embracing Islam in Denmark because of marriage and also friendship with immigrant Muslim boys. I have observed a similar trend in Sweden, where many young boys as well as men who marry Muslim women have

recently embraced Islam. Furthermore, in Sweden I have observed that many men who marry Muslim women tend to adjust to their wives' understanding of Islam, although I will claim that they do not turn into 'cultural Muslims' in the same manner as many women do. This has probably to do with their role in majority society as breadwinners for the family, whereas many of the female 'cultural Muslims' tend to have more children than the average Scandinavian women and stay at home to look after them. These women, thus, have less contact with and are less influenced by the ideas and ideology of majority society.

The new Muslims who can function as intermediaries between Muslims and Scandinavian macro-society are probably those with a higher education or a certain status in society. On a grassroots level, however, many Scandinavian new Muslims are active: some work as kindergarten teachers, some work within the community, and some have obtained funding for cultural work that aims to inform Scandinavian society about Islam and Muslims. Karima says that 'as I am wearing a headscarf, I am a bridge between Muslims and Swedes whether I like it or not'. Gunilla, who works as a community worker, expresses her role as a bridge between Muslims and Swedes in similar terms; she is 'just being there'. She believes she creates an image of normality when she acts within Swedish society; in her dealings with Swedish social workers at work and in her activities at her children's school, where she shows that the Swedish parents' problems are similar to her own. 'We Muslims are like everybody else in this society,' she states. 'I am as afraid of my children taking drugs or ignoring their homework as they are. We are all Swedes, and the fact that I wear a headscarf does not make my concerns about my fellow human beings and my family any different from other Swedes.'

Abu Ahmad sees the attempt to create understanding between people of different opinions and ideologies as a challenge. He finds it valuable to try to get acquainted with 'the other persons' ways of thinking', and he regards his role as a mediator in terms of establishing a dialogue. 'To understand the person with whom one communicates is a basic condition for a true dialogue,' he states. 'One should not just listen to "the other", rather one should try to *understand* "the other's" reasoning.' He further believes that one has to be secure in one's own faith to the extent that one does not feel threatened by others' ideas and conceptualizations. 'Thus,' he says,

‘a lot of knowledge and wisdom is necessary in order to be an open and balanced person.’

Dialogue or Da’wa?

In contrast to Abu Ahmad, who sees his role as a mediator between Muslims and Swedish society in terms of understanding, acceptance and tolerance of others’ opinions and ideologies, many Muslim immigrants living in Scandinavia see *da’wa* as an important factor in their contact with majority society. This might be one of the reasons why many born Muslims experience difficulty in their attempts to build bridges. When they speak to non-Muslims they do so in a normative manner, with the aim of presenting ‘the truth’ in order to lead non-Muslims to the right path. In a Scandinavian context, the audience who attends lectures about Islam and Muslims tends to be less interested in Islam as a religion, and more interested in acquiring knowledge about Islam and Muslims in the migrant situation. Many new Muslims are aware of this fact; many non-Muslims are not. Due to the difference in aim between the lecturer and the audience, therefore, there often appears to be a disharmony between them. Annika, who frequently gives lectures to teachers, social workers, etc, expresses:

When I give lectures I rarely have it in mind that somebody in the audience might actually convert. I know that in Sweden there is so much basic hostility towards Islam, my main aim is just to let non-Muslims understand that Islam is not dangerous. I therefore never preach about Islam. This would be wrong and this is not why people ask me to come to lecture. I try to speak about the diversity in Muslim communities and to convey the idea of development within the Islamic theology. By doing this I do think some people change their view of Islam in general.

Many new Muslims, particularly those who are highly educated, do not ‘preach’ Islam, rather they talk about problems in the Muslim communities and explain many of these problems by making a distinction between the practice of Muslims and the writings of the holy texts.

As with the role of Hamza Yusuf in American society, some new Muslims in Scandinavian society, who function as imams or leaders within the Muslim community, act as intermediaries. Abdul-Wahid Pedersen, who functions as imam, tells how, after the September 11th attack, he was asked to be interviewed and write feature arti-

cles in the big newspapers in Denmark, and has frequently appeared on Danish television. Abdul-Wahid sees his role as being a mediator within both the Muslim group and Danish society. He says:

For many years I have been a bridge-builder. This is due mainly to the fact that I, as a Danish convert, have an adequate understanding of what is going on among my compatriots. I also know better than my fellow Muslims, who have their background in other countries, why Danes reason as they do about Islam and Muslims.

Abdul-Wahid tells of how he frequently gives lectures on Islam and that his Danish cultural background and his understanding of Islam, built on many years studying Islamic books, makes it easier for Danes to understand Muslims and Islam. Abdul-Wahid speaks also about his status within the Muslim community, and it is interesting to note that, whilst Swedish female converts often say that the Muslim leadership, consisting of Muslim immigrants, works against them, Abdul-Wahid feels that he is promoted by the Muslim community:

Among immigrants there is a general understanding that converted Muslims are better able to bridge the gap with the Danes in general; they therefore rely a lot on those of us who have chosen to act in the official space. There is no doubt that even immigrant Muslims regard the converts as bridge-builders.

Even in Sweden, there are male converts who give lectures and who act in the official debate. One of these functions as imam and he has thus a role to play as a bridge-builder. He is accepted as such by both the Muslim community and majority society.

It is important to be aware of the fact that the new Muslims who function as imams and intermediaries between Muslim communities and majority society in Denmark and in Sweden are affiliated in one way or another to Sufism. It is also interesting to note that Gerholm, has pointed to the potential of Sufism to forge a compromise between the Western and the Muslim worlds. He writes:

Sufism *might* be a compromise between East and West: it is private enough to be suitable in the Western social order and it is official enough to remain an echo of the total Islamic order (Gerholm 1994: 207; cited in Westerlund 1999: 85).

In contrast to the new Muslims who function as imams and who are active both within Muslim communities and in majority society, Khadija, who is highly educated, sees her role mainly in terms of

helping Norwegian society to ‘understand Islam’. Although in Norway there has been a female convert as leader of the Islamic Council Norway, there still tends to be segregation between new Muslims and immigrant Muslims. Moreover, in Norway there is no male convert who has the function of imam in the Muslim community and who could hypothetically act as an intermediary. In my discussion with Khadija she describes her perception of her role as intermediary between the Muslim community and Norwegian society. She believes that her role within the Muslim community is limited as born Muslims rarely open up to new Muslims. ‘My role,’ she says, ‘is to help Muslims create room for Islam in Norwegian society and to convey Islam to non-Muslims’. She continues, saying:

I have a religio-political agenda. Islam is to be official in Norwegian society. When the fasting month Ramadan starts it should be announced on the national radio and television news. Islam should be accepted as part of the Norwegian establishment.

It is interesting to note Khadija’s claim that new Muslims have a limited role in Muslim communities. Larsen’s study reinforces this claim as she observed that it is not easy for new Muslims to integrate into Muslim communities in Norway. This claim is contradicted by the experience of the Danish male convert, but it is important to note that the Danish male convert speaks fluently Arabic and this helps him to participate in the social gatherings in the Muslim community. Due to structural factors, such as cultural traits and language, many Muslim converts feel segregated from the Muslim community. Moreover, as the immigrant leadership tends to feel threatened by new Muslims, an exclusionist attitude develops towards these new Muslims who have reached a certain level of education and Islamic knowledge. This is particularly true for Sweden, although in all three countries there is a tendency for new Muslims to create their own space together. Larsen has illustrated new Muslims’ space as being at the intersection between Muslim communities and Norwegian society. She explains this by referring to how Muslims in Norway have first and foremost concentrated on the opening of mosques. The function of the mosque is, according to Larsen, to maintain immigrants’ Islamic identity, which often includes aspects of culture and language. Born Muslims’ activities are, to a great extent, linked to the mosques. Within the mosques, however, such factors as nationality, ethnicity and language act as structural barriers.

ers to the newcomers. The new Muslims interviewed by Larsen pointed at how they felt that they could not be fully accepted into the community because they could not fulfil certain demands for cultural competence, which is closely linked to nationality, ethnicity and language (Larsen 1995).

New Muslims' role as mediators in the media

New Muslims also have a role to play in the Scandinavian media. In the media Muslims are often defined from an outside perspective; they rarely define themselves. There are many reasons for the scarcity of official Muslim debaters. Firstly, many Muslims lack the professional journalistic and academic training necessary to write in a way accepted by the editors. One editor on a big newspaper told me she usually refused Muslims' writing as it tends to be emotional and unbalanced. Secondly, many immigrants lack sufficient knowledge of the Scandinavian languages and cultural codes. It is thus mainly new Muslims who make the few Muslim contributions to Scandinavian newspapers and magazines. Take the example of the police report filed by new Muslims of the Muslim Women's Organisation in Lund that was referred to in the last chapter; a convert and member of this organisation, Veronica Belina, wrote a letter to the editor of the Swedish newspaper *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* attacking the Iranian woman's speech. She concludes her letter, saying:

There is a general apprehension that Muslims are not willing to follow the Swedish laws, rather they will follow sharia only. Personally, I do my best to follow the Swedish laws like other citizens. Why does nobody react when such a prominent person as Asrin Mohamadi manifestly violates the law that prohibits the agitation of a group of people? She has now been reported to the police by, among others, the undersigned (*Sydsvenskan Dagbladet* 9/11–2000: B9 [translation mine]).

In Belina's statement two main issues appear. Firstly, she disputes the common notion that Muslims do not accept Swedish laws by stating her own commitment to Sweden and its laws. As a new Muslim, standing in between majority society and the Muslim community, she becomes a mediator who can transfer messages from the Muslim community to majority society in a manner majority society can relate to. Secondly she questions why nobody reacts against Mohamadi's obvious violation of the law. Belina turns the

issue and accuses Mohamadi in a way that highlights her familiarity with the cultural codes and social content of Swedish society. Her argumentation reflects a role for new Muslims as mediators, who can interpret and act on behalf of the Muslims. They know the law and know how to apply it in its proper context.

Another example of new Muslims' role in the media is the case of the murder of Fadime, the Kurdish woman, in Sweden in January 2002. Immediately after the murder, members of immigrant women's organisations wrote articles in Swedish newspapers and were interviewed by various papers. Their main message was that religion, particularly Islam, was to blame for what had happened, despite the fact that it was clearly stated in the media that Fadime's family did not have any religious involvement. The Swedish imam, Abdul-Haqq Kielan, took the initiative of writing an answer from an Islamic point of view to one of the big newspapers, in which he rejected the notion that this murder had any grounding in the Islamic sources. This he had various Muslim Women's organisations sign. It is interesting that the editor responsible for the headline of the article chose the wording: 'Crush Male Superiority' (*Svenska Dagbladet* 26/1–2002). As with Belina's article above, Kielan uses 'Swedish' concepts of 'freedom', 'free will' and the 'individual's integrity' to counteract the immigrant women's arguments. The immigrant women demanded that the state interfere to protect children in immigrant families in cases of 'serious cultural clashes' between immigrant communities and 'Swedish culture'. They stated that 'the state must shape laws and safety nets that protect children and the youth from the strait-jackets of religion' (*Svenska Dagbladet* 23/1–2002). Kielan's answer was that this claim is 'a Stalinist fixation on the state as being responsible for children's upbringing' (*Svenska Dagbladet* 26/1–2002). The rest of his answer reflects his background in the Swedish intellectual sphere: 'this attitude is against the Convention on Children's Rights that gives children the right to life, health, security, protection against abuse, respect for their views, identity, language, culture and religion' (*Svenska Dagbladet* 26/1–2002).

Kielan goes on to criticise actual practice in immigrant communities, saying:

In certain immigrant communities there are double standards on accepted behaviour for men and women. Men are able to engage themselves in pre- and extra-marital relationships with impunity, they are even expected to do so, contrary to the Islamic precepts. Women,

on the other hand, run the risk, on the slightest suspicion or accusation, of losing their position or even being murdered. This is also against Islamic law, where the act of falsely accusing somebody is a serious crime (*Svenska Dagbladet* 26/1–2002 [translation mine]).

Kielan's argumentation is very much in line with an accepted 'Swedish' manner of writing; he refers, firstly, to the individual's freedom to raise one's own children according to their own world view. Secondly, by referring to the Convention of Children's Rights, Kielan shows his knowledge of the principles of international justice. However, it is in the latter statement that Kielan shows his knowledge of the Swedish cultural context. By rejecting certain immigrant practices as unacceptable, setting these practices in the frame of 'Islamic values', and at the same time relating these to 'Swedish values', he adheres to the cultural codes and values of the Swedish discourse. Kielan's role as a mediator between majority society and Muslims becomes forceful, as, in the official media debate, he becomes the one to define 'Islam'. In this case 'Islam' becomes synonymous with 'Swedish values'.

Reflections

The new Muslims who function as intermediaries between Muslims and Scandinavian society are mainly those belonging to the 'rational' trend and traditionalists who are institutionally affiliated to Sufism. On the other hand, strict *salafī* converts and new Muslims affiliated to *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, tend to have a hostile attitude towards society and their performances can bring about more hostility than understanding. 'Cultural' Muslim converts rarely function as external bridge-builders, although they have an important function within Muslim communities, where their cultural background comes across in their behaviour and attitudes. Thus 'cultural' Muslim converts are active in creating cultural encounters between Muslim immigrants and Western society on a microcosmic level in the Muslim community.

Although both male and female converts are accepted as mediators between Muslim communities and majority society by the Scandinavian authorities and society in general male converts tend to be more accepted as mediators by the Muslim community. This might be due to the social structure in the immigrant homelands, where women play a minor role in official religious life.

Scandinavian authorities tend to prefer new Muslims, or even second-generation Muslims as dialogue partners, due to the fact that they have gone through a Scandinavian educational system and have knowledge of the Scandinavian outlook on life and Scandinavian value system and thus have a similar approach as majority society. Converts are thus more “equal” or “similar” to themselves in Gullestad’s sense of the word (Gullestad 2002: 83).

Muslim communities in the Scandinavian countries have various approaches to new Muslims. In Norway and Denmark it seems that the immigrant community encourages new Muslims to be intercessors. This has been particularly true after the September 11th attacks in New York. In Sweden, however, there seems to be a resistance in the Muslim councils to use new Muslims for public functions. The differences in approach are caused by the formation of the leadership group. In Sweden, for instance, there are various confederations and thus a struggle for power, whereas in Norway there is only one council, which, at present, seems to function well and without too much friction when it comes to who should be elected as the chair of the board. In Denmark there is as yet no such centralized leadership. Only the future will show how a Danish Muslim council will manage their function as intermediary between the Danish society and Muslim communities, and what role new Muslims will have in such a centralized leadership.

In this chapter I have indicated how new Muslims might play a role as intermediaries between Muslim communities and Scandinavian society. In the next chapter, I will look into how new Muslims are actively shaping a particular form of a ‘Danish’, ‘Swedish’ and ‘Norwegian’ Islam.

CHAPTER NINE

TOWARDS A 'DANISH', 'SWEDISH' OR 'NORWEGIAN' ISLAM?

This [Islam in the West] is a new shoot of the old plant that has died down. You see, Islam is like a green plant; it dies in one spot and crops up somewhere else (Peter Sanders 2001).

Previously, less privileged groups of society, such as women, blacks and immigrants from the third world, have hardly been able to define themselves, neither theologically speaking nor their social behaviour or their ideas. Theological expressions, however, are changing in most world religions today, due partly to the educational revolution that has meant modern higher education is no longer the privilege of a 'white, male elite'. Moreover, as former less privileged groups enter religious studies, traditional religious expressions have been criticised for their particularistic nature. The second fundamental phenomenon behind this process of religious change is the development of new communication technologies.

The concept of creolization helps illustrate modern cultural interaction in both a global and a local context. It can also give us an indication of how earlier societies developed away from perceived homogeneity and uniformity. Why is it that, particularly in Northern Europe, there is a pervasive acceptance of female priests? Going further back in history, how is it that Protestantism spread throughout Northern Europe? The answers lie with political decisions, political conflicts and bonds between different parts of the world.

Schreiter relates the recent process of change within theology to tensions between the global and the local, what globalization theorist, Roland Robertson, terms 'glocalization' (Robertson 1992). Schreiter claims that 'neither the global, homogenizing forces nor the local forms of accommodation and resistance can of themselves provide an adequate explanation of these [cultural and theological] phenomena. It is precisely in their interaction that one comes to understand what is happening' (Schreiter 1997: 12).

Scandinavian converts to Islam are transcultural beings with strong cultural influences both from the Scandinavian and various Muslim cultural spheres. Their understanding of Islam seems to eventually end up in something in between these cultural spheres. Larsen suggests new Muslims' shaping of a particular form of Islam in the Western context is an important development. By speaking about Norway, she believes that the formation of a strong community of Norwegian Muslims helps them in their intercession between Muslim communities and majority society. Larsen shows converts are positioned in the middle of society: there is a dichotomy between new Muslims and born Muslims on the one hand and a dichotomy between Norwegian society and new Muslims on the other. Thus, the born Muslims view the new Muslims as 'them', and Norwegian society views them the same. Therefore, in Larsen's view, the new Muslims, become a separate group: 'Norwegian Muslims'. The process Larsen describes is in keeping with the Schreiter's idea that recent theological changes result from the tension between the global and the local; her description also falls into what Robertson calls a 'globalization' process.

Larsen claims that the separation of new Muslims and born Muslims is caused largely by the Muslim community. However, she conducted her study in the early 1990s and the situation has changed in the early twenty-first century. Lately, with the growth of the convert community, new Muslims' own 'us' and 'them' dichotomy has tended to affect the separation between born Muslims and new Muslims. This dichotomy might also affect new Muslims' separation from Scandinavian society: their change in world view at the time of conversion creates a distance between them and certain Scandinavian attitudes and notions. This distance is expressed in the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. In Larsen's model, new Muslims are, to a certain extent, passive and forced into their particular position, whereas the new reality seems to be that new Muslims themselves are actors in the shaping of a particular form of 'Scandinavian Islam'/'Scandinavian Muslim' community. It is important to note that the new Muslims themselves do not regard this phenomenon as 'Scandinavian Islam'; they speak in terms of 'Danish', 'Swedish' or 'Norwegian' Islam. Given the similar cultural traits of these three countries, however, I have chosen to use the generic term 'Scandinavian Islam'.

The impression I got from my interviews with new Muslims from Scandinavia is that many regard their particular understanding of

Islam as being different from that of the immigrant community. New Muslims often view immigrants' behaviour as part of a struggle between 'Islam' and 'culture'; few grasp the complex relationship that really exists between culture and religion. However, Amal expressed that 'as the Islamic sources have always been interpreted through cultural filters, we, the Swedish Muslims, might create a Swedish Islam.'

Larsen has noted a similar development, saying:

They [the converts] can be regarded as bringing their own Norwegian 'cultural luggage', which is of importance when the Koranic principles are interpreted in the Norwegian context. The result, in the future, will be a 'Norwegian Islam' (Larsen 1995: 175 [translation mine]).

'Religion' versus 'culture'

Many researchers on Islam see the Muslim concept of 'one true Islam' as being a refusal to accept regional differences in the understandings of the Islamic sources. The Swedish researcher on Islam, Leif Stenberg, sees 'Islam' as:

... An on-going discourse where different trends are engaged in struggle, and where the successful contender becomes, for the time being, the established tradition, until it is challenged by yet another trend. This is a situation where many 'Islams' fight to become the One Islamic tradition (Stenberg 1996: 15).

Otterbeck has a similar view. In his discussion of the Muslim magazine, *Salaam*, he shows how Muslim writers are looking for a 'true Islam' by denigrating other Islamic interpretations as 'false Islam' (Otterbeck 2000: 149). He further indicates that Muslims, as well as some non-Muslims, who write about Islam tend to regard Islam as 'a reified category that is experienced as an objective reality' (Otterbeck 2000: 159). In his view it is not understandings of Islam that are presented, but rather 'Islam' itself (Otterbeck 2000: 159). I have to agree to a certain extent with Otterbeck, as in the 1980s and early 1990s this way of presenting 'Islamic' ideas was common both among Muslims and non-Muslims. Otterbeck's study does not, however, discuss the huge development of Islamic ideas in the 1990s, rather it is a historical study presenting ideas in the eighties and the early nineties. Although many Muslims still tend to speak in terms of 'right'

and ‘wrong’ ‘Islam’, the belief in ‘one true Islam’ or ‘one Islamic tradition’ has changed. This change is obvious by looking, for instance, at the Scandinavian Muslim e-group on the Internet, where this concept of ‘one Islam’ is to a certain extent on the way out at the beginning of the twenty-first century.¹ I have also observed with new Muslims as well as amongst born Muslims that the acceptance of the diversity of the Muslim community on both a global and local scale is growing. Some accept it reluctantly, others, like Annika, see the diversity as a ‘reason why Islam still is a driving force in many Muslims’ lives’. In my discussion with Annika, she stated that if ‘Islam’ actually was static, it would only be suitable for one place and at one time. ‘The reason why Islam is still going strong,’ she says, ‘is its dynamics that make it suitable for all times and all places.’

Otterbeck and Stenberg do not draw attention to the fact that Muslims tend to reject those ideas and actions of other Muslims that they regard to be ‘harmful’ or ‘bad’. This seems apparent in the example to which Otterbeck draws attention in his discussion on ‘the true Islam’, but without discussing it in such terms. Otterbeck quotes a female new Muslim’s text in *Salaam*:

A Muslim knows that a child is a gift from Allah, whether it is a boy or a girl and it has the right to care, cordiality and guidance. That is why s/he loves his/her daughter just as much as the son: s/he gives the daughter just as good an education as s/he gives the son and s/he shows the daughter just as much appreciation and consideration as s/he shows the son. Anything else would be impossible in the just and global religion of equality, Islam (Otterbeck 2000: 148, see also *Salaam* 8/87:7 [translation mine]).

The Muslim convert speaks of the good qualities in terms of what is ‘just’ and belonging within the frame of Islam. She promotes what in her view are ‘good’ qualities, and accepting as ‘Islamic’ what in her view are ‘good’ actions or ideas. The content of what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ is a cultural as well as a personal matter and cannot thus be discussed objectively. The important thing, however, is that ‘Islam’ for most Muslims represents that which they regard as ‘good’ and they would refuse that which they regard as ‘bad’, seeing it as ‘un-Islamic’.

The English sociologist, Bobby S. Sayyid, discusses the issue of

¹ See for instance hem.passagen.se/sfcm/sfcm.htm.

'Islam' versus 'Islams', a debate also tackled by some non-Muslim researchers (see for instance Stenberg 1996: 15). He speaks in terms of the signifier (the image) and the signified (concept). By referring to Jacques Lacan, who believes that the signified is produced by the signifier, he sees Islam as a signifier 'whose meaning is expressed by its articulation' (Sayyid 1997: 42). The issue becomes, therefore, one of identifying how Islam itself is articulated as a nodal point. He gives the example that, in general argumentation, 'Islam' connotes many things, such as the Koran and the messengership of the Prophet, that 'it carries along in any of its articulations within any single Muslim community, and [that] cannot be disarticulated without dissolving the specificity of "Islam"' (Sayyid 1997: 42). He continues, saying:

This would suggest that, although Islam can be used to suture a large number of discourses, and that in each act of suturing, its identity will be transformed, it still retains traces of its other articulations (Sayyid 1997: 43).

Sayyid sees that the unity of the Muslim community is a result of 'retrospectively constructing its [the community's] identity, through the use of Islam as a nodal point' (Sayyid 1997: 44). Sayyid points at that fact that 'Islam' occupies a privileged place within the Muslim discourse and that 'the inter-discursivity of Islam is tied up, in large measure, by its significance for the construction of a Muslim identity' (Sayyid 1997: 44). Sayyid argues that even though 'Islam' may be used to articulate a multiplicity of positions, this does not mean that there are multiple 'Islams'. Rather, he says, 'Islam has emerged as the means of articulating a multiplicity of positions without losing its specificity' (Sayyid 1997: 44). Sayyid defines this specificity as being 'for the majority of Muslims . . . the definition of good' (Sayyid 1997: 48). In his view, therefore, 'Islam' is a 'master signifier'. By looking at Sayyid's arguments against the common concept of 'Islams' in view of the examples given by Otterbeck, it seems that when Muslims speak in terms of 'Islamic' or 'Islam', they mean the 'good' and the 'lofty'. The notion of 'Islam' as representing 'the good' is reinforced by Otterbeck's example. He refers also to how writers in *Salaam* understand Islam to be a religion of equality between men and women; a green, ecological religion; as well as a democratic, socially and economically just religion (Otterbeck 2000: 148–149). All the values listed by Otterbeck show how Scandinavian Muslims

understand 'Islam' as a master signifier of that which is 'good' and 'lofty'.

'Scandinavian values'

Islamic concepts are filtered through a Scandinavian cultural filter to give Scandinavian new Muslims their understanding of Islam. The values to which writers in *Salaam* refer as 'Islamic' (equality between men and women, ecology, democracy, social and economic justice) all point at an understanding that 'Islam' is all that is 'good' in a Scandinavian context. Scandinavian new Muslims' primary socialization probably plays a key role in their view on Islam.

The three countries' cultural or social homogeneity (see Chapter One) makes it possible to discern particular Scandinavian values. By looking at the EVSS findings, the increased individualization is characteristic of Scandinavian society (Pettersson and Riis 1994). Personal permissiveness is another common value. Similar social and cultural institutions in the three countries, such as language and welfare systems, coupled with the predominance of the Social Democratic party in all three countries in the post-war period, have contributed to values common to all three countries. By looking at legislation in the three countries, for instance, there is a discernible pattern of equal opportunities for men and women, for individuals of various faiths, ethnic groups, sexual dispositions, etc. Furthermore, what Schreiter calls the 'global flows' (theologies of liberation, feminism, ecology and human rights) (Schreiter 1997) can be seen in a wider perspective as common values in the Western society in general and Scandinavian society in particular. These theological discourses are, in my view, explicit responses to similar discourses in the general process of globalization. Thus, Schreiter's four theological discourses can be considered guidelines in the search for common Scandinavian values, making it possible to evaluate the arrival of a 'Scandinavian Islam'.

The growing individualism in society and the change in traditional bonds between individuals can be seen as contributing to the notion of liberation or emancipation. The secularization process that is evident in Western society in general and Scandinavian society in particular is an indication of emancipation from traditional norms. The secularization of society does not mean that religiosity is non-existent

in Scandinavia; many Scandinavians see religion as an important factor in their life. Rather religion, which has often been the carrier of traditional values and behaviour patterns, has a smaller part to play in official life than it used to have. The discourse on emancipation is also important when it comes to power. In Scandinavia there has been an emancipation campaign from the traditional sources of power that are 'white', 'heterosexual', 'Protestant' and 'male'. The strengthening of feminist, secularist and anti-racist ideas has led to a general emancipation from the social ideal being 'white', 'heterosexual', 'Protestant' and 'male' that marked the pre-war debate.

Democracy as a concept can be considered within the same frame of discourse as emancipation. The ideal of the liberal democracy, as opposed to the democracy of the majority, is integral to Scandinavia as it is to the rest of the Western countries. Democratic values are, for instance, listed as core values in the school regulations of all the three countries.

As a consequence of the discourse on emancipation, the ideal of equal opportunities, between individuals in general and men and women in particular, has become a penetrating concept. The discourses on human rights and feminism are crucial elements of the development of equal opportunities. The Social Democratic Parties in the three countries have promoted this concept in particular and their strong influence in the political debate has allowed it to play a major role in official life. Ehn and Löfgren's notion of 'cultural struggle' (Ehn and Löfgren 1982) is, in my view, an accurate illustration of how feminist ideas came to be a substantial part of middle-class ideology. This was achieved through an internal cultural struggle, whereas the working class came to absorb the ideal after an external cultural struggle.

The ideal of equal opportunities between people of all classes and ethnic groups exists in all three Scandinavian countries and is manifested in the welfare system. This equal opportunity ideal seems to be a result of the three states incorporating parts of the radical message of the students' revolt of 1968, with its demands for social equality and the levelling of class distinctions. The stress on equal opportunities can be linked in part to how the Scandinavian countries have incorporated certain subcultures into the mainstream ideology.

As for the ideal of equal gender opportunities in the religious sphere, the Danish church was the first of the three state Churches to accept female clergy. Female priesthood was sanctioned in 1947;

the following year three women were ordained as priests. In Sweden, on the other hand, female priesthood was first sanctioned in 1958, and the first three clergywomen were ordained in 1960. Norway was the last to agree to female priesthood, the first clergywoman being ordained in 1961.

In order to chart the development of equal gender opportunities in Scandinavia, I will focus on the representative example of the Swedish context. In the mid-1970s the Swedish Social Democratic Party officially recommended *jämställdhet*, which, according to the historians, Christina Florin and Bengt Nilsson, implied a vision of a governmental reform programme for equal work opportunities for men and women in Swedish society (Florin and Nilsson 1999: 14–15). The law on equal gender opportunities (*jämställdhetslagen*) was passed in 1979, a year later than in Denmark and Norway. In Sweden, and indeed the rest of Scandinavia, the implementation of a new gender order was introduced as a political project, which effected actual policy and legislation. The new gender order became an order instigated from the top, to which the public was obliged to respond.

In Sweden, the entry of women into the labour market coincided with the development of social institutions such as kindergartens, the introduction of school lunches, the vaccination programme, and the state's active role in children's education. These were all factors in society's creation of substitutes for 'the good mother', which liberated women from the burden of domestic work (See Florin and Nilsson 1999: 23). It is important to draw attention to how the 'scientification of daily life' became a strong weapon in the cultural struggle for an equal opportunities policy. When kindergartens were nationalized in the 1960s, people called attention to scientific investigations that indicated how kindergartens positively contributed to the development of children's social character even from an early age (SOU: 1968).

The introduction of school lunches was a project specific to Sweden. In Norway and Denmark children have to bring their own school lunches, which more often than not consist of sandwiches. The system of school lunches in Sweden indicates a more fundamental approach to the welfare project, as expressed in the concept of 'the People's Home'. The system also reflects the Swedish state's fundamental commitment to the project of equal opportunities between men and women, as women were released from such basic tasks as cooking lunch every day. This was, therefore, a greater opportunity

for women and men to be emancipated from traditional social patterns, and for women to work longer hours in the official domain.

Ehn and Löfgren refer to various strategies employed by the dominating classes or groups in order to maintain cultural hegemony, such as opposing antagonistic subcultures or incorporating the cultural expressions of various subcultures into majority society (Ehn and Löfgren 1982: 80). Gelb's claim of Sweden being a country of 'feminism without feminists' (Gelb 1989: 137–177) indicates a similar incorporation of feminist subculture into governmental policy. Gelb points at how the issues behind protest movements in Sweden have tended to be absorbed by the state and their ideas have become institutionalized. She sees this phenomenon as a problem-solving strategy in order to avoid great controversies between the state and civil society in general. As Gelb deals with feminism, she concludes that, in Sweden, neither has a militant feminism arisen, nor has feminist theory had a real impact (Gelb 1989: 137–177). By linking Gelb's argumentation with the observations of Ehn and Löfgren, it seems that conflicts in Sweden have been avoided by institutionalizing or incorporating *parts* of conflicting ideologies rather than the whole.

Similar developments can be observed in Norway and Denmark, with legislation on equal opportunities and gender issues being passed in both countries. Although the Norwegian and Danish churches do not have the strict policy of denying ordination of clergies who oppose female priesthood, as in Sweden, the promotion of female priesthood is strong. Leirvik has referred to the fact that the Social Democratic Party's annual congress in 1996 decided that the Norwegian Church should not be exempted from the law on equal gender opportunities. A consequence of this was increased female influence and leadership in the church. Leirvik states that 'without the Social Democratic Party's church policy, the Norwegian Church would not have Rosemarie Køhn as bishop' (Leirvik 1997: 157). Køhn was not only the first appointed female bishop (in 1993), but her support for homosexuals within the church caused a fierce official debate at her inauguration.

This introduces another aspect of the ideal of equal opportunities witnessed across Scandinavia: equal opportunities for people of different sexual orientations. The promotion of homosexuals' rights in society has come to the fore of the socio-political discourse. Homosexuals' rights are now widely championed in legislation issues and in the official debate. In their 1996 annual congress, the Social Democratic

Party accepted homosexuals' right to take up positions in the Norwegian Church. This paved the way for homosexuals to take full part in all social areas. Denmark has witnessed a similar process; the Danish Church now has many homosexual clergymen. Furthermore, in 1997, the Danish Episcopal Convention accepted the right for homosexuals to enter into partnership in the church.

It is important to draw attention to the *Ecce Homo* exhibition, the exhibition of photographs by Swedish photographer Elisabeth Olsson in the late 1990s. Her photographs included one image of The Last Supper, where Jesus and his disciples are portrayed as transvestites, and another that depicted a naked Jesus in a rather promiscuous position, which had obvious homosexual undertones. It was not the photographs in themselves that raised the storm of protest, rather it was the fact that some of them were shown as slides at certain sermons in the Cathedral of Uppsala, with the acceptance of the Swedish archbishop. The idea was to make everybody feel welcome in the Swedish Church, irrespective of sexual direction. After the slide display, some claimed that the holy space of the Church had been desecrated, whereas others welcomed the initiative to show the tolerance of the church.

The last of the 'global flows', the ecological discourse, is also an important ingredient in the Scandinavian debate; awareness of ecological issues can be regarded as a common Scandinavian value. Jamison has observed that even with ecology, the Swedish authorities have absorbed elements of the environmentalist ideology, which have then been partly institutionalised and incorporated into official policy (Jamison 2001). Similar tendencies can be found in the political debate in Norway and Denmark, where most political parties have their own programme on environmental protection.

New Muslims on 'Danish', 'Swedish' or 'Norwegian' Islam

Do new Muslims recognise the emergence of a 'Scandinavian Islam', or do they regard Islam as static and immutable, in keeping with the belief of 'one true Islam'? In my discussions with Scandinavian new Muslims I raised the issue and was presented different views. Even within like directions, I could sense variations in view, and it is obvious that individuals' cultural and social backgrounds, gender and personal dispositions have as large a part to play in this as the

direction they represent. Below, I will discuss some of the views. I will try to analyse the answers in light of the 'Scandinavian values' I have discussed above; values that fall within the framework of the discourses of liberation or emancipation, feminism, human rights and ecology, as well as those presented by the EVSS findings (Pettersson and Riis 1994).

In my discussions, many new Muslims saw the development of a 'Danish', 'Swedish' or 'Norwegian' Islam as a natural part of the process of Islam's acceptance in Scandinavian countries. However, Mansur, from the *hizb al-tahrir* categorically opposed the development of a 'Danish Islam'. He states:

I believe that Muslims cannot and should not form a 'Danish Islam'. There do not exist many versions of Islam, just as there do not exist many versions of the Koran. The attempt to create a so-called 'Danish Islam', 'European Islam' or 'American Islam' is only the over-interpretation of certain Islamic texts. In reality, they are Western thoughts, values and rules that are only dressed up as Islam.

Mansur sees the attempts to develop a 'Danish Islam' in terms of conspiracy. 'The idea of a "Danish Islam, "European Islam", or "American Islam", he says, 'is aimed at the destruction of Islam and the Muslims.' He continues, saying that 'such ideas are designed to empty the Islamic world view and the Islamic legislation from those concepts and laws which are not compatible with Western concepts, norms, values, systems and legislation.' He sees this attempt to destroy Islam as part of Western countries' 'global war against Islam' which is manifested in 'the United States' policy in the Muslim world.'

Abu Ahmad, who converted six years ago and who has a slightly *salafi* approach, did not accept the concept of 'Swedish Islam' either. His view is that 'Swedish Islam' would be just a new Islamic Law School. It is interesting to note, however, that he also expressed that 'every country's traditions leave their mark on the way Islam is practised, but that is something else.'

The Danish imam, Abdul-Wahid Pedersen, regards Islam in a similar way, although he goes further than Abu Ahmad. He says that 'Islam is one but it has many faces.' He creates a metaphor of Islam as a string bag full of oranges:

If we change oranges for apples, the bag is still the same, although the fruit changes. I see Islam in this way, if we put Danes or Indonesians or Moroccans in the bag, the bag is still the same whereas the content,

the people inside, change. The people do not change their culture just because they become Muslims. Islam is the gathering factor, but the various Muslim cultures differ from each other.

It is possible to regard Abdul-Wahid's view on Islam as similar to Sayyid's expression of Islam as a 'nodal point'. Just as Sayyid believes that 'Islam' can be used to articulate a multiplicity of positions without implying multiple 'Islams', Abdul-Wahid sees 'Islam as one' but with 'many faces'. Abdul-Wahid's understanding of Islam in these terms rejects the Western notion of 'Islams'; he indicates great diversity *within* the Islamic framework.

It is problematic that Abdul-Wahid sees the relationship between 'culture' and 'religion' as distinctive, indicating a static concept of culture. However, after further discussion, he stated that he sees a close relationship between religion and culture and that 'this relationship between the two is the evidence that it is possible to preserve cultural traits within Islam.' 'Islam is still Islam in Morocco, and Islam is still Islam in Indonesia, although the cultures in the two countries are different,' he says.

In my discussions with Abla, who embraced Islam in the mid-1980s, she expressed that 'Swedish Islam' for her is 'Islam interpreted through Swedish/European experiences.' Abla has a degree in humanities and her answers are marked by a reflective attitude both towards 'Islam' as a concept and her own role as Muslim in Scandinavian society. 'Swedish Islam,' she says, 'widens the scope of Islam.' She tells how she and other Muslim women—Swedish converts and some first-generation immigrants—have established kindergartens according to the Swedish model of child care, run Muslim women's sports associations, arrange summer camps for Muslim women and children with outdoor activities, bathing and canoeing. 'These activities are all examples of "Swedish Islam,"' she claims. Abla speaks of 'Swedish Islam' referring to practical activities and according to the general understanding of theology, this would be slightly wrong. However, Abla sees 'Islam' in terms of a 'comprehensive system of life' comprising both theological expressions as well as practice and practice becomes thus part of the theological system in her view.

It is, however, in relation to the women's issue that she feels a 'Swedish Islam' is most evident in her own Muslim environment. In her view, many Muslim countries have boundaries for the activities

of Muslim women and young girls. 'The interpretations of Islam are more limited, traditional and conventional in Muslim countries,' she says. She sees these interpretations as the 'preservation of culture' in contrast to 'Swedish Islam', which, in her view is innovative, alternative and a movement of questioning. 'Our way,' she says, 'is the creation of new culture, Swedish Islam tries to find alternative methods and ways to educate and promote *da'wa*.' She further states that in her view 'Swedish Islam' incorporates 'Swedish' values, such as honesty, punctuality, work ethics and the keeping of promises. She says that these virtues are also 'Islamic virtues', but they 'are not particularly prominent among Muslims'.

During the lectures I give to the Swedish public or university students, I usually ask them what they regard as 'Swedish ideals', so that we might compare them with 'Islamic ideals'. The ideals they list are very much in accordance with Abla's list of 'Swedish values' that she believes penetrate 'Swedish Islam'. Her view, thus, complies with Sayyid's idea of 'Islam' being a master signifier, having connotations of the 'good' for Muslims. Abla's Islamic ideals are compatible with a popular understanding of 'Swedish ideals' and 'Swedish Islam' becomes a mixture of Islamic and Swedish notions. The innovation in this mixture is its emphasis on the 'good': 'good' Islamic ideals are mixed with the 'good' Swedish ideal, creating a 'Swedish Muslim' that is regarded as both the 'best Muslim' and the 'best Swede'.

The merging of 'Islamic' and 'Scandinavian' values indicated by Abla and Pedersen points at the 'creolization' of culture. Abla and Pedersen's cultural creolization, however, contrasts with Mansur and Abu Ahmad's idea of one uniform understanding of Islam. The centralized ideology of *ḥizb al-tahrīr* and the *salafī* world view obviously play a part in such an understanding. As the ideology of the two movements sticks to the accepted beliefs of Arabic-speaking ideologues there is no scope for local expressions of Islam. Nevertheless, Abla and Pedersen's acceptance of particular Scandinavian expressions of Islam highlights the idea of creolization as well as showing how converts cause 'implosions' within the Muslim community. Abla and Pedersen are both active within the Muslim community and are thus transferring their ideas into a wider Muslim context. The merging of 'Islamic' and 'Scandinavian' values is a probable outcome of their activities.

Islamic Individualism

In 1999, the anthology *Blågul islam. Muslimer i Sverige* (Blue and Yellow Islam? Muslims in Sweden) was published. Ingvar Svanberg and David Westerlund, two researchers on Islam and Muslims, edited the volume, in which various aspects of Muslim activities in Sweden are discussed. Westerlund has dealt with converts in his article 'Euro-Sufism — universalister och konvertiter' (Euro-Sufism — universalists and converts). In his view, many of the new Sufi movements in Europe are characterized by an individualistic approach and, thus, they resemble early Sufic expressions, rather than the well-organised forms of Sufism found in contemporary Muslim countries (Westerlund 1999: 88). His observation is interesting in view of how majority society tends to influence the expression of migrant experience; in this particular case Western individualism seems to dominate the new Muslims' approach to Sufism. He refers to European converts to Sufism, such as Frithjof Schuon (d. 1998), who, although initiated into a Sufi order in Syria, established his own order called Maryamiyya. It is probably no coincidence that he chose the name Maryam, as it is the Arabic form of Mary, the mother of Jesus. It seems that Schuon stressed the role of Jesus and Mary, trying to bridge the gap between Muslims and Christians. Moreover, by giving his Sufi order a female name he has also indicated the importance of women's spiritual experiences, a matter that has often been neglected in the official Muslim context.

Westerlund's further analysis of the writings of European and Swedish Sufi representatives shows how they were often influenced by the texts of Christianity and other religions. Schoun and René Guénon's philosophic writings on the timeless religion (*religio perennis*) have, for instance, influenced the writings of Swedish Sufi Kurt Almqvist (b. 1912). Westerlund goes on to describe the Sufi Movement, a Sufi group active in Europe and established by the Sufi sheikh from India, Inyat Khan (d. 1927). The Swedish branch is called the Sufi Movement in Sweden. In 1910 he visited various Western countries to spread his Sufi message. In the 1920s he came to Scandinavia and gained many disciples in Sweden and Denmark and some in Norway. Vogt sees his form of Sufism as 'Sufism without Islam'. She describes it thus:

When religions are stripped of all myth and dogma we reach 'the eternal wisdom', a universal truth that makes us capable of self-acknowledgement and inner development (Vogt 2000: 210 [translation mine]).

Both Westerlund and Vogt point to the tolerant and inclusive attitudes of this movement. The movement stresses that all religions have a similar essential kernel, although the exoteric forms vary. The aim is thus not to take people away from their religion; rather it is to deepen their spiritual experiences and devotion (Westerlund 1999: 94). This tolerance for other religions is expressed in the shape of the movement's altar, which is adorned with seven candles and the holy scriptures of Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism. Such a form of Sufism, with its individualistic approach and its particular tolerance of other religions, might probably arouse interest in a European context in general and a Scandinavian context in particular. The individualist approach and the possibility to incorporate various elements into the religion also reflects Ahlin and Dahlgren's idea of the modern forms of religion as eclectic 'systems of meaning'.

In Scandinavia there tends to be a suspicious attitude towards institutionalized religions in general (Pettersson and Riis 1994). Personal religiosity and New Age philosophies are increasing in popularity at the expense of established religions. Westerlund has observed that books on Sufism are actually sold in so-called New Age shops in Sweden. From a Western viewpoint, Sufism is regarded not as part of institutionalized Islam, but as a positive expression within an 'oppressive religion'; this despite the fact that Sufism in Muslim countries is very much part of the establishment. However, in the cultural encounter between the West and Sufism, Sufism tends to become more personal and individualistic, thus fitting into the Western emphasis on personal religiosity.

Equal gender opportunities

As indicated by Abla, 'Swedish Islam' allows for Muslim women to participate in activities that women in Muslim countries are excluded from. In my discussions with Muslim converts I found that the issue of gender was often raised. The fact that gender issues are prominent among new Muslims has to be regarded in view of how Islam is portrayed as a 'religion hostile to women' in the Scandinavian media as well as in the general Scandinavian discourse. The new Muslims respond to this by presenting counter arguments to such portraits and thus facilitating change in the realm of gender issues. I have observed how new converts tend to defend traditional Muslim gender

systems. However, as these new Muslims go through various stages in the conversion process there is a tendency to incorporate Scandinavian ideals on gender relations into the Islamic framework, seeing gender equality as 'Islamic' in the pattern of that which is 'good' is Islamic. I have discussed elsewhere how there tends to be a rapprochement between the ideas of highly educated Arabic-speaking immigrants' and those of the West when it comes to gender relations (Roald 2001a). A similar relation can be observed in the Scandinavian convert community, where views on equal gender opportunities vary according to the level of education and degree of continuous contact with majority society.

Maryam, a young woman who is a sympathiser with the *salafī* movement, states that 'in Islam the man is the breadwinner and the woman has to stay at home with her children.' Maryam does not wear the face veil that is quite common among *salafīs*. She says that she would prefer to wear a face veil, but she is only eighteen and is still at school. Her ideas on the roles of women and men are very much the same as those found in books written by leading *salafīs* in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt. Books on women's behaviour and women's dress from these countries have been spread in the late 1990s, promoting a strict segregation between men and women and a gender pattern that accords with the particular Saudi gender pattern.

Mansur, of the Danish movement *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, promotes a similar view when he refers to the article on gender written by al-Nabhānī (see Chapter Five). This article's statement that there is no problem between men and women in 'Islam' indicates a lack of awareness of gender issues in general.

In contrast to Maryam and Mansur, Håkon expresses that he does not see any conflict between the ideal of equal opportunities and Islam. He states that there is no problem with equal gender opportunities, so long as one can be relaxed about the issue. 'The Arab gender pattern is not necessarily Islamic,' he says. 'Look at how the Prophet was at home sewing his own sandals and taking part in domestic work in a relaxed way. I do not want to make a big deal out of it and for me I do not see it as a problem.' In my discussion with Abdul-Wahid Pedersen, I asked him about his view on gender equality. He stated:

There has always been gender equality in Islam. It has been known in Islam for 1400 years. It is a new thing in the Western part of the world, but there has always been gender equality (*ligestilling*) in Islam.

This gender equality, however, does not mean the two genders have similar tasks (*en-stilling*), as there is a difference between men and women. Islamic views are based on the real world. Women acquire their rights according to what is stated in the Koran and in the Koran men and women are given nearly the same rights and duties.

It is interesting to compare Pedersen's argumentation with Badawi's concept of 'equity' (see page 187).

As referred to in Chapter Six, Badawi's book was discussed by the new Muslim attendants of the summer camp in Gothenburg in 1997. The discussion centered round Badawi's concept of 'equity' and its consequences in 'real life'. A Swedish convert expressed that her impression of 'equity' is that, although men and women have the same opportunities, everybody has the right to make personal choices according to his/her own disposition. No position should be regarded as better than another position in her view. She continues saying that the hierarchical structures in society result from the perceived superiority of men's traditional role over that of women. She believes this standard is still reflected in the modern world's social set-up. In the ensuing discussion, another convert remarked that the case where women, due to the economic system in the Scandinavian countries, often have to work outside the home even though they have small children, is an example of 'equality' rather than 'equity'; there is no consideration that women have various likes and dislikes. In her view, some women pursue careers whereas others prefer to stay at home, and the pattern of 'equity' takes care of such differences in outlook and disposition. There was a total acceptance of Badawi's concept 'equity', many of the women expressed in interviews that Badawi's book had brought them much relief. One of them exclaimed 'he [Badawi] has named a feeling that many Muslims recognize but have had difficulty expressing.' Although I raised the question of how the relation of power between men and women might influence the woman's choices, I discovered that there was no real awareness of this among the converts in this discussion. For them 'equity' represented a free choice of their own. In the process of defining 'gender equity', however, a similar situation of that to the past might arise, where women's tasks, what is Islamic and what is un-Islamic, are established by male representatives of the Islamic faith.

I discovered that with the exception of followers of the *salafî* movement and the *ḥizb al-tahṛīr*, by and large Scandinavian new Muslims accept the ideal of equal opportunities, but reject the idea of seeing

women and men as 'equal'. The concept of 'equity' seems to cover this distinction. I found that there was no great difference between Shi'a and Sunni converts on this matter. In my discussions with Shi'a Muslims, Gunilla said she feels the Shi'a converts she knows are all 'feminists', herself included. In her view, many Sunni converts are more traditional in the way they tend to follow their partners' 'Islam', whereas Shi'a female converts are continuously fighting for women's right within 'Islam'. I do not know whether she is right or not but such conclusions probably reflect more the type of people with whom one mixes. She might feel this way because she mixes with those people she feels comfortable with and who have similar views to her. There are also more Sunni convert Muslims than Shi'a converts. My discussions with Sunni Muslims, however, have shown that ideas on female empowerment are just as dominant among them as they are among Shi'a Muslims. In further discussions with Shi'a Muslims I discovered that, even in this group, 'feminist' ideas are closer to the concept of 'equity' than 'equality', thus reflecting the pattern in the Sunni Muslim convert community.

In my discussion with Annika, she stated:

In my view 'equity' means justice. I believe it is unfair to have to live up to the standard of men. Men are different and have different dispositions and the creation of a man's world has tended to incorporate the traditional roles of men. If we go back fifty years, this man's world had no place for children. Now look at how much women work. Who should take care of the children? We are working side by side with men in society, but in this 'manly' society we have forgotten who is to take care of the family. In the end it all comes down to who is to wash the dishes. The social community represented by the family is dissolving and I as a Muslim am very concerned about this situation. At the same time, I am very much part of it as I am a professional woman who does not manage to take care of my family as I would like. If in Sweden, we believed in equity instead of equality we might have a better society, where I could be both a working professional and a good mother and wife.

Annika's dilemma of being a professional at the same time as feeling responsibility for keeping the family together is not specific to new Muslims; it is a problem for many women in Scandinavian society. It is characteristic of the new Muslim's approach, however, that Annika accepts the woman's role as being responsible for the running of the family. Annika believes that women are generally more competent at caring for the family's well being and she would have

preferred a society where she could combine her professionalism with family maintenance.

The acceptance of men and women's different biological dispositions seems to be inherent in the concept of 'equity'. In the official Scandinavian discourse such argumentation based on 'biological reductionism', has been repressed and more or less been defined out of the discourse. In further discussion with Annika I asked her if she believes that men and women must have different roles due to biological factors. She answers:

In society, I believe that men and women are interchangeable; a woman is as good a medical doctor as a man, and a man can be as good a nurse as a woman, and so on. However, on a personal level I believe women feel more responsibility towards their children than many men. Psychologists and geneticists explain this with the fact that women, unlike men, can only beget a limited number of children. I believe this has an influence on the human psyche, at least this is my personal experience. Although my husband is very concerned with the upbringing of our children, he does not care to check if they have brushed their teeth properly or if they put on sufficient clothes when they go out.

By asking Annika how she believes a system of 'equity' would help her in her professional life she states that in such a system her domestic work and her main responsibility for raising the children would be recognised as qualifications and become part of her official work portfolio. 'If I apply for a job', she states, 'I should have the right to have this work evaluated as work experience, which would help me to expand in my job.' She continues saying that 'if women's traditional work were appreciated on an official level of society women would have greater possibilities to participate not only in society as such, but also on a higher level of society.'

In the discussion with Pedersen, he stated that women were only restricted in leading prayers in a mixed gathering, otherwise men and women have equal opportunities. When I asked a group of female converts about this view they accepted this limitation on female participation. One convert stated that women can be imams and lead prayer, but in a female gathering only. The only limitation for women, she says, is thus praying in front of men and she does not see this limitation as a problem. However, she admits that it might become a problem for some in the future, Muslim girls for instance who are brought up in a society like that of Scandinavia

where the equal opportunities policy is strong. ‘But,’ she says, ‘we will cross that bridge when we come to it.’ Another convert stated that she did not regard the issue of women being imams as important as women becoming Islamic scholars. In her view it is in the intellectual development of Islamic ideas women are needed in order to ‘restore the imbalance between the female and the male perspective in Islamic thinking’, she says.

Ideas on equal opportunities in the Scandinavian convert community resemble those of general society. And, just as in society in general, views among new Muslims differ according to the educational status of the individuals. *Salafīs*, members of the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* and lower educated Muslims who are marginalized in majority society tend to accept the traditional Muslim gender pattern. The views of the higher educated, who are often part of the majority society, tend, on the other hand, to converge with the standard Scandinavian view of equal opportunities. However, the latter group’s point of view differs slightly from Scandinavian discourses on gender. The divergence can be illustrated in the distinction between the two concepts ‘equality’ and ‘equity’, where the concept of biological differences is prominent.

Democracy and Human Rights

The debate on democracy and human rights established a foothold in the Islamic discourse at the end of the twentieth century. During my fieldwork among Islamists in Malaysia, Jordan and Europe from the early 1990s, I discovered how Islamists have changed the content of their understanding of ‘human rights’ and ‘democracy’. At the beginning of the nineties, I conducted some fieldwork in Jordan where I interviewed many of the leading Islamists about their views on democracy. Most of them saw democracy in terms of *shūrā*, the Koranic term for taking counsel, saying that as Muslims have *shūrā* there is no need for Western democracy. In the late 1990s, I asked the same persons the same question about democracy and their answers were unanimous: ‘*shūrā* is the same as Western democracy.’ A similar change in the understanding of ‘human rights’ can be observed. The late Pakistani scholar al-Mawdūdī (d. 1979) discusses human rights from an Islamic point of view in his book *Human Rights in Islam*. His style is apologetic and he confronts the Western concepts of human rights by rhetorically promoting alternative rights

(Hedin 1999: 222). He states: 'when we speak of human rights in Islam we mean those rights granted by God' (al-Mawdūdī 1980: 15). Ideas on human rights in the Muslim communities and particularly among new Muslims have changed from the time al-Mawdūdī wrote his book in the 1970s, as the content of the concept 'rights granted by God' has slightly changed.

The change in the understanding of the concepts 'democracy' and 'human rights' indicates a development of ideas in the Islamic movement. I see the change as a result of the cultural encounter with Western society as well as a result of the globalization process, where Western ideas are spread and have a penetrating force all over the world. The strength of ideas of democracy and human rights stems from the strength of the international society, as witnessed in the influence of the United Nations and the Western press on governments in Third World countries.

In my discussions with new Muslims on human rights and democracy, I observed how most Scandinavian new Muslims' understanding of democracy largely coincides with the common Scandinavian view of liberal democracy. I also discovered a similar trend in the discussion of human rights, where few new Muslims said anything against the Declaration of Human Rights. I discovered that those opposing both democracy and human rights were individuals from the *salafī* movement, and those who had recently embraced Islam. Moreover, in Denmark, members and sympathizers of *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, actively opposed the democratic process in autumn 2001 by spreading pamphlets urging Muslims to boycott the elections. As with the *salafī* movement, the *ḥizb al-tahrīr* attracts the youth, newly converted Muslims and second-generation immigrants who come to Islam from non-religious families. Pedersen sees the attachment to these particular movements as a form of youth revolt against the parents' generation. Although many new converts adhere to such extreme movements they tend to leave these movements and join the mainstream 'Islam' at later stages in the conversion process. These movements might be regarded in view of the anarchistic and leftist trends into which youth rebellion is channelled.

In my discussion with Håkon, he said he finds it difficult to discuss democracy as democracy can be defined in various ways. However, he believes that the 'good things' in a democratic system can also be found in Islam. His reference to 'good things' as 'Islamic' reflects Sayyid's theses of 'Islam' as the nodal point and the master signifier

of that which is 'good'. What Håkon means by 'good things' is, firstly, a consideration for human beings' equal value; this, he says, is 'Islamic'. Secondly, he sees the way of discussing the appointment of a leader, which is an important part of a democratic system, as being similar to the *shūrā* system. He continues:

There is a tendency to see Islam and democracy as polar opposites. The bearded Taliban is the best example; he has to learn how to behave in a Western way, otherwise he is not accepted. This discussion is a fake discussion because there is no consideration that democratic values are already present in the Islamic message; often we can even find better ideas in this message than we can in the Western democratic system.

Håkon believes that, in Western countries, there is a tendency to ignore other systems and beliefs and assume that the 'Western' system or belief is the only 'truth'. Such attitudes towards 'the others' indicate a feeling of superiority and an arrogance that is not acceptable, according to Håkon. 'Then,' he says, 'we [the Westerners] have to force our system upon others without caring for what others have or do not have.'

The way Håkon identifies himself with the 'Westerners' in the last statement indicates the dilemma faced by many new Muslims when they find themselves in the intersection between 'us', the Westerners, and 'them', the Muslims. As discussed in Chapter Six, sometimes, new Muslims reverse this 'us' and 'them' pattern, identifying themselves with Muslims and seeing 'them' as Westerners. This has also been observed by Larsen. When it comes to identification with one of the sides in the dichotomy, new Muslims feel themselves to be somewhere in the middle. Many new Muslims regard some Western ideas as acceptable and even 'Islamic', whereas immigrant Muslims (and even many converts within the extreme movements) see the same ideas as 'Western' and therefore 'un-Islamic'. When it comes to the empowerment of women, for instance, new Muslims tend to go much further than immigrant Muslims into a Western sphere of ideas; ideas that are often presented as 'Islamic' by immigrant Muslims, on the other hand, such as a Middle-Eastern gender pattern system or strict obedience to a leader, might be regarded as reprehensible and therefore not 'Islamic' by many new Muslims. This follows the pattern indicated by Sayyid; the reprehensible by definition is 'un-Islamic' in contrast to the 'good' which is 'Islamic'.

New converts at an initial stage of the conversion process, where the rejection of the old is prominent, and individuals in either of the two extreme movements *salaḥī* and the *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, tend to oppose both democracy as well as the Declaration of the Human Rights. However, due to the great emphasis on democracy and democratic values in Scandinavia, most new Muslims look at democracy and human rights in a favourable way. Most do not see any distinction between a democratic system and Islam, and, in their view, human rights are fully compatible with 'Islamic' values.² As both democracy and human rights are regarded in terms of the 'good' and 'desirable', they are thus considered 'Islamic'.

Homosexuality

When it comes to homosexuality, new Muslims diverge most markedly from the 'Scandinavian value system'. Given the prominence of equal opportunities for people of various sexual directions on the political agenda in Scandinavia, the issue of homosexuality is frequently discussed in the official space. The *Ecce Homo* exhibition in Sweden is an example of the political weight put on the issue. Garbi Schmidt, a Danish researcher in Islamic studies, has observed that the homepage of the Sveriges Förenade CyberMuslimer (SFCM — Sweden's United Cyber Muslims) has a link to the homepage of a homosexual Muslim (Schmidt 1999: 111). It is important to note that it also has a link to the Ahmadiyya movement's homepage. This is interesting in view of the main Muslim trend of regarding the Ahmadiyya movement as being outside the fold of Islam. These two links were found on the homepage of one of the founders of the SFCM homepage and e-group under the subheading of 'religious debate and related'. Although the founder, who is also a convert, states that the traditional Islamic view is that homosexuality is a punishable crime, these two links, both controversial in the Islamic discourse, indicate the Swedish Muslim convert's democratic view of freedom of expression as well as the Scandinavian idea of equal opportunities for individuals of various sexual dispositions.

² As for attitudes towards the Declaration of Human Rights among Muslims in general, see Mayer 1991; 1995.

In the summer of 2001, there was an intense debate on Islam and homosexuality on the SFCM e-group. Many of those involved in the debate were new Muslims or second-generation Muslims. On the e-group it is sometimes difficult to separate new Muslims from second-generations, as the members often use aliases, however, second-generation Muslims are in much the same situation as new Muslims, having been brought up in a secular Western society and educated in secular Western institutions. I have discussed elsewhere the effect educational systems have on the kinds of questions one raises and the answers one gives (Roald 1994). In the present discussion, thus, there seems to be few differences between the views of new Muslims and second-generation practicing Muslims.

The debate started with a female convert who wrote:

At a time when it is politically correct to say that homosexuality is a normal phenomenon, it is refreshing to read the psychologists' view. A common argument used to be that homosexuality is congenital and there is nothing one can do about it; one has to accept it. On www.narth.com however, psychologists claim the opposite and one can therefore (with the help of God) recover from this illness. It is remarkable that one can claim that one is not born a woman, 'one turns into one' (the words of de Beauvoir), whereas the same thing cannot be said of homosexuals (SFCM 5/6-2001 [translation mine]).

It becomes obvious by looking at this new Muslim's statement, that there is no awareness of the scientific debate of essentialism versus social constructionism. The writer is an undergraduate student but she has not linked the various views on homosexuality to the controversy between the two scientific paradigms. It is further interesting to see how Muslims tend to embrace the view that homosexuality is a result of socialization, as this suits best the idea of God's omnipotence. For how can God be just if he creates some people with a homosexual disposition only to deny them the right to fully express their feelings? In my discussions with Muslim converts similar ideas were aired. Elisabeth, who converted to Islam a few years ago, stated that there is no problem with homosexuals turning away from their homosexuality if they embrace Islam. Other new Muslims, however, particularly those belonging to the 'rational' trend, were much more reflective in their views on homosexuality. Annika, who has been Muslim for more than 10 years and is one of those who regards Islam in terms of being a logical religion, says she believes homosexuality might be both congenital and an effect of the environment.

'However,' she says, 'I believe that it has mostly to do with genes.' When I asked her how she defines homosexuality within the Islamic framework, she expressed:

For me everybody has the right to live according to his/her own standards. Although I know that the Islamic Law Schools have various punishments for homosexual acts, I cannot judge the homosexuals. They are born like this or they are victims of unfortunate adolescent conditions. What they do privately is none of my business, as long as they do not demonstrate their sexual direction openly. This is the same as with heterosexual couples. One should not kiss or caress openly as this is embarrassing and creates jealousy and bad feelings in individuals who are single or feel lonely. Sex belongs to the private sphere and not in official life.

Annika's view coincides with that of another contribution at the SFCM e-group. The male contributor, probably a second-generation Muslim, states that he knows that it is not the norm to be homosexual or bisexual, and he says he also knows what the Koran says about homosexuality, but he continues: 'I do not want to judge people for what [sexual disposition] they have' (SFCM 12/6-2001). He goes on to say that he was not always favourably disposed towards homosexuals, but he changed his view after he got to know some homosexual Muslims who were strict practitioners of their religion, had good behaviour and were in general decent people. He speaks against turning homosexuality into a 'Western phenomenon', saying that, even in Muslim countries, one can find practising homosexuals.

By saying this, he bucks the trend common to first-generation Muslims and Muslims living in Muslim countries in particular, of regarding all 'bad' phenomena as being 'Western'. This particular denigration of the 'other' has to be linked to the pattern of judging other cultural groups according to their apparent practices and one's own according to its ideals (Elias and Scotson 1994).

A male convert responds to this contributor, saying that it is obvious that homosexuality exists in Muslim countries also, but the fact that it exists does not mean that it is acceptable. He states that homosexuality is not an illness and one can be homosexual and Muslim at the same time. The most important thing, however, is to not be an 'active' homosexual. 'Islam,' he says, 'takes a similar position to that of the Catholic Church; the feelings are okay, but the action is forbidden' (SFCM 12/6-2001). In a later contribution the same person states that 'according to our Holy Law we, as human

beings, are not judged according to our feelings but according to our actions' (SFCM 13/6–2001). He also reminds the readers of the Hereafter, saying that 'we do not only have this life on earth but also the coming life [in the Hereafter]'.

In his continuing argumentation, it is obvious that it is less the homosexual action he is against as it is the 'gay culture' that he sees as over-exposed in contemporary Sweden. He says:

I also turn against the founding of one's identity on one's sexuality and the creation of a politically powerful and promiscuous subculture that makes up much of the cultural life of Sweden. Gay pride festivals, homosexual marriages and adoptions and state-funded sodomy propaganda are things that are obviously very harmful for Sweden (SFCM 12/5–2001 [translation mine]).

Another member on the e-group agrees that homosexual actions are 'against Islam', but he believes that they are no worse than other misdeeds that Muslims are much more ready to accept. 'We should have a sense of proportion,' he says, 'it is worse not to perform the daily prayers than to be homosexual' (SFCM 12/6–2001).

In a discussion with Somaya, who embraced Islam in the 1980s, the matter of homosexuality was brought up. She had followed the discussion on SFCM and she believes that some of the contributions do not take into consideration the fact that no punishment is stated in the Koran for homosexuality. 'The issue of homosexuality,' she says, 'is a spiritual one. Human beings should not judge other human beings rather it is God who is the Judge. If a person chooses to perform homosexual actions, even though there are indications both in the Koran and the hadith literature that such actions are not acceptable, it is the human being's own choice.'

Somaya's approach, as with that of Annika, indicates a leaning towards individualism, away from traditional social patterns. Although both women see homosexual actions as against 'Islamic values', they still see the issue of homosexuality as a matter between man and God and not for human beings to resolve. This point of view reflects the increased individualization of Scandinavian society as found in the EVSS study.

Jesber is convinced that God has created homosexuals, but that God, in his wisdom, has made certain rules to protect His creation. 'If someone should be punished for the homosexual act,' he says, 'there have to be four witnesses to the act itself. I believe God has

made it in this way because He knows that human beings are weak.' He further states that homosexuality is practised everywhere but Muslims cannot legalize it as has been done in Europe.

Margaretha, who is a Shi'a Muslim convert, states that, although she does not judge homosexuals as long as they do not disturb anybody, she sees homosexuality as an 'unnatural' condition. 'The natural condition is that human beings, animals and plants multiply,' she says, 'whereas that which does not multiply is unnatural.' There is no contradiction between Margaretha's view and the view of many Sunni converts. The views of individuals belonging to the extreme movements were much more harsh than those of the average convert. Maryam, for instance, strongly disapproves of homosexuality. As in most other cases, the extreme movements share radical ideas and tend to differ from Muslims in the 'rational' trends and traditionalists.

In Scandinavia there is a general acceptance of homosexuals and homosexual rights are promoted in the official discourse. Among Muslim converts, homosexuality is less accepted; homosexual feelings are accepted, whereas homosexual actions are regarded as 'un-Islamic'. The discussion on homosexuality on the SFCM send-list testifies to the importance of the topic; the rights of homosexuals are a recurring theme in the official Swedish discourse. The acceptance of homosexuality in all three Scandinavian countries is reflected in the status of homosexuals in official life. However, although many new Muslims expressed their intolerance for homosexuality, some expressed the opposite or showed an indifference to the subject. As Scandinavian converts are conditioned into a democratic as well as individualistic way of thinking, through their upbringing and the educational system, I was not surprised to find such an unconcerned attitude. 'It is their [the homosexuals'] own business as long as they do not bother anybody,' Khadija stated, echoing the statements of other new Muslims and thus showing a 'typical' contemporary Scandinavian attitude.

Ecology

Ouis wrote an article, 'Islamisk eco-teologi — en ny grön rörelse?' (Islamic Eco-Theology — a new green movement), in the anthology *Blue and Yellow Islam: Muslims in Sweden*, in which she discusses how ecological and environmental ideas, as well as close relations to the

elements of 'nature', present in the Swedish discourse, have affected Muslims in Sweden. She points to the fact that new Muslims in particular are affected by such ideas and that a particular Islamic eco-theology is a result of the cultural encounter between 'Islam' and the Swedish context. Most Swedish political parties have a programme on environmental issues, and 'nature', she says, 'has practically obtained a holy status in Sweden, becoming a new "religious institution"' (Ouis 1999: 239). She further shows that some researchers argue that ecology has replaced the role of religion as an ideology in the contemporary world (Ouis 1999: 239). Ouis analyses some poems written by Swedish new Muslims that were published in *Salaam*. She shows how 'Swedish' ideas on nature are expressed in these Islamic poems, such as how human beings who listen to their inner soul will eventually choose the woodland and the village over urban life. Some new Muslims have expressed the closeness of God in nature and others the problematic relationship between humankind and nature, where human beings represent a devastating force and 'nature' represents the 'innocent' and the 'wise'. Ouis also mentions how many Muslim organisations in which new Muslims are active share ecological ideas and values with Swedish society. The Muslim Women's Association in Lund (Lunds Muslimska Kvinnoförening) in the south of Sweden has, for instance, emphasized environmental issues in their kids' activities. Ouis refers to the Muslim summer camps as another example of Muslims' use of 'nature'. According to Ouis, Muslim social organisations in general tend to resemble Swedish organisations both in structure and in activities (Ouis 1999: 244–245). Ouis' claim is reinforced by Abla's statement above that highlights 'Swedish Islam' as promoting women's sports activities and summer camps for Muslim women and children with outdoor activities, bathing and canoeing.

In my discussions with Håkon on a 'Scandinavian Islam', ecological issues were raised. He stated that the relationship between human being and nature is clearly given in the Koran. He tells of how, as a boy in a non-religious home, he had experiences of God in the countryside. He used to sit for hours on a small bridge where he could view open fields, paddocks and woods. 'Here I sat during summer holidays, listening to the ripples under the bridge in the chlorophyll-coloured sunlight that filtered through the trees,' he says. Håkon is, however, careful to deny any pantheistic ideas, saying:

God of course does not exist in the trees or in the sunlight, but all this exists because He exists. They are traces or imprints of what He has created. In the Koran it says that the signs of God are in the shifting of the seasons and in the diurnal rhythm. But I did not understand this then.

He quotes the Koranic verse:

And He it is who has caused waters to come down from the sky; and by this means have We brought forth verdure. Out of this do We bring forth close-growing grain; and out of the spathe of the palm tree, dates in thick clusters; and gardens of vines, and the olive tree, and the pomegranate; [all] so alike, and yet so different! Behold their fruit when it comes to fruition and ripens! Verily, in all this there are messages indeed for people who will believe! (Koran 6: 99)

Håkon further points at how the creation of human beings is depicted in the Koran as nowhere near as great and overwhelming as the creation of the universe. According to him this indicates human beings' place in universe. He states that he finds it strange how Muslim immigrants never 'use nature' as Scandinavians do. 'They never go out and contemplate nature,' he says, continuing:

This is something I find very strange. In the Koran there is a recurrent theme that nature provides signs for human beings to contemplate; those who have intellect or wisdom will understand these signs. However, one cannot see these signs if one does not go out into the open air or visit the countryside. This is what the old Sufis used to do. They sat in their caves and contemplated for years, looking at various signs in nature. They fully understood this part of the whole.

Other new Muslims adhering to various Islamic directions promote similar ideas. One issue discussed among new Muslims is that of organic foodstuffs. In all three Scandinavian countries organic food can be widely bought and many people are aware of the importance of eating 'proper' food and avoiding too much poisonous or synthetic food. In my discussion with Pedersen, he placed particular emphasis not only on the way animals are *slaughtered* but also on the way they *live*. He sees the role of human beings, as God's *khalīfa* (vicegerent) on earth, as decisive for their relation to nature. He mentions how in Denmark the discussion on *ḥalāl* slaughter (ritual slaughter) is raised approximately every year or every second year, with Danes expressing outrage at the way Jews and Muslims slaughter their animals. At the same time they do not care that animals

may be held in very bad conditions or transported long ways to get slaughtered. The way the animal lives is also important in order for it to be *ḥalāl*, Pederson says. He continues, saying that if the animal has lived in bad conditions or if it has a poor diet according to the Islamic regulations, it might not be *ḥalāl* even though it is slaughtered in a *ḥalāl* way.

In a discussion group of female converts, they tackle the same issue stating their belief that none of the meat available to Muslims today is *ḥalāl*. ‘Muslims,’ one of them says, ‘are not allowed to eat carnivorous animals, but today the farmers force meat in one form or another into animals whose bodies are made for a green diet.’ In her view, thus, all the accepted sorts of meat such as chicken, cow, ox and sheep have more or less become forbidden for Muslims to eat. ‘It is more *ḥalāl* for me to buy an organic free range chicken which is not slaughtered in a *ḥalāl* way than it is to buy a *ḥalāl*-slaughtered chicken,’ she says.

Another important issue is new Muslims’ stance on the plethora of alternative medicine that has sprung up in Scandinavia in recent times. Many new Muslims embrace this trend, and its focus on natural remedies, such as herbal cures, as well as homeopathic medicines. Many new Muslims, particularly women, see this issue as part of the modern ecological initiative.

The new Muslims’ ideas of ecology, promoting nature and organic foodstuffs, resemble Scandinavian ecological ideas. In Scandinavia some people are very concerned about these issues, whereas others do not care at all. Similarly with the Scandinavian new Muslims, some take ecological issues seriously whereas others have no interest in the issue. However, as Ouis has observed, there is a tendency for new Muslims to put the traditional Scandinavian view of ‘nature’ into an Islamic framework. As shown by the example of Håkon, new Muslims’ reading of the Koran is based on a Scandinavian value system, of which a respectful approach to ‘nature’ is an important part.

Scandinavian new Muslims’ Islamic activities

Larsen discusses a gradual convergence of ‘Islamic’ and ‘Norwegian’ activities into a new kind of ‘Islamic’ activity. Norwegian converts have for instance started up Islamic kindergartens and have also initiated a specific form of Eid celebration. In the Muslim world the Eid celebration is a time when families visit each other during the

three or four days that the celebration lasts. New Muslims often do not have Muslim relatives, unless they can include their partner's family. In the Muslim community in Norway there was no real Eid celebration for children until female converts decided to arrange a special party in one of the mosques, *al-Rabita* (the league), after the Eid prayer. The new Muslims emphasised the children's need for celebrations and the development of Eid traditions in the Norwegian context. The giving of gifts to children who had managed to fast, and the organization of various competitions became a recurring element in the celebrations (Larsen 1995: 79). Larsen notes that, after a while, even Muslim immigrants took part in this celebration. Even women from other mosques came to attend the celebration, as there were no arrangements for women in their mosques. The new Muslims' Eid traditions in Scandinavia resemble that of the traditional Christmas traditions.

As most converts tend to skip Christmas celebration (except for those who feel obliged to celebrate with their parents), they have brought the traditions from this celebration into the new Islamic framework. One example of this is the Norwegian converts who have introduced the Norwegian tradition of the 'Advent calendar' that contains little pictures and small pieces of candy for each day of Advent and have adapted them for Ramadan. The calendars are homemade with an appliqué of mosques, crescents and other 'Islamic' motifs. Larsen writes that these calendars are peculiar in that the children are not to open the gift of the day until after sunset, when the Muslims break their fast.

The publication of a book of Norwegian-Islamic children's songs is another example of how 'Islam' has evolved in the Norwegian context. The texts are mainly Islamic songs translated from English but the new Muslims have composed some songs themselves. It is interesting to observe that the melodies are often taken from well-known children's songs, even Christian songs, from the Norwegian context (Larsen 1995: 167).

During Ramadan 2001, some new Muslims were made responsible for children's activities in one of the mosques in Oslo. In addition to telling Islamic stories, they also worked with play dough. Khadija tells how children queued up to participate in the activities; even those children who often refuse to participate in mosque activities were enthusiastic about going to the mosque that year. 'They have at last understood that the traditional imams' way of only letting

the children sit and read the Koran does not work on Norwegian children,' she says. 'If we want our children to take up the Islamic tradition we have to teach them in an empathetic manner, not in a traditional way.'

In Sweden in the town of Gothenburg, a group consisting mainly of Swedish female converts have started up Islamic kindergartens. The main methodology used in these kindergartens is the Montessori system, in which many of the new Muslims have taken classes. The reason they have chosen to follow a 'Swedish' child-care model (the Montessori system is popular in Sweden) is that they regard this model to be in accordance with the 'Islamic' pedagogical ideal.

Yet another interesting phenomenon in the development towards 'Scandinavian Islamic activities' is the new Muslims undertaking of 'walking with (ski) poles' or 'exerstriding'. Over the last few years this sport, where one walks with poles in order to increase the exercising effect, has become a popular sport in Sweden and Norway and particularly in Finland, where it started. Some converts and even some born Muslims walk regularly several miles with poles.

These examples of Norwegian convert activities, the Swedish-Islamic kindergartens and the exerstriding, are typical examples of how Scandinavian new Muslims form their own 'Islamic' traditions by transferring Scandinavian traditions into an Islamic context. It is also interesting to note how some immigrant Muslims participate in the new Muslim activities, as seen in the example of the Eid celebrations in Norway and in the Muslim immigrants who send their children to the Islamic kindergartens run by new Muslims in Sweden. The new 'Islamic' model draws on elements both from the Muslims' own cultural context and from a Scandinavian cultural sphere.

In Flinn's model of conversion (see Chapter Three) he speaks of how new movements might be formed in the converts' perception of a discrepancy between ideal and reality. Moreover, he claims that a convert community might work in a revolutionary way by defying accepted rules and establishing new movements. The process I have described above, where Scandinavian new Muslims are active in shaping a 'Scandinavian Islam', reflects Flinn's prediction. The Scandinavian Muslims' defiance of born Muslims' understanding of Islam and their working of new content into theological concepts are factors that might lead to new established theologies within a Scandinavian framework.

Larsen defines the innovation of Norwegian new Muslims using

the terms of the sociologist of religion, Peter Berger: the 'externalisation of a *subjective* reality' (Larsen 1995: 167). Given Berger and Luckmann's theses of social reality as a human construction, it is plausible to believe that future generations of Muslims in Scandinavia will internalize the hybrid traditions created by Muslim converts and see them as wholly 'Islamic' rather than Scandinavian traditions. These new Muslim activities are the results of a 'creolization' process where new Muslims' cultural backgrounds merge with Islamic ideas.

It is however, important to consider whether the rediscovery of the convert identity built on a merging of Scandinavian and Islamic values, ideas, and practice is a result of a deliberate intellectual endeavour or to what extent it is an instinctive reaction to what can be seen as a downwards step in the social ladder. Converts have a great vested interest in remaining 'Scandinavian' with all that it implies. By reclaiming the Scandinavian heritage they can effectively distance themselves from the social, economical and political problems that are weighing down the Muslim community and keep some of the superiority inherent in belonging to the majority community.

By reclaiming their Scandinavian culture they can claim ethnicity distinct from the ethnic 'Arabic', 'Turkish', or 'Kurdish' label, which often connotes inner city or suburb ghettos, fraud of the benefit system, educational underachievement, and poor language skills, 'ignorance', without having to turn their backs on Islam and without appearing racists. On a global level it also means that they can gain relief from the sheer weight of the burden of the Muslims Umma. A British convert expressed that when he became a Muslim it was to do with faith in God, belief and theology. He said he found it an awful experience to then wake up one day as a Muslim and be expected to take on a dozen political causes. Suddenly he felt responsible for helping to free Kashmir and Palestine, supporting the Bosnian and Kosovan Muslims, feeding the refugees from Afghanistan and Chechnya and generally arguing the cause of all Muslims around the world. In view of his reflection it seems that being a 'European' or a 'Scandinavian' Muslim becomes a safer and less stressful option and looks increasingly attractive.³

³ Thanks to Erica Timoney for making me aware of this perspective.

Creolization

It seems obvious that current Muslim religiosity is influenced by Western attitudes and methodologies in various ways. On the one hand, the new Muslims play an important role in the blending of the various traditions. In due course, second-, third- and fourth- generation Muslims will probably play a similar role as carriers of local Scandinavian traditions into the Muslim communities. On the SFCM e-group in 1998, a Swedish male convert illustrated this blending of traditions thus:

How will contemporary and future young Swedish Muslims look at Islam in this country? 'Swedish Islam' will probably, like Swedish Christianity, give rise to a succession of various alternative views, but I believe that the interpretation which is establishing itself as the current Swedish understanding of Islam will, putting it mildly, be very interesting. A calm and balanced Islam rooted in, and with respect for, the Swedish cultural heritage. [An Islam] Which raises up the classical Islamic culture, which is full of nuances, as a beautiful heritage to pass on in the Swedish language. [An Islam] Which represents a deep spirituality rooted in the Islamic orthodoxy as well as in the mystical path of Sufism (SFCM 29th of April 1998 [translation mine])

Later in his letter he imagines the fruits of this hybrid, combining the Islamic symbol, the mosque, with a strong Swedish architectural symbol, Falun red houses with white corners:

Swedish Islam would hopefully have its own writers, thinkers and artists, as well as institutions of different kinds, established Swedish imam colleges, people's high schools and mosques with Swedish architecture. Maybe Falun red mosques with white corners? [translation mine]

This new Muslim explicitly expresses his link to both Islamic traditionalism and to Sufism and his approach to the 'Swedish-Islamic' hybrid has to be regarded in view of Gerholm's idea of Sufism as a compromise between the East and the West.

In contrast to this mixture of traditions, which seems to be an obvious general trend among Scandinavian new Muslims, current interaction between the Muslim communities and Scandinavian society seems to flow very much one way. Many of the attitudes and practices of majority society greatly influence Muslims, whereas majority society adapts little except food traditions from the Muslim communities. However, is it possible to evaluate Scandinavian society without taking the immigrant communities into consideration? Al-

though immigrants in general and Muslims in particular have had little explicit influence on majority society, the Scandinavian countries would probably have looked quite different today without its immigrant population. Thus there has been an implicit influence that has had and still has an impact of the development of Scandinavian society.

Reflections

The starting point for my discussions with new Muslims was the EVSS study and Schreiter's idea of the 'global flows' of theologies of liberation, feminism, ecology and human rights. I discovered that variations on these themes are very much part of the general Scandinavian discourse, as well as that of the Scandinavian new Muslims. An attitude of increasing individualism and notions of decent behaviour, democracy, equal opportunities, ecology and homosexuality dominated new Muslims' answers to my questions on Scandinavian values and 'Danish', 'Swedish' or 'Norwegian' types of Islam. As these concepts are particularly prominent in the Scandinavian discourse it is natural that many new Muslims identify with them in their reflection and reasoning of a 'Scandinavian Islam'.

A small minority, mainly new converts who are at an early stage of the conversion process, tends to defy 'Scandinavian society' in a pattern of being 'more royal than the king'. Similarly, sympathizers with the two extreme movements, *salafī* and *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, refused to speak in terms of a 'Scandinavian Islam'. They claimed that there is only 'one Islam' that never changes. These movements are actually marginalized both in the Muslim world as well as in Muslim communities in Western countries, and such statements reflect the 'fundamentalist' nature of these groups in that they interpret the Scripture literally and endorse a rigid and at times violent understanding of Islam (See also Roald 2001a: 23–28). They have an exclusionist approach to majority society, as witnessed in the *ḥizb al-tahrīr*'s boycott of the Danish election. However, many new Muslims in this movement are young people, and here Abdul-Wahid Pedersen's conclusion seems to be pertinent: such movements attract the youth because of the stage of rebellion many young people go through at a certain point in their lives. Furthermore, the harsh climate of the Danish election campaign in the autumn 2001, which focused on

the situation of immigrants or 'foreigners', probably triggered off the popularity of this movement. In Norway but particularly in Sweden, there is a less fertile soil for such movements to grow, due to a much more careful attitude in the official discourse towards the immigrant issue.

As for the great majority of my informants, I observed that, by and large, they accepted 'Scandinavian values', such as human rights, democracy, female empowerment and certain ecological attitudes. However, I also discovered that, within the general consensus, there were often slight variations in view, but no more than can be found among non-Muslim Scandinavians.

The EVSS study's finding of increased individualization in Scandinavian society is reflected in Westerlund's observation that Sufism in Europe has an individualistic approach. Similarly, new Muslim reactions against the Arabic gender pattern, as expressed by Håkon, is another aspect of the spread of an ideology of emancipation, promoting in particular the empowerment of women through a re-reading of the Islamic sources. In my study on Arabic-speaking Muslims I found that this re-reading is a new trend in Europe (Roald 2001a), and European converts seem to have an important part to play in this process with an increased trend towards individual choices of theological expressions. As for the theology of feminism, it is obvious that new Muslims are concerned with the empowerment of women, in contrast to traditional Muslim gender patterns. Similarly, the human rights discourse, with its other sub-discourses, such as democracy, equal opportunities, and rights for individuals of various sexual dispositions, are important ingredients in the new Muslim discourse. Although new Muslims' views do not always coincide with official Scandinavian views, there are areas of overlap. New Muslims' ability to mix ideas is obvious, for instance, in the promotion of 'equity' over 'equality' in matters of equal gender opportunities.

It is in the matter of homosexuals' claim for official recognition of their rights that Scandinavian new Muslims diverge from the official Scandinavian discourse. Although many Muslims condemn homosexuality *in toto*, the great majority of Muslim converts tolerate homosexuals if they do not 'disturb' anybody. This is very much the same standpoint as that of the Catholic Church and many other religious associations. The Protestant Church in Scandinavia, however, has taken a much more progressive stand towards both homosexuality and homosexuals.

The general attitude, thus, is to condemn the act of homosexuality rather than individuals with homosexual leanings. This is in line with the common Muslim view that Islam does not condemn thought and ideas, rather the *actions* of human beings. A female convert explained that if a Muslim has a bad thought but does not act on that thought, God rewards his/her discipline. Moreover, a Muslim who intends to do some good deed but does not act on the intention will still receive a certain reward for having had the good intention. 'We do not have to struggle with feelings of guilt for bad thoughts,' she states.

Larsen has shown that some Norwegian intellectuals have raised the issue of whether Norwegian society has something to learn from Muslims. She refers to Eriksen, who has written:

This [to learn from Muslims] is bizarre for many, who are used to thinking of Muslim society as reactionary and anti-modern. Maybe they might tell us that it is possible to build a binding inter-related community on values based on loftier values than the unrestrained freedom of the individual (Eriksen 1995 [cited in Larsen 1995: 181] [Translation mine]).

I have observed that Muslims in Scandinavia still feel marginalized in society due to the segregation of society and to the fact that many Muslims are unemployed. Few born Muslims actively interact with Scandinavian society on a level where it is possible to exchange mutual ideas. In contemporary Scandinavia, new Muslims constitute the majority of Muslims engaged in a dialogue with wider society. However, the part they play is a defensive one, intended to show that the ideas of Muslims and Islam are not threatening to Scandinavian society. In the near future, second-generation Muslims will most probably have a similar role to play.

CHAPTER TEN

REFLECTIONS

The new Muslim community in Scandinavia is heterogeneous; its members share some common traits but differ according to direction, class, personality, gender and education as well as personal experiences. The cultural influences on the interpretation of holy Christian and Judaic texts have been widely accepted in a Scandinavian context. When it comes to Islam, however, there is a tendency to regard the religion as well as its adherents in static terms. In the above discussion the static nature of 'Islam' and Muslims is challenged. From early in Islamic history, Islamic expressions have been formed according to time and place with an intimate relationship between the social experiences and interpretations of the religious texts. The formation of Islam in the Scandinavian context indicates a similar development: a tendency to view the Islamic sources through cultural filters. New Muslims are products of their Scandinavian socialization and they act and react in their particular social context.

In contrast to European countries such as France and Britain, Islam in Scandinavia is a relatively new phenomenon. This might be one of the reasons why Muslims are regarded as problematic rather than beneficial to the further development of society. Another reason might be the idea of uniformity (*enhellighet*), where immigrants and particularly Muslims who do not assimilate to a 'Scandinavian' pattern of living have difficulties being regarded as participants in society.

Islamophobia

Islamophobia is a strong element in the Scandinavian public discourse. The span of Islamophobia varies in the three countries. Whereas in Sweden one finds a mild form of Islamophobia, in Denmark it has grown to form part of the foundation of the public discourse. In all three countries, the Muslim has become the immigrant *per se*: one who is seen as unemployed, living on social

allowances and who lives according to his/her homelands' 'backward' traditions. Such conceptions have provoked increased hostility towards the Muslim community in the 1990s, and it has reached its peak in Denmark since September 11th 2001. The Danish election campaign of autumn 2001 was largely built on Islamophobic argumentation and reasoning.

The conversion process

The lack of religious arguments in the public discourse seems to have made many Scandinavians indifferent and sometimes even hostile towards established religions (as implied by the EVSS study). Although there are differences within the Scandinavian context, one can generally state that the pattern of socialization tends to contain few religious elements. The Scandinavian new Muslims' embracing of Islam is therefore not necessarily primarily religiously motivated. 102 respondents (out of 116) in this study were either married to Muslims, had intimate relationships with Muslims or had Muslim friends or relatives prior to their conversion. Of the seven stages of the conversion process deduced by Rambo, I found that the stage of 'encounter' decides whether and how Scandinavians enter the fold of Islam. Not everybody that marries a Muslim has a relationship with a Muslim, has Muslim friends or relatives necessarily embraces Islam, but in the personal encounter with Muslims, non-Muslims sense a discrepancy between stereotypical images of Islam and Muslims and Muslims' 'reality'; many new Muslims tell how this discrepancy started them on their search for 'what Islam really is'. It seems that due to Islamophobic attitudes in Scandinavian society an encounter with Muslims is necessary for a person to at least consider converting to Islam.

In the Scandinavian context, the notion of 'Islam' as a logical religion is stated as a major reason for new Muslims embracing Islam. I have, however, shown how convert narratives are more indicators of the new Muslims' current state of mind in his/her conversion process than accurate stories of their journey to Islam.

Some conversions can be regarded as part of a pattern of rebellion against either parents or society. Due to Islamophobic images in society, conversion to Islam must be regarded as a strong rebellious act. I further found that some new Muslims, prior to their conversion,

had belonged to leftist movements. The conversion to Islam can, thus, be considered a continuation of rebellion against established policy; it can also be considered an identification with ideas perceived to be similar to those found in the leftist movement.

Rambo's model of stages in the conversion process is not particularly applicable to the Islamic context. Rambo's model is concerned mainly with the pre-conversion process. In a Western context, individuals tend to convert to Islam after a personal encounter with born Muslims. This is in contrast to, for instance, the conversion pattern in Christianity, where conversion is often a consequence of a spiritual, psychological or social crisis. Thus Rambo's model seems to be better suited to a Christian than an Islamic context.

Islamic trends

The Muslim convert community in Scandinavia is diverse, not least in the various Islamic trends to which new Muslims adhere. In Scandinavia, most Islamic trends are represented. Scandinavian new Muslims tend either to adhere to a traditionalist, a 'rational' or an extreme trend. I found that most new Muslims in Scandinavia follow a 'rational' trend. This is partly due to the fact that much of the literature printed in the Scandinavian languages and in English has reflected a 'rational' approach to Islam. Hjärpe, has denoted this trend 'engineer-Islam' due to the fact that many of its promoters have a technical educational background, which influences the interpretation of the Islamic texts. The traditionalist approach to Islam has previously found its root in the Sufi trend, which has a history in Scandinavian that stems back to the early twentieth century. From the 1990s, traditionalist literature translated from Arabic has become more widespread in the Scandinavian context. Another decisive factor in the spread of this particular trend is the increased availability of speeches by American Muslim convert preachers on audio and videotapes. Their speeches have been widely distributed in the 1990s, giving the traditionalist trend a strong foothold in Europe and Scandinavia.

As for the extreme movements, the *salafī* trend and the political party *ḥizb al-tahrīr* have both attracted convert adherents. The *salafī* trend is peculiar in its attitude of 'being more royal than the king'. Such

an attitude, however, is often a first stage in an on-going conversion process and many new Muslims have stated that they started out with ideas similar to those of the *salafī* movement. The *salafīs* promote a literal interpretation of the Koran and the hadiths; the *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* is a more political alternative that demands a strict following of centralized Islamic texts written by the party's ideologues. Whereas the *salafī* trend is widespread in all three Scandinavian countries and across European countries, the *ḥizb al-taḥrīr* has followers mainly in Denmark and in Britain. The harsh socio-political climate for immigrants in Denmark might be regarded as the main reason for this movement's strength in the country.

Although one might think that traditionalists or adherents to Sufism also demand a strict following of texts or a sheikh, I have discovered that they are actually quite flexible in their approaches. By arguing that Muslims have to follow the law of majority society, traditionalists can avoid confusion over 'problematic Islamic rulings' that are part of sharia but that go against Scandinavian legislation. Examples are the punishment laws, attitudes towards homosexuality and gender issues.

Convert literature

As the convert community grows and as new Muslims become established members of the Muslim community in general, new Muslims play a role both as 'Westerners' in Muslim communities in Scandinavia and as Muslims in majority society. There has been an increase in convert literature in the 1990s. The convert speeches, together with books written by converts, aid in the dissemination of Islamic ideas in Scandinavia. Scandinavian new Muslims are less productive than, for instance, American, British and German converts, but it is probably only a matter of time before Scandinavian new Muslims start to write. Bernström, the former Swedish former diplomat who converted in the 1980s, has translated the Koran with commentaries by the Polish convert Muhammad Asad into the Swedish language. Asad's commentaries are marked by a 'rational' tendency that finds its roots in the Mu'tazila movement in Islamic history.

Majority society

The new Muslims' encounter with Scandinavian society is, to a great extent, marked by an awareness of Islamophobic expressions in society. New Muslims have shown the most extreme hostility toward majority society in Denmark with the *ḥizb al-tahrīr*'s boycotting of the election process in autumn 2001. Widespread and vocal Islamophobia in Denmark is an obvious cause of new Muslims' hostility towards majority society. In the *salafī* trend in Sweden and Norway one finds similar ideas, although to a lesser extent than the political actions of the *ḥizb al-tahrīr*.

New Muslims in general tend to adopt a defensive stance on Islam in their encounter with majority society. New Muslims who speak or act in public are often regarded as representatives of all the negative images presented by the Islamophobic influences in society. New Muslims have to defend any political action taken by Muslims across the world, any type of Muslim behaviour in whatever country or region it appears. It is, however, the headscarf that has been the most sensitive conflict area between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Scandinavian context. On this issue female converts have spoken out in order to reject the arguments that veiling is a symbol of female oppression in Islam.

Muslim communities

The relationship between new Muslims and the Muslim community is a mixture of positive and negative experiences. Although most new Muslims have a positive experience with born Muslims at the beginning of their conversion, frustration with marriage partners and Muslim relatives, or cultural encounters with immigrant Muslims in general tend to sour attitudes towards born Muslims. As many immigrant Muslim communities see their own understanding of Islam as Islam *per se*, new Muslims tend to culturalize into the community of their partners or friends. As time goes by their Islamic knowledge increases and as new Muslims meet with other new Muslims many turn away from this culturalization into 'Arab', 'Turkish' or 'Pakistani' Islam in favour of becoming a 'Scandinavian Muslim'. New Muslims have described this process in terms of stages one goes through in the on-going conversion process.

The three stages in the post-conversion process

Many new Muslims tend to be 'more royal than the king' in the first period after conversion, but this stage of 'falling in love' with Islam soon tends to cool down. The second stage is marked by a 'rejection' of born Muslims and sometimes of Islam. The third stage is one of 'maturity' where the convert comes to 'understand' the difference between the Islamic ideal and Muslim (human) practice. This post-conversion process is very much part of the convert's relationship to the immigrant community. In the beginning, new Muslims tend to view 'Islam' and Muslims in idealized terms. Muslims turn out, however, to be 'ordinary human beings' who act and behave in similar ways to human beings of other faiths and ideologies. The Muslim failure to act according to Islamic principles causes new Muslims to question whether there is something wrong with 'Islam' if Muslims cannot act according to the faith. This evolves into yet another stage where there is a realization that Muslims are just 'human beings' and 'Islam' is an ideal that one strives to follow, sometimes successfully and sometimes without success.

During the second stage of 'rejection' many new Muslims start to mix with other new Muslims. The convert community then becomes the new Muslims' frame of reference. These communities produce new views and ideas as a result of the cultural encounter between Islamic ideas and the converts' 'cultural luggage'. Converts from the 1980s went through these stages at a much slower pace than converts from the late 1990s. This is due to the growth of the convert community in the 1990s and the fact that this community provides at an early stage a convert plausibility structure for new Muslims.

New Muslims' role as mediators

In my discussions with Scandinavian new Muslims, the concept that arose most frequently was that of the new Muslim as mediators not only between Muslim immigrants and majority society but also between majority society and Muslim immigrants. The new Muslims' role as mediator can be illustrated by the American convert to Islam, Hamza Yusuf, and his role as advisor to American president, George W. Bush, in the 'War against Terror' campaign in the autumn of 2001. However, new Muslims are mediators on all levels of society:

in activities in local areas, at their work as kindergarten teachers, schoolteachers, factory and company workers, etc. Some new Muslims with higher education have taken on a more active role as mediators. In all three countries highly educated new Muslims are invited on a regular basis to give speeches about Islam and Muslims at schools and to teachers, community workers, the police and politicians. In this activity, new Muslims might formulate an image of Islam and Muslims that is acceptable to both non-Muslims and Muslims alike.

'Scandinavian Islam'

The new Muslim's role as mediator between majority society and immigrant Muslims is not officially expressed and I would claim operates on a more subtle level. However, an outcome of such a mediation is the emergence of a specific understanding of Islam. The question of whether there exists something called a 'Danish', 'Swedish', 'Norwegian' or even 'Scandinavian Islam' might raise protests from immigrant Muslims as well as from new Muslim adherents to the extreme Islamic movements. However, many Muslim converts in this study accepted and even promoted the idea of a 'Danish', Swedish' or 'Norwegian' Islam.

According to the EVSS, the Scandinavian countries have certain features that can be regarded as 'Scandinavian values': a lack of traditional beliefs but a strong belief in spiritual 'forces'; a weak position for the Church in the public discourse; a lack of a strong public discourse on religious values; and an increased individualization. Furthermore, the promotion of, for instance, the rights of women and homosexuals is another aspect of how religious traditional arguments have been toned down in the public debate. Denmark, Sweden and Norway all have strong Social Democratic parties, and, in the post-war era, the Social Democrats have governed for long periods of time. It is thus the Social Democratic ideology rather than Christian value system that has in modern times had the opportunity to develop.

The globalization process is also decisive in the shaping of Islam in a new social context. The four main 'global flows' in the Christian tradition, the discourses of liberation (or in the Islamic context: emancipation), feminism, human rights and ecology, are very instrumen-

tal in the formation of Islam in the new European and Scandinavian context. There are thus local as well as global elements in the Scandinavian new Muslims' perception of 'Islam', which is in keeping with the historical development of the religion; 'Islam' has been interpreted through a cultural filter throughout Islamic history.

Future prospects

The trend I see in the convert community in Scandinavia is that the notion of a 'Danish', 'Swedish' and 'Norwegian' Islam is strong and substantial. The new Muslims that came to Islam in the 1980s now have an increasingly prominent position in both the convert community and the Muslim immigrant community. A result of the on-going conversion process is that new Muslims tend eventually to end up at a stage where they rediscover 'themselves'. Many new Muslims sense this to be the result of a gradual process of maturation, common to human beings in general. Others come to this realisation as a result of a marital crisis. My fieldwork shows that it is not unusual for Muslim female converts to divorce their immigrant husbands. By being free from the control of a demanding husband, many female converts change their view on how to understand the Islamic texts. The rediscovery of one's self is actually a return to 'Scandinavian values' but in Islamic dress. As Khadija remarked: 'I have realised that I am who I always have been, with the addition of being a Muslim.'

As the plausibility structure for new converts these days is increasingly the convert community rather than an ethnic community, the on-going conversion process might be less dramatic than it used to be for Muslim converts of the 1980s and early 1990s. New Muslims might be said to be in a similar position to second-generation Muslim immigrants. The two groups have gone through a similar educational process as well as having been socialized (primarily or secondarily) into a similar set of attitudes and cultural experiences. As I have argued throughout the book (particularly in Chapter One), cultural expressions play a vital part in the shaping of religious conceptions and ideas. New Muslims and second-generation Muslims have different educational and cultural backgrounds from that of immigrant Muslims. Moreover, these two groups are well established

in the Scandinavian context and might therefore search for an understanding of Islam that can function within the Scandinavian society. These factors make them ask different questions and present different answers from those of first-generation immigrant Muslims. New Muslims and second-generation Muslim immigrants, thus, will probably be the avant-garde of new Islamic expressions in Scandinavia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- al-‘Abdalāt, Marwan, A.S. 1992. *Kharīṭa li aḥzāb al-siāsiyya al-urduniyya*, Amman: Qurtasiyya al-Ibra.
- ‘Abduh, Muḥammad (n.d.). *tafsīr al-manār* (vol. I–XI), Cairo: Dār al-Fikr.
- . 1983. *Islam in Focus*, Kuwait: IIFSO.
- Abū Dawūd (n.d.). *sunnan abi dawūd*, system *al-‘ālamī*, CD-ROM, Jeddah: Company Sakhr al-‘Alami.
- Abū Zahra, Muḥammad (n.d.). *uṣūl al-fiqh*, Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī.
- ‘Addulātī, Hammūdah. 1990. *Introduksjon til Islam (Introduction to Islam)*. Kuwait: IIFSO (International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations).
- Ahlin, Lars and Dahlgren Curt. 1999. “The Religious Market and the problem of Conversion” in Ulf Görman (ed.), *Towards a New Understanding of Conversion*, Lund: Religio 50 (Department of Theology, University of Lund). Pp. 155–167.
- Ahmad, Leila. 1992. *Women and Gender in Islam*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- al-Albānī, Naṣr al-Dīn. 1993. *The Prophet’s Prayer*, Suffolk: al-Hanif Publications.
- Allison, J. 1969. “Religious Conversion: Regression and Progression in Adolescent Experience”, in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 8. Pp. 23–38.
- Alnæs, Karsten. 1998. *The History of Norway* (vol. III), Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Altorki, S. and El-Solh (eds.). 1988. *Arab Women in the Field*, New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Amīn, Šādiq. 1982. *al-da’wa al-islāmīyya*, Amman: jama’iyya ‘ummāl al-matabi’ al-ta’awuniyya.
- Andersen, Niels Knud and Lindhardt, P.G. (eds.). 1966. *Den Danske Kirkes Historie*, København: Nytt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck.
- Anway, Carol L. 1995. *Daughters of Another Path: Experiences of American Women Choosing Islam*, Lee’s Summit: Yawna Publication.
- al-Asqar, ‘Umar Sulaymān. 1982. *Tarikh al-fiqh al-islāmī*, Kuwait: Maktaba al-Falāh.
- Asad, Muḥammad. 1956. *Vägen till Mecka*, Stockholm: Bonniers.
- . 1984. *The Message of the Qur’an*, Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus.
- . 1982, (first edition 1934). *Islam at the Crossroad*, Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press.
- . 1975. *The Spirit of Islam*, London: Islamic Council of Europe.
- . 1961. *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Asmussen, Jes. 1981. *Islam*, København: Politikens Forlag.
- al-Atas, Syed Farīd. 1986. “Notes on various theories regarding the Islamization of the Malay archipelago” in *The Muslim World* (vol. 75).
- Badawi, Jamal. 1995. *Gender Equity in Islam: Basic Principles*, Indianapolis: American Trust Publication.
- Belina, Veronika. 1999. “‘Förmåner och Inte Förtryck’ Svenska konvertiter till Islam berättar.” Paper examined at Lund University.
- Berg, Einar. 1980. *Koranen*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Berg, Magnus. 1998. *Hudud: En essä om popularorientalismens bruksvärde och världsbild*, Stockholm: Carlssons.
- Berger, Peter. 1993. *Religion, samfunn og virkelighet*, Oslo: Vidarforlaget.
- Berger, Peter and Luckman Thomas. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality*, New York: Anchor Books.
- Bernström, Mohammed Knut. 1998. *Koranens Budskap*, Stockholm: Proprius.

- Beyer, Peter. 1994. *Religion and Globalization*. London: SAGE.
- Billig, Michael. 1995. *Banal Nationalism*, London: SAGE.
- Brooks, Geraldine. 1995. *Nine Parts of Desire: The hidden world of Islamic women*, New York: Anchor Books.
- Bucaille, Maurice. 1978. *The Bible, The Koran and Science*, Indianapolis: American Trust Publications.
- Bulliet Richard. 1979. *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An essay in Quantitative History*. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Bæk Simonsen, Jørgen. 1990. *Islam i Danmark*, Århus: Århus Universitetsforlag.
- . 2001. *Det retfærdige samfund: om Islam muslimer og etik*. København Samleren.
- Canclini, Nestor. 1995. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cuesta, Marta. 1997. *Flowers to the Ocean*, Lund: Lund University Press.
- Dansk Skolelov, 1999.
- Denny, Fredrick Mathewson. 1987. "Da'wah" in *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (vol. 4). Pp. 244–245.
- Deutsch, A. 1975. "Observation on a sidewalk Ashram" in *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 32. Pp. 166–175.
- Eaton, Gai. 1994. *Islam and the destiny of Man*, Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society.
- Echammari, Amina Tønnsen. 1998. *Islam i europæisk klædedragt*, København: Fremad.
- Ehn, Billy and Löfgren, Orvar. 1982. *Kulturanalys: Ett etnologiskt perspektiv*, Lund: Liber Förlag.
- Elias, Norbert. 1996. *The Germans. Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Elias, Norbert and Scotson, J.L. 1994. *The Established and the Outsiders*, London: Sage.
- El Saadawi, Nawal. 1980. *The Hidden face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 1994. *Kulturella Veikryss* (Cultural Crossroads), Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- . 1995. *Det nye fiendebildet*, Oslo: J.W. Cappelens Forlag.
- Esposito, John. 1992. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fadhullāh, Muḥammad Ḥussayn. 1997. *dunya al-mara'*, Beirut: Dār al-Malak.
- Al-Farūqī, Ismā'īl. 1976. 'On the nature of Islamic Da'wah' *International Review of Mission*, vol. lxxv, October, Genève.
- . 1983. *Tawhid: Its relevance for thought and life*. Kuwait: IIFSO.
- Feasterstone, Mike (ed). 1990. *Global Culture. Nationalism, Globalization, and Modernity*, London: SAGE Publication.
- Featherstone, Mike and Lash, Scott (eds.). 1999. *Spaces of Culture. City, Nation, World*, London: SAGE Publication.
- Flannery, Edward. 1965. *The Anguish of the Jews*, New York: Macmillan.
- Flinn, Frank K. 1999. 'Conversion: The Pentecostal and Charismatic Experience' in Christopher Lamb & M. Darrol Bryant (eds.), *Religious Conversion: Contemporary Practices and Controversies*, London: Cassell. Pp. 51–72.
- Florin, Christina and Nilsson, Bengt. 1999. "Something in the nature of a bloodless revolution: Gender equality policy in Sweden in the 1960s and 70s." In Rolf Torstendahl (ed.), *State Policy and Gender System in the two German States and Sweden*. Uppsala: Opuscula Historica Upsaliensia. Pp. 11–77.
- Friedman, Jonathan. 1994. *Cultural Identity & Global Processes*, London: SAGE Publications.
- Fuglerud, Øivind 2001. *Migrationsforståelse: Flytteprosesser, rasisme og globalisering*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Furion, Ben. 1998. *Det är aldrig för sent att få en lycklig barndom*, Stockholm: Natur och Kultur.

- Gardell, Mattias. 1996. 'Den gröna världsordningen: om islam, mediasmuslimer och globaliseringsprocessen' in *Svensk religionshistorisk årsskrift*. Göteborg: Svenska samfundet för religionshistorisk forskning. Pp. 9–44.
- Geels, Antoon. 1991. *Att Möta Gud i Kaos. Religiösa visioner i dagens Sverige*. Stockholm: Norstedt.
- . 1999. *Muslimsk Mystik*. Skellefteå: Norma Bokförlag.
- Geels, Antoon & Wikström, Owe. 1993. *Den Religiösa Människan*, Lund: Bokförlaget Plus Ultra.
- Gelb, Joyce. 1989. *Feminism and Politics: A Comparative study*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gerholm, Tomas. 1988. 'Three European intellectuals as converts to Islam: Cultural Mediators or Social Critics?' in Tomas Gerholm and Yngve Georg Lithman (eds.), *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*, London: Mansell. Pp. 263–277.
- . 1994. "Two Muslim intellectuals in the Postmodern West: Akbar Ahmad and Ziauddin Sardar" in Akbar S. Ahmad & Hastings Donnan (eds.), *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity*, London and New York: Routledge. Pp. 190–212.
- Al-Ghazālī, Abū Hāmid Muḥammad. 1982. *Ihya Ulum-i-din* (Vols. I–IV), New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan.
- al-Ghazālī, Muḥammad. 1989. *al-sunna al-nabawiyya bayna ahl-al-fiqh wa ahl al-ḥadīth*, Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq.
- Goffman, Ervin. 2001. *Stigma: Den avvikandes roll och identitet*, Stockholm: Prisma.
- Green, Miranda J. 1994. *Celtic Myths*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- . 1995. *Celtic World*, London: Routledge.
- Gullestad, Marianne. 2002. *Det norske sett med nye øyne*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Gundelach, Peter. 2001. 'National identitet i en globaliseringstid' in *Dansk Sociologi*, nr. 1. Pp. 63–80.
- Gustavsson, Göran. 1994. 'Religious change in the five Scandinavian countries, 1930–1980' in *Scandinavian Values: Religion and Morality in the Nordic countries*, Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, pp. 11–58.
- Göcek, Fatme Muge and Balaghi, Shiva (eds.). 1994. *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Görman, Ulf (ed.). 1999. *Towards a New Understanding of Conversion*, Lund: Religio 50 (Department of Theology, University of Lund).
- Haleem, Muzaffar. 1999. *The Sun is rising in the West: New Muslims tell about their journey to Islam*, Maryland: Amana Publications.
- Halliday, Fred. 1995. "Islam is in Danger": Authority, Rushdie and the Struggle for the Migrant Soul" in *The Next Threia: Western Perceptions of Islam*, Jochen Hippler and Andrea Lueg (eds.), Amsterdam: Pluto Press with Transnational Institute (TNI). Pp. 71–81.
- Halman, Loek. 1994. 'Scandinavian values: How special are they?' in *Scandinavian Values: Religion and Morality in the Nordic countries*, Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, pp. 59–84.
- Hamberg, Eva. 1999. "Migration and religious change" in Helander, Eila (ed.), *Religion and Social Transition*, Helsinki: University of Helsinki. Pp. 71–86.
- Hannertz, Ulf. 1992. *Cultural Complexity*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1996. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, London & New York: Routledge.
- Hardy, Peter. 1972. *The Muslims of British India*, London: Cambridge South Asian Studies: 13.
- Haneef, Suzanne. 1979 (1994). *What everyone should know about Islam and Muslims*, South Asian Books.
- Heeren, Fatima and Lemu, Aisha. 1976. *Women in Islam*, London: Islamic Council of Europe.
- Hedin, Christer. 1988. *Alla är födda muslimer*, Stockholm: Verbum.

- . 1999. 'Islam på svenska — det tryckta ordet i tjänst åt Sveriges muslimer' in *Blågul Islam. Muslimer i Sverige*, Stockholm: Nya Doxa. Pp. 215–233.
- Hippler, Jochen and Lueg, Andrea (eds.). 1995. *The Next Threat: Western Perceptions of Islam*, Amsterdam: Pluto Press with Transnational Institute (TNI).
- Hizb al-tahrir*. 1953. *Hizb al-tahrir*, (n.p.).
- . 1963. *Muqaddima al-dustūr*, (n.p.).
- . 1985. *Al-takāṭul al-hizbi*, (n.p.).
- . (n.d.). 'Manden og kvinden i lyset av Shari'ah-forpligtelserne'.
- Hjørnø, Jan. 1996. "Muslims in Denmark" in *Muslim Communities in the New Europe*, Gerd Nonneman Tim Niblock, and Bogdan Szajkowski (eds.), Reading: Ithaca press. Pp. 291–302.
- Hjärpe, Jan. 1979. *Islam, lära och Livsmönster*, Stockholm: Nordstedts.
- . 1983. *Politisk islam — Studier i muslimsk fundamentalism*, Stockholm: Skeab.
- . 1999. 'Förord' in Antoon Geels, *Muslimsk Mystik*. Skellefteå: Norma Bokförlag. Pp. 9–15.
- Hofman, Murad. 1987. *Diary of a German Muslim*, Köln: Verlag Islamische Bibliothek.
- . 1996. *Islam 2000*, Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publications.
- . 1997. *Islam the Alternative*, Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publications.
- Hourani, Albert. 1962. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798–1939*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1980. *Europe and The Middle East*, Berkely: University of California Press.
- Huntington, Samuel. 1993. "The Clash of Civilisations?" in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3. Pp. 22–49.
- . 1996. *The Clash of Civilisations. The Debate*, New York: Foreign Affairs.
- Hussain, Mustafa. 2000. 'Islam, Media and Minorities in Denmark' in *Current Sociology* (Vol. 484), London: SAGE Publication, pp. 95–116.
- Hvitfelt, Håkan. 1998. "Den muslimska faran — om mediebilden av islam" i Ylva Brune (ed.) *Mörk Magi i Vita Medier. Svensk nyhetsjournalistik om invandrare, flyktingar och rasism*. Stockholm: Carlssons. Pp. 72–84.
- Hwitfelt, Kirsten et al. (eds.). 1982. *Strategies for Integrating Women into the Labour Market*, Copenhagen: Women's Research Centre in Social Science.
- Højlund, Niels. 2000. *Det evindelige forbehold. Danmark i den stora verden*, København: Gyldendal.
- Härenstam, Kjell. 1993. *Skolboks-islam: Analys av bilden av islam i läroböcker i religionskunskap*, Göteborg: ACTA UNIVERSITATIS GOTHOBURGENSIS.
- Idris, Jafar Shaykh. 1990. "Is man the vicegerent of God?" in *Journal of Islamic Studies* (Vol. 1).
- IIFSO. 1986. *al-ittihād al-islāmī al-‘ālamī lil-munazzamāt al-ṭulābiya fi khamṣa ‘ashara ‘āmm*, Kuwait: IIFSO.
- The Islamic Information Society. 1991. *Islam vår tro*, Stockholm: Bonniers.
- Jamison, Andrew. 2001. *The Making of Green Knowledge: Environmental politics and cultural transformation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johns, Anthony H. 1993. "Islamization in Southeast Asia: reflections and Reconsiderations with special reference to the role of Sufism" in *Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 31, No. 1, June. Pp. 43–61.
- Johnsdotter, Sarah. 2002. *Created by God*, Lund: Department of Social Anthropology, Lund University.
- Juhl, Line Vaaben. 2002. Series on converts, Copenhagen: Fønix Bureau.
- Karim, Wazir Jahan (ed.). 1995. *'Male' and 'Female' in Developing Southeast Asia*, London: Berg Publisher.
- Karlsson, Pia and Ingvar Svanberg. 1995. *Moskéer i Sverige. En religionsetnologisk studie i intolerans och administrativt vanmakt*. The Serie: Tro & Tanke 7/95, Svenska kyrkans forskningsråd.
- . 1997. *Religionsfrihet i Sverige*, Lund: Studentlitteratur.

- Keller, Nuah Ha Mim. 1991. *The Reliance of the Traveller*, UAE: Modern Printing Press.
- Kielan, Abd al Haqq. 2001. 'Sufismen imam Islam' in *Minaret*, vol. 4, pp. 7–10.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1991. *Främlingar för oss själva*. Stockholm: Natur och Kultur.
- Köse, Ali. 1996. *Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts*, London: Kegan Paul International.
- Lamb, Christopher and Bryant, M. Darrol (eds.). 1999. *Religious Conversion*, London: Cassell.
- Lang, Jeffrey. 1994. *Struggling to Surrender*, Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publications.
- . 1998. *I Kamp för Övergivelse*, Copenhagen: Sakifa Bog Forlag.
- . 1997. *Even Angels Ask*, Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publications.
- Larsen, Lena. 1995. *Velkommen til en stor Familie: Islam og Konversjon i norsk kontekst*. Master Theses at the Department of Religious Studies, University of Oslo.
- Lauha, Aila and Montgomery, Ingun. 2001. 'Virkelighetsbilleder efter krigen' in Jens Holger Schjöring (ed.), *Nordiska Folkekirken i Opbrud: National identitet og international nyorientering efter 1945*, Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag. Pp. 46–95.
- Lawrence, Bruce. 1989. *Defenders of God: The Fundamental revolt against the Modern Age*, San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Leirvik, Oddbjørn. 1997. 'Statskirkjeordning og religionssaker' in Inge Eidsvåg og Lena Larsen (eds.), *Religion, livssyn og menneskerettigheter i Norge*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. Pp. 150–167.
- . 2002. *Islamsk etikk — ei idehistorie*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Littberger, Inger (unpublished paper) 'Omvändelse och omtolkning: Eva Alexandersons ökenvandring', Paper presented at a seminar in Lund.
- Lofland, John and Stark, Rodney. 1965. "Becoming a World-saver: A theory of conversion to a deviant perspective" in *American Sociological Review*, December. Pp. 862–875.
- Louborg, Omar. 1990a. *Hvad er Sufisme*, Vanløse: Alif Forlag.
- . 1990b. *Sufterne*, Vanløse: Alif Forlag.
- Maqsood, Ruqaiyyah Waris. 1993. *The Qur'an*, in the series Discover Sacred Texts. Oxford: Heinemann.
- . 1994. *Thinking about God*, Indiana: American Trust Publication.
- . 1995a. *Living with teenagers: A guide for Muslim Parents*, London: Ta-Ha Publishers LTD.
- . 1995b. *The Muslim Marriage Guide*, London: The Quilliam Press.
- . 2002. *GCSE: Islam. The Do-it-Yourself Guide*. New Delhi: Goodword.
- Masud, Enver. 2000. *The war on Islam*, Arlington, VA: Madrasah Books.
- Al-Mawdūdī, Abū al-A'la. 1972. *The Meaning of the Quran*, Lahore: Islamic Publications LTD.
- . 1980. *Human Rights in Islam*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation.
- . 1983. *Jihad in Islam*, Kuwait: IIFSO.
- . 1972. *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*, Lahore: Islamic Publications Pvt. Ltd.
- . 1983. *Islams Fundamenter*, Kuwait: IIFSO. (Norwegian edition).
- Mayer, Ann Elisabeth. 1991. *Islam and Human Rights*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- . 1995. 'Rhetorical Strategies and Official Policies on Women's Rights: The merits and drawbacks of the new world hypocrisy' in *Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World*, Mahnaz Afkhami (ed.). Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press. Pp. 104–132.
- Mernissi, Fatima. 1975. *Beyond the Veil*, Cambridge: Schenkman.
- . 1987. *Women and Islam: An historical and Theological Enquiry*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 1993. *al-ḥarīm al-siāsī: al-nabī wa al-niṣā*, Damascus: Dār al-Hasad.
- Moghadam, V.M. 1990. *Gender, Development, and Policy: Toward Equity and Empowerment*, Helsinki: World Institute for Development Economics Research of the United Nations University.

- Mouritzen, Hans. 1999. 'Öresundsbroen: dansk-svenske myter og dynamikker' in *Utenrigs* 4:53–64.
- Mutahhari, Murteza. 1984a. *Rättsvetenskap och dess principer*, Lidingö: Islamiska Kulturcentret i Norden.
- . 1984b. *Att Förstå Koranen*, Lidingö: Islamiska Kulturcentret i Norden.
- . 1984c. *Begreppet Den Islamiska Republiken*, Lidingö: Islamiska Kulturcentret i Norden.
- . 1985a. *Martyren*, Lidingö: Islamiska Kulturcentret i Norden.
- . 1985b. *Islamiska Rörelser på 1900-talet*, Lidingö: Islamiska Kulturcentret i Norden.
- . 1996. *Kvinnans Rättigheter i Islam*, Lidingö: Kulturavdelingen vid Islamiska Republikens Irans Ambassad i Stockholm.
- Månsson, Anna. 2002. *Becoming Muslim. Meanings of conversion to Islam*, Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Nakahara, M. 1984. *Islam in Asia*. Raphael Israel and Anthony H. Johns (eds.). Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University.
- al-Nasrawi, Abbas. 1991. *Arab Nationalism, Oil, and the Political Economy of Dependence*, New York: Greenwood Press.
- Nielsen, Jörgen S. 1996. *Muslims in Western Europe*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Oksanen, Antti. 1994. *Religious Conversion: A Meta-Analytical Study*. Lund: Lund University Press.
- Olsson, Tord. 2000. "De rituella fälten i Gwanyebugu" in *svensk religionshistorisk årsskrift*. Svenska samfundet för religionshistorisk forskning. Pp. 9–63.
- Omar, Ali. (n.d.). *Skillnaden mellan Shiterna och majoriteten av muslimska lärde*, (n.p.).
- Otterbeck, Jonas. 2000. *Islam på svenska*, Lund: Lund Studies in History of Religions.
- Ouis, Pernilla. 1996. 'McDonalds i Mecka och moské i Malmö—om islams globalisering relaterat till olja', Unpublished paper at Lund University.
- . 1998. 'Ersätt rättigheterna med mänskliga skyldigheter ("Replace the right with human obligations")' in *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 7th of July, Malmö.
- . 1999. 'Islamisk ekoteologi — en ny grön rörelse?' in I. Svanberg and D. Westerlund (eds.), *Blågul Islam. Muslimer i Sverige*, Nora: Nya Doxa. Pp. 235–248.
- . 2000. 'Koranen — en text att jämföra med' in (eds.), Nilla Bollong and Andrea Kollman *Böckernas Bok*, Lund: Folkuniversitetets Förlag. Pp. 93–108.
- Pettersson, Thorleif and Riis, Ole (eds.). 1994. 'Preface' in *Scandinavian Values: Religion and Morality in the Nordic countries*, Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, pp. 7–9.
- Philips, Bilal (Abū Aminah). 1988. *The Evolution of Fiqh*, Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House.
- . 1990. *The Fundamentals of Tawheed Islamic Monotheism*, London: Dar al-Tawheed.
- . 1997. *Usool at-Tafseer: The Methodology of Qur'anic Explanation*, Sharjah, UAE: Dar Al Fatah.
- Pomeroy, Sarah. B. 1975. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*, New York: Schocken.
- Poston, Larry. 1992. *Islamic Da'wah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion of Islam*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- al-Qaradāwī, Yūsuf. 1993. *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, Kuwait: IIFSO.
- . 1981. *Islamic Awakening between Rejection and extremism*, Herndon: IIT (American Trust Publications and the International Institute of Islamic Thought).
- Quṭb, Muḥammad. 1983. *Missförstånd om Islam* (Swedish edition), Kuwait: IIFSO.
- Quṭb, Sayyid. 1983. *Denna Religion Islam* (Swedish edition), Kuwait: IIFSO.
- Rambo, Lewis R. 1993. *Understanding Religious Conversion*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Rambo, Lewis R. and Farhadian, Charles E. 1999. "Converting: Stages of Religious

- Change” in Christopher Lamb and M. Darrol Bryant (eds.), *Religious Conversion*, London: Cassell. Pp. 23–34.
- Roald, Anne Sofie. 1994. *Tarbiya. Education and Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia*. Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell International.
- . 1997. ‘Lyssna på männen: att leva i en patriarkalisk muslimsk kontext’ Anne Sofie Roald & Pernille Ouis) in *Kvinnvetenskaplig Tidskrift*, Nr. 3–4, Årg. 18, Uppsala. Pp. 91–108.
- . 1998. ‘Feminist Reinterpretation of Islamic Theology: Islamic Feminist Theology in the light of the Christian Tradition of Feminist Thought’ in *Women and Islamization*, [eds., Ask, Karin & Tjomsland, Marit.] Berg Publisher, Oxford. Pp. 14–36.
- . 2001a. *Women in Islam. The western experience*, London: Routledge.
- . 2001b. ‘The Wise Men. Democratisation and gender equalisation in the Islamic message: Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī and Ahmad al-Kubaisi on the air’ in *Encounters* 7: 1, pp. 29–55.
- . 2002. ‘From “the People’s Home” to Multiculturalism: Muslims in Sweden’ Under publication in Yvonne Haddad (ed.), *Muslims in the West. From Sojourners to Citizens*, New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 101–120.
- . 2003. ‘Mecca of Gender Equality: Muslim Women in Sweden’ in Haifaa Jawad and Tansin Benn (eds.), *Muslim Women in the United Kingdom and Beyond* Leiden and Boston: Brill. Pp. 65–89.
- Robertson, Roland. 1992. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, London: SAGE.
- Rodinson, Maxime. 1974. “The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam” in *The Legacy of Islam*, Joseph Schacht and C.E. Bosworth (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rojas, Mauricio. 1998. *The Rise and Fall of the Swedish Model*, London: The Social Market Foundation.
- Rothstein, Klaus. 2000. *Kvinde på Dronning Louises Bro*, Copenhagen: Rosinante.
- Royce, Josiah. 1968. *The Problem of Christianity*, John E. Smith (ed.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- The Runnymede Trust. 1997. *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All*.
- Rädda Barnen. 2001. *Rädda Barnens Årsmöte 2001*, Umeå 9–10 juni.
- Sabiq, Sayyid. 1998. *fiqh as-sunna (The Jurisprudence of Sunna)*, Damascus & Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathīr.
- Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage.
- . 1981. *Covering Islam*, New York: Pantheon Books.
- . 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Vintage.
- Salzman, L. 1953. “The Psychology of religious and ideological conversion” in *Psychiatry*, 16. Pp. 177–187.
- Sander, Åke. 1991. “The Road from Musalla to Mosque. Some reflections on the process of integration and institutionalization of Islam in Sweden.” in Shadid, W.A.R. and van Koningsveld, P.S. (eds.), *The Integration of Islam and Hinduism in Western Europe*. Kampen, The Netherlands. Pp. 62–88.
- . 1993. *I vilken utsträckning är den svenska muslimen religiös*. Göteborg: KIM.
- . 1997. “The Status of Muslim Communities in Sweden” in Nonneman, Gerd, and Niblock, Tim, and Szajkowski, Bogdan (eds.), *Muslim Communities in the New Europe*, London: Ithaca. Pp. 269–303.
- Sanders, Peter. 2001. ‘Capturing the Spirit’ Interview with Peter Sanders in *Q-News* June 2001.
- Saulat, Sarwat. 1979. *Maulana Maududi*, Karachi: International Islamic Publishers.
- Sayyid, Bobby. 1997. *A Fundamental Fear, Eurocentrism and the emergence of Islamism*, London & New York: Zed Books Ltd.
- Schjörring, Jens Holger (ed.). 2001. *Nordiska Folkekirken i Opbrud: National identitet og international nyorientering efter 1945*, Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

- Schmidt, Garbi. 1999. "Sveriges Förenade CyberMuslimer — blågul islam på internet?" in I. Svanberg and D. Westerlund (eds.), *Blågul Islam? Muslimer i Sverige*, Nora: Nya Doxa. Pp. 107–122.
- Schreiter, Robert J. 1997. *The New Catholicity*, New York: Orbis Books.
- Sivan, E. 1992. "Radical Islam" in A. Giddens (ed.), *Human Societies—An Introductory Reader in Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press. Pp. 237–249.
- SOU (Statens Offentliga Utredningar). 1968. Barnstugeutredningen Official (State Report of Kindergartens). Regeringskansliet: Stockholm.
- SOU. 1974. *Undersökning om invandrare 3* (Investigation of Immigrants 3), Stockholm: Regeringskansliet.
- SOU. 1999:8 *Invandrarskap och medborgarskap* (Immigrantship and citizenship), Stockholm: Regeringskansliet.
- Spellberg, Denise A. 1994. *Politics, Gender and the Islamic Past: The Legacy of A'isha bint Abū Bakr*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Stenberg, Leif. 1996. *The Islamization of Science: Four Muslim Positions developing an Islamic Modernity*, Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell International.
- Svanberg, Ingvar. 1994. 'I väntan på moskén — Muslimer i Sverige' in *Majoritetens Islam*, Stockholm: Arena. Pp. 391–410.
- Svanberg, Ingvar and Westerlund, David (eds.). 1994. *Majoritetens Islam*, Stockholm: Arena.
- (eds.) 1999. *Blågul islam? Muslimer i Sverige*, Nora: Nya Doxa.
- Svensson, Jonas. 1996. *Muslimsk Feminism*, Religio 46, Lund: Department of Theology.
- . 2000. *Women's Human Rights and Islam: A study of three attempts at accommodation*, Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell International.
- Taji-Farouki, Suha. 1996. *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate*, London: Longmans.
- The New English Bible. 1970. Oxford & Cambridge: Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press.
- Thurfjell, David. 2000. 'Shia' in I. Svanberg and D. Westerlund (eds.), *Blågul Islam? Muslimer i Sverige*, Stockholm: Nya Doxa. Pp. 33–51.
- al-Ṭurābī, Ḥasan. (n.d.). *al-mar'a bayna ta'ālīm al-dīn wa taqā'id al-mujtama'*, Khartoum: Jamā'iyya al-ra'āya al-islāh al-ijūmā'i.
- . 1991. *Women in Islam and Muslim Society*, London: Milestones.
- . 1993. *Women in Islam and Muslim Society*, Nigeria: Islamic Education Trust.
- . 2000. *Emancipation of Women: An Islamic perspective*, London: Muslim Information Centre.
- Turner, Bryan. 1994. *Orientalism, Postmodernism, and Globalization*, London: Routledge.
- Turner, John C. and Giles, Howard. 1981. *Intergroup Behaviour*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Ullman, C. 1989. *The Transformed Self: The psychology of religious conversion*, London: Plenum.
- Vogt, Kari. 2000. *Islam på norsk*, Oslo: J.W. Cappelen Forlag AB.
- Wadud, Amina. 2000. 'Alternative Qur'anic Interpretation and the status of Muslim Women' in Gisela Webb (ed.), *Window of Faith. Muslim women scholar-activists in North America*, New York: Syracuse University Press, pp. 3–21.
- Wadud-Muhsin, Amina. 1992. *Qur'an and Women*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti SDN. BHD.
- Watt, W.M. 1968. *Islamic Political Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Webb, Gisela (ed.), 2000. *Windows of Faith. Muslim Women Scholar-activists in North America*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Wehr, Hans. 1974. *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Beirut and London: MacDonald & Evans LTD.
- Welsch, Wolfgang. 1999. "Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today?" in Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (eds.), *Spaces of Culture. City, Nation, World*, London: SAGE Publication. Pp. 194–213.

- Werbner, Pnina. 1990 (1960). *The Migration Process*, New York and Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Werne, Bo. 2000. *Tro och Gärning i Islam. Det Religiöse Budskapet I-II*, Malmö: Risala.
- Werner, Yvonne Maria. 1999. *Världsvid men främmande. Katolska kyrkan i Sverige 1873–1929*. Uppsala: Katolska Bokförlaget.
- . 2000. 'Rätt, religion och katolsk motkultur: Nordiska katoliker mellan katolsk och nordisk rättstradition' in Lars M. Andersen, Anna Jansdotter, Bodil E.B. Persson, and Charlotte Tornbjer (eds.), *Rätten. En festskrift till Bengt Ankarloo*, Historiska Media: Nordic Academic Press. Pp. 101–128.
- Westerlund, David. 1999. 'Euro-sufism — universalister och konvertiter' in I. Svanberg and D. Westerlund (eds.), *Blågul islam? Muslimer i Sverige*, Nora: Nya Doxa. Pp. 85–106.
- Young, Michael. 2001. 'Frustration of a convert' in *Q-News* June 2001.
- Zettersteen, Karl Vilhelm 1979 (1917) *Köranen*, Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand.
- Östberg, Sissel. 2000. "Islamic Nurture and Identity Management" in *British Journal of Religious Education*, no. 1: 91–103.

Interviews

- Interview with imam Abdul-Wahid Pedersen in Copenhagen, Denmark, 24th of November 2001.
- Interview with Pernilla Somaya Ouis in Kävlinge, Sweden, 5th of September 2001.
- Interview with Tom Bryder in Sweden, November 2001.

Lectures

- Hamza Yusuf 2001. Lecture at AMSS Association of Muslim Social Scientists) yearly conference, University of Westminster, London, 20–21/10–01.

Magazines

- Q-News. The Muslim Magazine No. 337, November 2001. Ramadan 1422. *Salaam*.

Newspapers

Danish

- Ekstrabladet 13/10–1996.
- Berlingske Tidene 15/2–1998.
- Berlingske Tidene 21/3–2000.
- Berlingske Tidene 30/10–2001.
- B.T. 20/10–2000.
- B.T. 23/10–2000:4, 8,10.
- Politiken 28/2–1994.
- Politiken 22/3–2000.
- Politiken 1/11–2001.
- Urban 21/11–2001.

Swedish

Metro 20/10–2000.
 Sydsvenska Dagbladet 9/11–2000.
 Sydsvenska Dagbladet 21/12–2000 from Kristelig Dagblad in Danmark.
 Sydsvenska Dagbladet 19/9–2001.
 Sydsvenska Dagbladet 27/10–2001.
 Sydsvenska Dagbladet 6/11–2001.
 Sydsvenska Dagbladet 10/11–2001.
 Sydsvenska Dagbladet 18/11–2001.
 Sydsvenska Dagbladet 28/1–2002.
 Sydsvenska Dagbladet 25/4–2002.
 Svenska Dagbladet 23/1–2002.
 Svenska Dagbladet 26/1–2002.
 Svenska Dagbladet 31/3–2002.

Norwegian

Aftenposten 28/7–2001.
 Dagbladet 3/2–2002.
 Dagbladet 4/2–2002.
 Aftenposten 13/3–2002.

English

The Guardian 27th of September 2001.
 The Guardian 8th of October 2001.

Television programs

MBC 17th of October 2001.
Mosaik 7/11–2000

Radio programs

Religionsradion 30/11–2001.

Internet addresses

www.independent.co.uk/story.jsp?story=96697
www.islamfortoday.com
www.islamfortoday.com/ummzaid02.htm
www.danskfolkeparti.dk/dgcm/show.asp?parent=34288
www.ou.dk/hum/timjensen/rel/kristendom/html
folk.uio.no/leirvik
www.rfsu.se
www.amazon.com
 Winter, T.J. www.islamfortoday.com
 IIFSO. 2001. www.iifso.org/hist.htm History.
 SFCM e-group hem.passagen.se/sfcm/sfcm.htm

INDEX

- ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Muḥammad Ibn, 7, 118
 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *salafī*, 150, 155, see also *salafī*
 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, IIFSO, 170, see also IIFSO
 ‘Abdulātī, Ḥammudāh, 64
 ‘Abdulātī, Islamic Foundation, 117
 ‘Abdulātī, IIFSO, 121, 176–77
 ‘Abduh Muḥammad, 7–8, 264
 ‘Abduh, *salafī*, 150
 ‘Abduh, *salafīyya*, 227
 Abdullaṭīf, Fādī, 144, see also *hizb al-tahrīr*
 Abdul-Qadir al-Murabit, 39
 Abla, 126
 Abla, leftist, 122
 Abla, logic, 122–23
 Abla, ‘Swedish ideal’, 316–17
 Abla, ‘Swedish Islam’, 319, 332
 Absolutism, 283–84, see also ‘convertitis’
 Abu Ahmad, 315, 317, see also *salafī*
 Abū Bakr, 156
 Abū Ḥamza, 155–57, see also *salafī*
 Abū Ḥanīfa, 190, see also Ḥanafī
 Abū Laban, Aḥmad, 39
 Adam, 264–65
 Afghan women, 63
 Afghanistan, 157
 Afghanistan, immigrants, 38
 Afghanistan, war, 63, 154
 Afghanistan, Russian occupation of, 227
 Afghanistan, bombing of, 232
 Afghanistan, refugees from, 337
 Africa, 135, see Werne, 187
 Africa, Islamization of, 80
 African, 141
 African, slaves, 4
 African, religion, 5
 African, South, 186
 Aftenposten, 23, 126
 Agnosticism, 232
 Aguéli, Ivan, 28, 108
ahl al-bayt, 132
ahl al-ḥadīth, 6, 151, 151 (footnote), 183, 215, see *salafī*, see also Ḥanbalī law school
ahl al-ra’y, 6, 151 (footnote), 183
ahl al-sunna, 156
 Ahlin, Lars, xiii, 11, 15, 80, 126, 200, 319
 Ahmadiyya, 163, 327
 Ahmadiyya, mosque, 26
 Ahsan, Manazir, 121
 Aisha, 245, 254, 258, 261, 272, 279–80, 285
 Aisha, harassed, 107
A’isha, wife of the Prophet, 195
 al-Afghānī, Jamāl al-Dīn, 7–8
 al-Afghānī, *salafī*, 150, 227
 Al-Albānī, Naṣr al-Dīn, 151, 155, 158, 213–14, 219
al-astāf, 151, see also *salafī*
 Al-Azhar, 142
 Al-Banna’, Ḥasan, 121
 al-Banna’, Islamist, 121
 al-Banna’, IIFSO, 171
 al-Baṣrī, Ḥasan, 178
 Al-Bukhārī, 139, 169, 208 (footnote)
 Alcohol, stop drinking, 234
 Al-Farūqī, Ismā’il, 87
 Al-Farūqī, IIFSO, 170
 Algeria, 154, 202
 Algerian, 116, 157
 Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥamīd Muḥammad, 177–79
 Al-Ghazālī, *Salaam*, 193
 Al-Ghazālī, Muḥammad, 9, 151, 183–84
 Al-Ghazālī, IIFSO, 117
 Al-Ghazālī, Islamic Foundation, 117
 Al-Ghazālī, *Salaam*, 193
 Al-Ghazālī, on hadīth, 214
 Al-Ḥabashī, ‘Abdullāh, 141
 Al-Ḥallāj, 136
 Al-Ḥibrī, ‘Azīza, 195
 Al-Hilālī, Muḥammad, 169
 ‘Alī, 127–29, 132, see also Shi’a
 Alī, Yusuf, 164–65
 Alienation, viii, 237, 255

- Almajid, Fahmy, 143–44
 Al-Mawdūdī, Abū Aʿlā, 117, 121, 164, 171–73, 324–25
 Al-Mawdūdī, Islamist, 89
 Al-Mawdūdī, *Salaam*, 193
 Al-Misrī, Aḥmad ibn Naqīb, 221–22
 Almqvist, Kurt, 319
 Al-Munajjid, Muḥammad S., 155, see also *salafi*
 Al-Nabhānī, Tāqī al-Dīn, 142, 146–50, 320, see also *ḥizb al-tahrīr*
 Al-Nawawī, 135
 Al-Qaradāwī, Yūsuf, 9, 180–84, 213
 Al-Qaradāwī, IIFSO, 117, 171
 Al-Qaradāwī, Islamic Foundation, 117
 Al-Qaradāwī, satellite television, 128
 Al-Qaradāwī, *Salaam*, 193
 Al-Qaradāwī, European Council for Fatwa and Research, 272
al-ṣaḥwa al-islāmiyya, 170
 Al-Tabarī, Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr, 131, 190
 Alternative medicine, 334
 Al-Totonji, Ahmad, 118–119
 Al-Ṭurābī, Hasan, 184–187, 191, 213
 Al-Waqf al-Skandināfiyya, 39
 Al-Zamaksharī, Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd, 167
 Amal, 124–26, 250–51, 278, 281, 285
 Amal, on *salafi*, 157
 Amal, on al-Qaradāwī, 182
 Amal, on equity, 188
 Amal, on Philips, 217–18
 Amal, on ‘Us and them’, 234
 Amal, on headscarf, 242
 Amal, on stigmatisation, 246–47
 Amal, on gender equality, 248
 Amal, on ‘Swedish Islam’, 307
 Amana Publications, 180
 American Trust Publications, 180
amūr, 202
 Andrae, Tor, 27, 135, 163
 Annika, 107, 236, 276, 298, 308, 330
 Annika, on gender equality, 322–24
 Annika, on homosexuality, 328–29
 anti-religious, 274
 Anti-Zionist, 143
 Anway, Carol L., 81–82, 86, 95–96, 103–104.
 Apologetic, 64, 87, 91, 100, 110, 212, 324
 Apologetic, fundamentalist, 117
 Apologetic, IIFSO literature, 172
 Apologetic, literature, 174, 176
 Apologetic, discourse, 251
ʿaqīda, 151
 Arab, 70, 96, 110, 149, 152, 194, 202, 207, 210–11, 273, 294
 Arab, clothes, 233
 Arab, community, 28, 46, 261
 Arab, culture, 258, 267, 287
 Arab, female researchers, 63
 Arab, gender pattern, 320
 Arab, husband, 268
 Arab, Islamist, 121
 Arab, Peninsula, 7, 150
 Arab satellite channel, 184
 Arab, term, 13
 Arab, world, 15, 58, 141, 148, 150, 181
 Arabic-speaking, 28, 49, 128, 142, 168, 256, 277 (footnote), 340
 Arabic-speaking, community, 39, 61, 96, 121, 154, 196, 267, 293
 Arabic-speaking, female friend, 212–13
 Arabic-speaking, first-generation, 227
 Arabic-speaking, highly educated, 320
 Arabic-speaking, ideologues, 317
 Arabic-speaking, Islamist, 228, 230
 Arabic-speaking, men, 39, 179, 184
 Arabic-speaking, readership, 185
 Arabic-speaking, satellite channel, 290
 Arabic-speaking, scholar, 207
 Arabic-speaking, women, 186
 Arabic-speaking, world, 220–21
 Archbishop, 315
 Aristotelean, model of conversion, 87
 Asad, Muhammad, x–xi, 130, 167–69, 175–76, 189, 193, 203, 345
asbāb al-nuzūl, 137
 Ashʿarites, 6
 Asian, 258
 South Asian, 61, 178
 South East Asian, 28, 64
aslama, 13
 Asmussen, Jes, 163
 Association of Islamic Information in Norway, 110
 Astrid, 268–269
 Astrid, on discrepancy between Islam and Muslims, 271, 285–86

- Atheism, 232
 ‘Attār, Farīd al-Dīn, 135, 162
 Augustine, 85
 Ayatollah, 8
 Ayatollah Kho’i, 128
 ‘Azzām, ‘Abdullāh, 227
- Badawi, Jamal, 186, 187–92, 213, 230, 321
- Bæk Simonsen, Jørgen, 172, 180
 Bæk Simonsen, on apologetic literature, 170
 Bæk Simonsen, on Muslims in Denmark, 38–39
- Banal nationalism, 32, 34, 50–51
- Barth, Karl, 204
- Belina, Verona, on study on converts, 101, 103
 Belina, letter to editor, 301–302
- Benaouda, Helena, 269–70
- Bennabi, Malik, 171
- Berg, Einar, 162–64
- Berg, Magnus, 58, 65–66, 235
- Berger, Peter, 22, 286, 337
- Berlingske Tidende, 243
- Bernström, Knut, 37, 130–32, 164–69, 345
- Bettina, 246, 276, 289, 294, 296
 Bettina, on al-Mawdūdī, 172–73
 Bettina, on *salafī*, 160
- Bible, 102, 224
- bī‘da*, 125, 152, 284
- bilā kayf*, 215
- Billig, Michael, 32
- Bin Laden, Usama, 154, 157, 227
- Biological differences, 22, 212, 324
- Biological reductionism, 175, 212, 324
- Brelwi, 26, 48
- Britain, vii, 61, 78, 82, 96, 109, 261, 284, 295, 342, 345
 Britain, Abū Ḥamza, 156
 Britain, Aisha Lemu, 175
 Britain, Deobandi schools, 48
 Britain, *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, 143
 Britain, Islamic Foundation, 121
 Britain, new Muslims, 291–95
 Britain, Noah Ha Mim Keller, 221
 Britain, publishing houses, 180
 Britain, Religious dialogue, 204
 Britain, Runnymede Trust, 54
 Britain, al-Totonji, 119
 Britain, al-Ṭurābī, 185
 Britain, *salafī*, 152
- British, 48, 57, 61, 81, 99, 130, 185 (footnote), 204, 226, 238, 260, 283, 290–95, 130, 204, 260, 283
 British, colonization, 172
 British, converts, 103, 291–92, 337, 345
 British, convert literature, 198
 British, Gai Eaton, 89
 British, Home Secretary, 54
 British, India, 48
 British, John Henry Newman, 88
 British society, 54, 291–295
- Brooks, Geraldine, 67–68
- B.T., 72
- Bucaille, Maurice, 102, 124, 193
- Buddhism, 319
- Buddhist, 242
- Bulliet, William, 80
- CAIR, 292
- Caliphate, 229
 Caliphate, on *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, 142–50
- Camilla, 139–40
- Canada, 142, 189
 Canada, IIFSO, 118
- Cat Stevens, 292
- Catholic, 1, 23–25, 113, 202, 208, 236, 273, 329, 340
- Catholicism, 88–89, 113
 chador, 243
- Child care, 316
- Christendom, 56–57
- Christianity, viii, 11, 14, 55, 71, 77, 104, 162, 203, 215, 235, 273, 291, 338
 Christianity, on conflict with Islam, 57, 59
 Christianity, conversion to, 79, 95, 101–102, 226, 232, 344
 Christianity, on female covering, 238–39
 Christianity, on feminist theology, 125
 Christianity, on gender relations, 248
 Christianity, Grundtvig, 40, 45, 47
 Christianity, influence on Sufism, 318–19
 Christianity, as majority religion, 79, 111–12
 Christianity, religious education, 25–26
 Christianity, Protestant Christianity, 25–26, 32, 47

- Christmas, 234, 335
 Colonialism, 63
 Colonization, 57, 150, 172, 235
 Companions, 183, 199, 216, 259
 Companions, on *hizb al-tahrir*, 146–47
 Companions, in *salafi*, 151, 155
 Confederation, 36–37, 40, 46–47, 193, 294, 304
 Conspiracy, 315
 Conversion process, vii, viii, x–xi, 79, 81, 83, 84–85, 87, 90, 94, 96, 98–101, 104, 111, 160–61, 232, 250–252, 257, 269, 278, 288, 291, 296, 320, 325–27, 339, 343–46, 349
 Conversion process, in stages, 281–88, 347
Convertitis, 283–84
 Creolization, 3–5, 8, 191, 198, 268, 305, 317, 337, 338–39
 Crisis, 84–85, 93–95, 111–12, 344
 Crisis, September, 11th, 291
 Cross-cultural experience, 252
 Crusades, 56–57, 235
 Crusenstolpe, Fredrik, 165
 Cultural clashes, 275, 302
 Cultural code(s), 35, 241, 292–94, 301–303
 Cultural encounter, vii, 1, 5, 8–9, 20, 28, 33, 55–56, 118, 149, 152, 174, 189, 191, 231, 234, 253, 255, 303, 319, 325, 332, 346–47
 Cultural hegemony, 21, 313
 Cultural Muslim(s), 114–16, 248, 258–59, 285, 297
 Cultural struggle, 21, 311–12
 Cultural truths, 282
 Culturalization, 257–60, 287–88, 346

da'wa, 117, 119, 123, 145–46, 164, 193, 195, 229, 298–301, 317
 da'wa, Suficentre Dār al-Da'wa, 39
 Dagbladet, 74, 76
 Dahlgren, Curt, xiii, 11, 15, 80, 126, 200, 319
datil, 152
 Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti), 44
 Darsh, Muhammad, 96
 Darwin, 218
 Democracy, 9, 310–11, 324–27, 339–41
 Deobandi, 48

dhakar, 149
dhikr, 39, 134–136, 140
 Dialogue, 54, 201, 298–301
 Dialogue, of cultures, 289
 Dialogue, with majority society, 292–93, 304, 341
 Dialogue, of religions, 204, 250–51, 292
 Diet, 234
 Diet, animals, 334
 Dietary codes, 283
 Dietary rules, 12
 Divine interference, 38, 49, 90, 100
 Domestic responsibilities, 249
 Domestic work, 189, 248, 278–79, 312, 320, 323
 Domestic workers, 187
 Duval, Soraya, 195

 Eaton, Gai, 89–91, 100
 Ecce Homo, 314, 327
 Echammari, Aminah Tønnsen, 199–201
 Ecology, 18, 196, 314, 331–341
 Ecology, as global flow, 10, 193, 310, 314, 348
 Ecology, as Islamic, 310
 Ecology, as Scandinavian value, 315, 339
 Eco-theology, 197
 Eco-theology, Islamic, 196, 331
 Ehn, Billy, 21, 311, 313
 Eid, 114, 334–36
 Ekstrabladet, 75
 Elias, Norbert, 17–18, 32, 42, 50, 55, 282, 329
 Elisabeth, 168
 Elisabeth, on homosexuality, 328
 Engineer-Islam, 119, 196, 227, 344
 Engineer-Islam, rational approach, 177
 Engineer-Muslim, 227–228
 Environmental movement, 21
 Environmental movement, in *Salaam*, 197
 Environmental movement, see conversion as rebellion, 106–108
 Equal gender opportunities, 319–24, 340
 Equal gender opportunities, see *hizb al-tahrir*, 148–149
 Equal gender opportunities, policy in Scandinavia, 191, 247–49, 311–13

- Equity, 186, 321–24, 340
 Equity, see Jamal Badawi, 187–92
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, 2–10, 341
- Esposito, John, 56–57, 59–60
- Ethnic discrimination, law on, 34
- Ethnicity, 31, 244, 301, 337
- European Council for Fatwas and Research, 272
- European Union centre for supervision of racism and xenophobia, 71
- EVSS (The European Value System Study), 10, 15, 18, 99–100, 103, 126, 200, 268, 310, 315, 330, 339–40, 343, 348
- Exclusionist, 141, 158–59, 218, 220–21, 260, 263, 293, 300
- Extreme movement(s), x, 141–161, 287–88, 325–27, 331, 339–40, 344–46
- Extremism, 228
 Extremism, see *convertitis*, 284
 Extremism, see al-Qaradāwī, 180–84
- Extremist(s), 62, 227
 Extremist groups, 154, 160
 Extremist Islamists, 154
 Extremist, see al-Qaradāwī, 180–84
- Fadime, 74–76
- Fadlullāh, Muḥammad Ḥussain, 128
- FAIR, 292
- Fanatic, 65
 Fanatic, see Hofman, 202
 Fanatic, see Islamophobia, 53–78
 Fanatic, see Kari on, 258, 283
 Fanatic, see Philips, 219, 258
- Farhadian, Charles, E., 84, 95
- Farid, Ahmad, 155
- Fast, 115, 335
 Fast, see Ramadan, 115
- Fasting, 86, 256
 Fasting, see definition of Muslim, 12
 Fasting as Islamic practice, 15, 116, 136, 138, 155, 222, 274
 Fasting, in law-schools, 140–41, 222
 Fasting, in Ramadan, 300, see also Ramadan
- Fatimah, 272, 276
fatwā(s), 8, 127, 272
favda, 226
- Female circumcision, 73
 Female circumcision in law-school, 137, 222–23
- Female empowerment, 174, 195, 248, 322, 340
- Female subservience, 238
- Femaleness, 188
- Feminism, 21, 195, 313
 Feminism, as global flow, 10, 310–11, 315, 339–40, 348
 Feminism, western, 9
- Feminist(s), 21–22, 188, 199, 248, 311, 313
 Feminist(s), converts as, 322
 Feminist, Christians, 239
 Feminism, as global flow, 174, 195–96, 198
 Feminist ideas, 21
 Feminist journals, 66
 Feminist, Muslims, 9, 198
 Feminist, theologian, 125, 191
 Feminist Theology, 239
 Feminist theory, ix, 240
 Feminist, wife of Prophet, 195
- fiqh*, 96, 115, 125, 135, 137, 151–52, 183–84, 213, 284, 296
fiqh, see Bilal Philips, 219–20
fiqh, traditionalism, 221–30
- Flinn, Frank K., x, 13, 79, 84–88, 90–91, 104, 282, 336
- Florin, Christina, 21, 312
- Fox, Matthew, 204
- France, 60, 109, 185, 252, 261, 342
 France, on salafi, 152
- Freedom of belief, 40, 274
- Freudian, 92
- Fundamentalism, 163, 202
 Fundamentalism, definition of, 159
 Fundamentalism, Islamic, 241
 Fundamentalism, national, 45
- Fundamentalist apologetic, 117, 163
- Gardell, Mattias, 250
- Geels, Anton, 165
 Geels, on religious experience, 89
 Geels, on sufism, 134, 221
- Gelb, Joyce, 21, 134
- Gender equality, 22, 33, 98, 174, 247–249
 Gender equality, global flow, 193
 Gender equality, *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, on, 148
 Gender equality, as Islamic, 320
 Gender equality, Abdal-Wahid Pedersen on, 320–21
- Gender relation(s), 5, 188, 191, 206, 231, 248, 281, 292–294
 Gender relation(s), converts on, 248–49, 259

- Gender relation(s), *ḥizb al-taḥrīr*, 148–49
- Gender relation(s), immigrant attitude on, 189
- Gender relation(s), Islamic, 320
- Gender relation(s), Mutahharī on, 212
- Gender relation(s), Orthodox Jews on, 202
- Gender relation(s), *salafi* on, 155–56
- Gender relation(s) in Scandinavia, 212
- Gerholm, Thomas, 28
- Gerholm, on leftists, 108
- Gerholm, on Sufism, 299, 338
- Germany, 38, 61, 66, 109, 252
- Germany, on Fatimah Heeren, 175
- Ghadīr Khūm, 133
- Global flow(s), 9–10, 174, 191, 196, 310, 314, 339, 348
- Global theological flow, 10, 193, 195, 197–98, 208
- Globalization, 3, 8–10, 64, 77, 305, 310, 325, 348
- Glocalization, 305–306
- Goffman, Ervin, 246
- Grundtvig, 39–40, 45, 47
- Grundtvigianism, 39–40
- Guardian, 224, 226–27, 290–91
- Guénon, René, 318
- Gullestad, Marianne, 17, 20, 61, 69
- Gunilla, 128, 133, 212–13, 297
- Gunilla, on feminists, 322
- Ḥabashī ‘Abdullāh, 28, 35, 141–42
- Ḥabashī, see extreme movements, 141
- Hadith, 9, 113, 137–38, 147, 151 (footnote), 152, 158, 157, 174, 178, 181, 183, 186–87, 190, 195, 199, 223–24, 287, 330, 345
- Hadith, *ahl al-ḥadīth*, 6, 151, 183, 215
- Hadith, al-Albānī, 213–214
- Hadith, al-Bukhārī, 140, 169
- Hadith, fabrication of, 133
- Hadith, interpret in a literal manner, 183
- Hadith, Lang on, 206–11
- Hadith, literature, 142, 169
- Hadith, Philips on, 214–20
- Håkon, 320, 340
- Håkon, on democracy, 325–26
- Håkon, on Scandinavian Islam, 332–33, 334
- ḥalāl*, 33 (footnote), 155, 226, 232, 284
- ḥalāl*, al-Qaradāwī on, 181, 184
- ḥalāl* slaughter, 33, 35
- Haleem, Muzaffar, 81–82, 86–87, 96, 101, 103–104
- Halliday, Fred, 56, 59–60
- Hamberg, Eva, 286
- Ḥanafī, 6, 134
- Ḥanafī, see also SFCM, 139
- Hanan, 115–16
- Ḥanbal, Aḥmad Ibn, 130, 215
- Ḥanbalī, 6, 134, 151 (footnote)
- Haneef, Suzanne, 174
- Hans, 216–17
- ḥarām*, 155, 284
- ḥarām*, al-Qaradāwī on, 181–82, 184
- Hardy, Peter, 80
- Hassan, Riffat, 195
- Headscarf, 115, 211, 233, 235, 237, 238–247, 249, 251–252, 260, 274, 285, 297, 346, see also *khimār*.
- Headscarf, Echammari on, 200
- Headscarf, *khimār*, 167
- Headscarf, right-wing party on, 34
- Headscarves, 34, 195–96, 200, 233, 236, 238–45, 247, see also *khimār*.
- Hedin, Christer, 87, 117, 120, 120 (footnote), 163, 165–66, 171–72, 176, 324–25
- Hedin, on fundamentalist apologetic, 117, 172
- Hedin, on Haneef, 174
- Hedin, on Heeren and Lemu, 175
- Heeren, Fatima, 175
- Henzell-Thomas, Jeremy, 291–92, 295
- Hermelin, Eric, 135, 162
- Hermeneutical, 214
- Hermeneutical methodology, 239
- Hidden Imam, 127, see also Shi‘a converts, 126–133
- Hindu, 265
- Hinduism, 319
- Hippler, Jochen, 53–54, 58, 66
- ḥizb al-taḥrīr*, x, 114, 141, 142–50, 160, 233, 251, 260, 263, 287, 303, 315, 317, 339, 345–46
- ḥizb al-taḥrīr*, on democracy, 327
- ḥizb al-taḥrīr*, on election, 339
- ḥizb al-taḥrīr*, on gender, 320–22, 324
- ḥizb al-taḥrīr*, as rebellion, 325

- ḥizb al-tahrīr*, on Scandinavian Islam, 339
- Hjarnø, Jan, 70–71
- Hjärpe, Jan, 27, 91, 119 (also footnote), 163, 165, 179, 196, 227, 344
- Hofman, Murad, 198, 201–204, 206
- Homelessness, 237
- Homeopathic medicine, 334
- Homosexuality, 199
- Homosexuality, converts on, 327–31, 339, 341, 345
- Homosexuality, in society, 1, 18
- Homosexual(s), 47
- Homosexual(s), in society, 313–14, 348
- Human rights, 42–43, 75, 324–27
- Human rights, convention on, 24
- Human rights, converts on, 139
- Human rights, declaration on, 74
- Human rights, global flow, 10, 193, 310, 315, 339, 348
- Human rights, Hofman on, 202
- Human rights, as majority discourse, 198, 311
- Human rights, al-Mawdūdī on, 172
- Human rights, as new Muslim discourse, 340
- Human rights as Scandinavian values, 340
- Human rights, theology of, 196
- Human rights, in western society, vii
- Huntington, Samuel, 53–54, 59, 65
- Hussain, Mustafa, 69–70, 72, 75
- Hvitfelt, Håkan, 62
- Ibn al-‘Arabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn, 7 (footnote), 136, 215
- Ibn Bāz, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, 152, 158
- Ibn Kathīr, ‘Imād al-Dīn, 131
- Ibn Taymiyya, Taqī al-Dīn, 121, see also Islamic Foundation
- Idara Minhaj al-Qur’an, 39, 48
- IIFSO, 109–10, 117–21, 122–24, 164, 170–72, 174, 176–77, 179–81, 192–93, 197, 230
- IIT, 119, 180
- ijtihād*, 7–8, 137
- ijtihād*, definition of, 7
- ijtihād*, Badawi on, 188
- ijtihād*, Hamza Yusuf on, 225, 227
- ijtihād*, *ḥizb al-tahrīr* on, 147
- ijtihād*, Idara Minhaj ul-Qur’an on, 48
- ijtihād*, Shi‘a on, 127
- ikhwān*, 120
- ikhwān*, definition of, 15
- ikhwān*, see post-*ikhwān*, 122, 124
- ‘ilm al-maqāsīd*, definition on, 214
- ‘ilm al-rijāl*, 137
- Imam, 36–39, 74–75, 151, 152, 270, 335–38
- Imam, converts as, 299, 302, 315
- Imam, education of, 37
- Imam, on female circumcision, 73, 222–23
- Imam, Hamza Yusuf, 222–23, 229
- Imam, Khomeini, 127
- Imam, in media, 76, 222–23
- Imam, men as, 266
- Imam, al-Nawawī, 135
- Imam, see Shi‘a, 126–33, 216
- Imam, women as, 325
- Immigrant community, 70, 162, 231, 237, 287, 289, 304, 307, 347, 349
- Immigrant suburb, 34–35, 38, 56, 246
- Inclusionist, 263
- Inclusive, 44
- Inclusive, on terminology, 14
- Inclusive, the Sufi movement as, 319
- Individualism, 11, 77, 310, 330, 339
- Individualism, egalitarian, 20
- Individualism, Islamic, 318–19
- Individualism, Scandinavian, 126, 268
- Individualism, versus collectivism, 256
- Individualization, 19, 80, 125–126
- Individualization, in Scandinavia, 200, 310, 330, 340, 348
- Integrated plural identities, 286, see also Østberg
- intifāda*, 232
- iqtan‘a*, definition of, 13
- Iranian regime, 241
- Iranian revolution, 60, 63, 243
- Iranian women, 67, 241
- Islam, Yusuf, 292, 294–95
- Islamic centres, 110
- Islamic Council, 46, 294, 300
- Islamic Council of Europe, 117
- Islamic Council Norway, 46, 294, 300
- Islamic dress, 33, 116, 195, 233, 349, see also headscarf; headscarves
- Islamic Foundation, 117, 121–123, 164, 197

- Islamic Foundation, Hedin on, 120, 120 (footnote)
- Islamic Foundation, literature by, 121–24, 176–77, 179–80
- Islamic Foundation, publications by, 117, 164
- Islamic Foundation, *Salaam* and, 192–93
- Islamic fundamentalism, 241
- Islamic ideal, 192, 285
- Islamic ideal, of marriage, 275
- Islamic ideal versus culture, 188
- Islamic ideal versus Muslim practice, 192
- Islamic ideal versus Muslim reality, 264, 271–72, 278, 288, 347
- Islamic ideal versus Swedish ideals, 317
- Islamic ideal versus western reality, 172, 192
- Islamic identity, 220, 284
- Islamic identity, maintaining, 155, 300
- Islamic ideology, 157, 268, 275
- Islamic injunction, 264
- Islamic jurisprudence, 96, 194, see also *fiqh*
- Islamic jurisprudence, ignorant of, 140
- Islamic knowledge, 115, 119, 162, 212–13, 269, 296, 346
- Islamic knowledge, of converts, 257, 300
- Islamic knowledge, of Hamza Yusuf, 224
- Islamic knowledge, ignoring traditional, 114
- Islamic law schools, 120, 182, 199, 225, 230, see also traditionalists
- Islamic law schools, adhering to, 134–35, 140, 168, 207
- Islamic law schools, development of, 219
- Islamic law schools, punishment in, 329
- Islamic law schools, refusal of, 213
- Islamic law schools, Swedish Islam as, 315
- Islamic legislation, 148, 214, 315
- Islamic legislation, consensus in, 147
- Islamic legislation, Echammari on, 199
- Islamic legislation, lack of official authorities, 140
- Islamic legislation, legal tools within, 219
- Islamic legislation, new interpretations in, 225
- Islamic legislation, rejecting, 226
- Islamic legislation, traditional, 74
- Islamic legislation, women participating in, 228
- Islamic Liberation Party, 142, see also *hizb al-tahrir*, 142–50
- Islamic organisation, 117, 119, 204, 270
- Islamic organisation, IIFSO, 110
- Islamic organisation, in Norway, 48
- Islamic Research Academy, 167
- Islamic scholars, 9–10, 142, 162, see also *‘ulamā’*
- Islamic scholars, criticism of, 200
- Islamic scholars, diversity of, 105, 120, 201, 214
- Islamic scholars, on divorce, 190
- Islamic scholars, on female judges, 190
- Islamic scholars, on hadith, 206–207
- Islamic scholars, institution of, 146
- Islamic scholar, Shia, 127, 131
- Islamic scholar, women as, 324
- Islamic Studies, 134
- Islamic Studies, Arabic and, 159
- Islamic Studies, Hedin, 87
- Islamic Studies, Hjärpe, 91
- Islamic Studies, Leirvik, 195
- Islamic Studies, Otterbeck, 192
- Islamic Studies, Schmidt, 328
- Islamic Studies, Stenberg, 193
- Islamic Studies, Watt, 130
- Islamic world view, 220, 234, 315
- Islamic world view, acceptance of, 232, 232 (footnote)
- Islamism, 171
- Islamism, petro-, 193
- Islamism, development of
- Islamist literature, 109, 112
- isnād*, 214, see also narrator chain
- ‘taniqa*, definition of, 13
- jāhiliyya*
- Jama’at-i-Islami, 48, 164
- Jama’at-i-Islami, Islamic Foundation, 121,
- James, William, 84–85
- Jamison, Andrew, 21, 314
- Jesber, 249–250

- Jesber, *salafī* sufi, 114, 123, 137
 Jesber, Murabitun, 136–137
 Jesber, on homosexuality, 330–31
- jihad*, 199, 227
jihad, al-Mawdūdī on, 172
jihad, 154–159, see also *salafī*
jihadic, 154, 157, 227
jilbāb, 167, 200, 260
jinn, 169
- Johnsdotter, Sara, 73, 222 (footnote), 223
 Johnsdotter, on headscarf, 244, 244 (footnote)
- Jönsson, Halima, 241
- Judaism, viii, 55, 162, 319
 Judaism, conversion from, 232
 Judaism, feminist theologians, 125
 Judaism, gender relations in, 248
 Judaism, Reform, 1
 Judaism, survival of, 77
- kāfir*, 133
kāfir, *salafīs* on, 133, 154, 157, 160, 251, see also *salafī*, 150–61
kāfir, Zettersteen on, 166
- Kari, 101, 107
 Kari, on conversion, 101, 258, 283
 Kari, on female circumcision, 222–23
 Kari, on Muslims, 265–267, 271
 Kari, on Tabligh-i-Jama'at, 171
- Karim, Wazir Jahan, 63–64
- Karima, 102, 156, 233, 280
 Karima, on Badawi, 187–88, 190
 Karima, on familial support, 277
 Karima, on Koran, 102, 166, 168
 Karima, on mixed marriages, 275
 Karima, on Muslims, 268
- Karlsson, Pia, 28, 33, 273
- Keller, Nuah Ha Mim, 134–135
- Khadija, 349
 Khadija, on converts, 107–108
 Khadija, on al-Ghazzālī, 178
 Khadija, on headscarf, 240
 Khadija, on homosexuality
 Khadija, on Keller, 222
 Khadija, on majority society, 235–36, 300
 Khadija, on mosque activities, 335–36
 Khadija, on Qutb, 173–74
- khalīfa*, 129, 202, 333
khalīfatullāh, 7
- Khan, Inyat, 28, 163, 318
 Khān, Muḥammad Muḥsin, 169
kharijīte, 217
khulāfa, see *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, 142–50
khimār, 167, 200, 239, see also headscarf, headscarves
- Khomeini, Imam, 126–127
khul', 190
- Kielan, Abd al-Haqq, 302–303
 Kielan, on Sufism, 135–36
- King Hussein, 68
- Kohlberg, Lawrence, 86
- Koran, viii, 7, 17, 37, 39, 49, 53, 68, 79, 97, 102, 103, 113, 120, 122, 124–26, 129–33, 135, 137, 139–40, 146, 150–53, 155–58, 160, 163–70, 175, 178, 181, 184, 188, 190, 193, 195, 198–200, 206–209, 212–14, 216–17, 219, 221, 223, 226, 228, 238, 240, 258, 259, 261, 263, 265–66, 268, 309, 315, 321, 329, 330, 333, 334, 336, 345, 347
 Koran, and the hadiths, 9, 186, 206, 209, 213, 215, 330, 345
 Koran and Sunna, 113–114, 120–21, 123, 125, 137, 146, 151, 158, 181, 184, 196, 198, 207, 208, 214, 221, 226, 265
 Koran and the Sunna, 49, 151, 157, 170, 195
 Koran, translation of, x, 129–30, 163–69
- Köse, Ali, 82–83, 92, 96–97, 99, 106, 112
- Kristeva, Julia, 66
kuffār, 133, 154–55, 157
kufīr, 142, 215, 216
- Kuhn, Thomas, 86
- Küng, Hans, 204
- Labour market, 22, 35, 43, 77, 312
- Lacan, Jacques, 309
- Lang, Jeffrey, 206–11
- Larsen, Lena, ix, 13, 27, 39, 46, 48, 81–82, 95–98, 102, 109, 114, 117, 178, 164–265, 273, 276, 278, 289, 294, 296, 300–301, 306–307, 326, 334, 336, 341
- Lawrence, Bruce, 119, 120 (footnote)
- Law-School system, 123, 137, see *madhhab*
 Law-school system, adhering to, 141
 Law-school system, link to Sufism, 161, 184

- Law-school system, rejection of, 113–14, 124–25, 152, see *salafī*, 150–61
- Leadership, 36–38, 39, 113, 145, 281, 304
- Leadership, difference Shia and Sunni, 127–28, see Shia, 133
- Leadership, female, 9, 207–208, 208 (footnote)
- Leadership, Islamic religious, 26
- Leadership, Muslim, 46, 118, 230, 289, 299–300, 313
- Leftist(s), 106, 122, 177, 325, 343–44
- Leftist, Abba as, 122–23
- Leftist, Annika as, 107
- Leftist, Bettina as, 172, 172–73
- Leftist, converts as, 107–108
- Leirvik, Oddbjørn, 46–47, 195–96, 313
- Lemu, Aisha, 175, 193
- Liberal democracy, 311, 325
- Lindstad, Trond Ali, 126, 165
- Lise, 259
- Lise, on Lang, 210
- Littberger, Inger, 88, 88 (footnote)
- Löfgren, Orvar, 21, 311, 313
- Logical religion, Islam as, 103, 122, 328, 342
- Luckmann, Thomas, 22, 286, 337
- Lueg, Andrea, 53–54, 58, 66–67
- madhhab*, 123, 151 (footnote), 219–20, see also Islamic law schools; Islamic legislation
- Mahdī, 129
- Mahmoody, Betty, 66–67
- mahrām*, 156, 158
- Majority discourse, 79, 100, 198
- Male authority, 98
- Male authority, in the Bible, 238
- Male sovereignty, 240
- Male sovereignty, in Christianity, 239
- Maleness, 188
- Mālikī, 6, 134, see also Islamic law schools
- Malmö, 6, 141, 244
- Malmö, Mosque in, 26
- Malmö, Right-wing party in, 34
- Malmö, University, 242 (footnote)
- Mansur, 145–150, 160, see also *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, 142–150
- Mansur, on gender, 320
- Mansur, on Scandinavian Islam, 315, 317
- Maqsood, Ruqaiyyah Waris, 204–205
- Margaretha, 128–130, 132
- Margaretha, on gender relations, 212
- Margaretha, on homosexuality, 331
- Margaretha, on Koran, 166
- Marginalization, 152, 247, 255
- Maria, 210–11
- Marianne, 229
- majī' taqlīd*, 127–29, 213, see Shi'a converts, 126–33; Shi'a literature
- Martyrdom, 212
- Marxist, 108, 126
- Maryam, 318, 320
- Maryam, on homosexuality, 331
- Maryamiyya, 318
- mashallāh*, 171
- Master signifier, 309–10, 317, 325–26
- Mattias, 168
- MBC, 290
- Mernissi, Fatima, 9, 186, 201, 208 (footnote)
- Middle Age, 56, 235
- Middle East, viii, 64, 67, 196, 269
- mihna*, 130
- Minority/majority dichotomy, 108
- Modernist, 64, 87, 209
- Modernistic ideas, 110
- Modernist, Amal on Philips, 217
- Modernity, 30, 119, 120 (footnote), 123, 208, 267
- Modernization process, 30
- Mohamadi, Asrin, 241, 301–302
- Montessori, 336
- Mosque, 26–27, 48, 90, 163, 183, 215, 273, 293, 300, 335–36, 338
- Mosque, see *ḥizb al-tahrīr*, 145
- Mosque, report on, 245
- Mosque, women in, 152–53, 273
- MTV, 228–29, see Hamza Yusuf, 223–30
- muḥīt*, 217
- Multiculturalism, 4, 29, 31
- Muna, 171, 259–60, 272–73, 243–44
- Murabitun, 136–37
- Muslim association(s), 294
- Muslim association, financial support, 48
- Muslim association, male-dominated, 37
- Muslim council, 36, 289, 304
- Muslim council, Swedish, 193–94
- Muslim organisations, 15, 40–41, 47–48, 193, 289, 332

- Muslim organisations, dominated by male immigrants, 37
- Muslim organisations in interfaith dialogue, 292
- Muslim Women's Organisation, 37, 241, 301–302
- mu'ta*, 212
- Mutahharī, Morteza, 177
- Mutahharī, books of, 211–12
- mu'tazila*, 167
- Nahdi, Fuad, 226
- Naqshbandi, 136
- Naqshbandiyya, 39, 136
- Narrator chain, 214
- New Age, 11, 319
- Newman, John Henry, 88–89
- NGO, RFSU, 22
- NGO, *Save the Children*, 296
- Nilsson, Bengt, 21, 312
- Nina, 115–16
- Northern Europe, 10, 19, 103
- Northern Europe, female priests in, 305
- Northern Europe, Protestants in, 305
- Occident, double standard in, 202
- Ohlmark, Åke, 165–66
- Oksanen, Antti, 92–93
- Olav, 253
- Olav, on Lang, 210–11
- Ombudsman, 33–34, 46
- Ombudsman, sharia court in Pakistan, 224
- Orient, 57–59, 65–66, 175, see Said
- Orientalst, translation of the Koran, 162
- Orientalst attitude, 165–66
- Orientalism, 53, 57, see Said
- Orientalism, on popular, 65–68
- Orientalism, Turner, 64
- Östling, Magdalena, 81, 81 (footnote), 264
- Otherness, 70, 242, 251–52
- Otterbeck, Jonas, 12, 163, 176–77, 212
- Otterbeck, Islam versus Islams, 307–309, 311
- Otterbeck, on *Salaam*, 192–94, 196
- Ouis, Pernilla, 33 (footnote), 110, 184 (footnote), 187 (footnote), 190, 250 (footnote)
- Ouis, ecology, 192, 196–98, 331–32, 334
- Ouis, on Islam as rational, 123–24
- Ouis, member of *Save the Children*, 295–96
- Ouis, on 'petro-Islamism', 117, 120, 193
- Ouis, on Zetterstéen, 166
- Pakistani dress, 259, see *sharwāl* and *qamīs*
- Patriarchal, 240
- Patriarchal, ideas, 125, 282
- Patriarchal structures, 33, 36, 248
- Paul, 238
- Pedersen, Abdul-Wahid, 39, 127, 296, 298–99, 315–17, 320–21, 323, 325, 333–334, 339
- People's Home, 29–32, 41, 52, 312
- Peter, 115
- Petro-Islamism, 193
- Philips, Bilal, 155, 213, 214–21
- Physical abuse, 189–90
- Piaget, Jean, 85–86
- Plausibility structure, 286–88, 347, 349
- Plurality, 268
- Political left, 106–108, see conversion as rebellion; see also leftist(s)
- Politiken, 45, 71, 243
- Polygyny, 160, 212
- Post-conversion stage, 281, 287–88
- Post-*ikhwān*, 122–26
- Poston, Larry, 81–83, 93, 96–97, 100–105, 100 (footnote)
- Power relationship, 57, 255
- Power relationship, female covering in the Bible, 238
- Power struggle, 277
- Prayer, 15, 25, 86, 138, 274, 284, 330, see also *ṣalāt*
- Prayer, definition of Muslims, 12
- Prayer, difference between Shia and Sunni, 127
- Prayer, Eid, 334
- Prayer, God save America, 291
- Prayer, place of, 245
- Prayer, the Prophet's, 213, 219
- Prayer, separation of sexes in, 245
- Prayer, sufismen on, 138
- Prayer, void, 155
- Prayer, women leading in, 323
- Prayer hall, 245
- Praying, 115, 222, see also *ṣalāt*
- Prejudice, 69, 75–76, 271
- Prejudice, Brook's, 67
- confirming, 159–160

- defending against, 235
 Prejudice, against Muslims, 41, 115, 277
 Prejudice, against Muslim women, 98
 Prejudice, on Ohlmark, 166
 Prejudice, on Zetterstéen, 165
 Proprius, 167
 Protestant Church, 1, 236
 Protestant Church, on
 homosexuality, 342
 Punishment, 71, 347
 Punishment, for apostacy, 139
 Punishment, collective, 266
 Punishment, homosexuality, 330
 Punishment, Islamic, 139, 173, 188, 206
 Punishment, in law schools, 329
 Punishment, psychological, 188
 Punishment, spiritual, 140
- qamīs*, 259
 Q-News, 226, 185 (footnote), 260
 Queen Noor, 68
 Queen of Sheba, 208
 Questionnaire, 14–16, 81, 99, 102, 104, 106, 128, 172, 256, 262
 Quṭb, Muḥammad, 64, 89, 171, 173–74, 193
 Quṭb, Sayyid, 89, 171, 193
- Ramadan, 115, 300, 335–36
 Ramadan, Tariq, 121–22, 144–45
 Rambo, ix, x, 79, 83–84, 86, 88 (footnote), 99–95, 100, 110–11, 281, 343–44
 Rebellion, 92, 339, 343–44
 Rebellion, womens', 68
 Rebellion, conversion as, 106–108, 112, 281
 Rebellion, membership in extreme movements, 144, 150, 160, 325
 Reflectivity, 233, 249–51, 281
 Relativization, 250
 Religiosity, 10–11, 15, 19, 103, 165, 225–26, 277 (footnote), 310, 338
 Religiosity, private, 273–74, 319
 Religious freedom, 23, 33, 39, 274
 Religious truth, 93, 124, 251
 Revert, 13, 72, 86–87, 139
 Revolt, 68, 112, 311, 325
 Revolution, 22, 59, 172, 212, 305
 Revolution, Iranian, 60, 63, 243
 Rhetorician, 229
ridda, 80
 Robertson, Roland, 305
 Rojas Mauricio, 30–31
 Rolf, 229
 Royce, Josiah, 88
 Rumi, Jalal al-Din, 135, 162
 Runnymede Trust, 54, 78
 Rushdie, Salman, 127, 176
- Sā' dī Musliḥ al-Dīn, 162
 Sahindal, Fadime, 74–76, 303
 Said, Edward, 4, 53, 56–58, 65, 191, 235
Salaam, 110, 123, 187, 192–98
 Salaam, on born-Muslims, 269–71
 Salaam, on Islam as the 'good', 307–10, 332
salafī, x, 15, 114, 125, 131–33, 138, 141, 150–61, 168–69, 180, 221, 233, 251, 260, 263, 287, 303, 317, 325, see also *wahhabism*
salafī, Abu Ahmad, 315
salafī, on apostacy, 139
salafī, on democracy, 327
salafī, on face veil, 320
salafī, on gender, 9, 321–22, 324
salafī, ideology, 120
salafī, literature by, 213–20, 230, 344–46
salafī, Maryam, 320
salafī, Sufi, 114, 123, 137
salafī, on Scandinavian Islam, 339
salafīyya, 7, 170, 227
salāt, 284, see also prayer
 Samira, 139–40
 Sanaī, Hakīm, 135, 162
 Saudi Arabia, 137, 153–54, 157, 180, 265, 320
 Saudi Arabia, Islamic institutions in, 29, 151
 Saudi Arabia, *da'wa*, 117–19
 Saudi Arabia, IIFSO, 119
 Saudi Arabia, *salafī* on, 153–54, 320
Save the Children, 295–96
 Sayyid, Bobby S., 308–309, 316–17, 326
 Scandinavian standard, 242
 Schmidt, Garbi, 327
 Schoun, Frithjof, 318
 Schreiter, Robert J., 9, 174, 191, 193, 198, 203, 305, 310, 339
 Second-class citizen, converts as, 237
 Secularisation, 19, 23, 109, 310
 Secularist, 311

- Segregation, 56, 155–56, 245, 255, 261, 293
 Segregation, of gender, 148, 153, 199, 320
 Segregation, of living, 34–35, 51
 Segregation, between new Muslims and immigrant Muslims, 301
 Segregation, Scandinavian society, 3, 29, 77, 341
 Self-reflectivity, 251
 Separation of the sexes, 207, 245
 September, 11th, 45, 54, 55, 60, 143, 154
 September, 11th, effect on converts, 232, 235, 291–93, 300, 305, 345
 September, 11th, Hamza Yusuf on, 225–27, 290–92
 SFCM, 125, 138–41, 308 (footnote)
 SFCM, on homosexuality, 327–31
 SFCM, on law schools, 158
 SFCM, on Scandinavian Islam, 338–39
 Shadhiliyya, 221, see also Keller, 221–23
 Shāfiʿī, 6, 134, 221–22, see also Keller, 221–23
 Shāfiʿī, Jesber on, 137
shahāda, 87, 260, 284
 Sharia, 96, 227, 301, 345
 Sharia, Hamza Yusuf on, 225–26
 Sharia, *hizb al-tahrir* on, 147–48
 Sharia, Ombudsman of, 223–24
 Sharia, Traditionalists on, 134, 136, 139–40
sharwāl, 259
 Sheikh, Mona, 25
 Shiʿa, 8, 14, 37, 114, 161, 123, 180
 Shiʿa, on Bernström, 168
 Shiʿa, converts, 126–133
 Shiʿa, as feminists, 322
 Shiʿa, on homosexuality, 331
 Shiʿa, literature by, 177, 211–13
 Shiʿa, mosque, 26
 Shiʿa, organisation, 49
 Shiʿa, Philips on, 215–16, 218
 Shiʿa, *salafī* on, 155–57, 159
 Shiʿa, on Zetterstéen, 166
shirk, 7 (footnote), 151, 214–16
shūrā, 9, 326
 Significant other, husbands as, 296
ṣirāt al-mustaqīm, 13
 Skullcap, 233, 260
 Social allowance, 34, 116, 244, 342–43
 Social Democratic Party, 31, 41, 47, 310–14, 348
 Social Democratic Party, converts belonging to, 108
 Social Democratic Party, on gender, 21, 31
 Social Democratic Party, the People's Home, 30
 Social Democratic Party, MP, 245
 Social network, viii, 278
 Somaya, 174
 Somaya, on homelessness, 237
 Somaya, on homosexuality, 330
 Somaya, on Muslim women as traitors, 247
 Somaya, on al-Qaradawi, 184
 South Asian, 61
 South Asian, Islamic movements, 178
 South East Asia, 63–64, 80
 Stenberg, Leif, 308–09
 Stenberg, on Bucaille, 193
 Stenberg, Islam as, 307
 Stenqvist, Bjarne, 44, 72
 Sufi, 102, 110, 134, 141, 161, 170, 233
 Sufi, Brelwi, 48
 Sufi, brotherhoods, 108
 Sufi, *ḥabashī* movement, 141–42
 Sufi, literature, 162–63, 180, 220–30, 231, 344–45
 Sufi, Philips on, 215–216, 218
 Sufi, on al-Qaradāwī, 184
 Sufi, *salafī* Sufi, 114, 123, 136
 Sufi tradition, 28, 39, 80
 Sufi, Turkisk community, 49
 Sufi, sheikh, 28, 39, 163, see also Khan, Inyat
 Sufism, 15, 27, 81, 110, 123, 141, 161, 168, 260, 299, 303, 318–19, 338, 340
 Sufism, al-Ghazālī, 177, see also al-Ghazālī, 177–79
 Sufism, law schools, 134
 Sufism, in *Salaam*, 194
 Sunni, 8, 37, 157, 180
 Sunni, Bernström as, 168
 Sunni, classical sources, 207
 Sunni, converts, 14, 331
 Sunni, differences with Shiʿa, 126–27, 130–33, 322
 Sunni, extreme trends, 160
 Sunni, mosques, 26
 Sunni, scholar, 128, 213

- Sunni, schools of law, 6, 215
 Sunni, Sufism as orthodox, 135
 Supernatural happening, 90
 Svanberg, Ingvar, 27, 28, 33, 80, 273, 318
 Svenska Dagbladet, 18, 303–304
 Swedish Islamic Academy, 37
 Swedish Muslim Council, 193–94
 Switzerland, 33 (footnote), 142
 Sydsvenska Dagbladet, 21, 43–45, 62, 72, 74, 143–44, 241, 301
 Symbolic universe, 286–87

 Tabligh-i-Jama'at, 39, 48, 178–79, 258–59
 Taha Publishing House, 180
tajīd, 227
 Taliban, 326
taqīyya, 133
taqlīd, 8, 158,
 taqlīd, see *salafī*, 207
 taqlīd, Philips on, 219
tariqa, 39, 136, see Naqshbandiyya
tariqa, 221, Shadhiliyya
 Tarja, 204
tawba, 13
tawhīd, literature on, 117, 170, 213
 tawhīd, extreme movement on, 142
 tawhīd, Philips on, 214–18
 Terrorist, 45, 54, 154, 202, 290
 Terrorist, see headscarves, 290
 The Muslim Brotherhood, 28, 118, 120–22, 180, 192–93
 Thurfjell, David, 127
 TIME, 202
 Timoney, Erica, xiii, 337 (footnote)
 Tornberg, Carl Johan, 165
 Traditionalist, x, 1, 128, 131, 134, 141, 156, 158–59, 161, 180, 209, 230, 263, 304, 344–45
 Traditionalists, *ahl al-ḥadīth*, 6
 Traditionalists, on homosexuality, 332
 Traditionalist, law schools, 125
 Traditionalist, literature, 220–30
 Traitor, 237, 247
 Transcultural, 4–6, 285
 Transcultural, converts as, 3, 306
 Trinity, 109, 232
 Trinity, interpretation, 238
 Trinity, rejection of, 103–105
 Turkish-Ottoman Empire, 165
 Turner, Bryan, 64
 Twelver Shi'a, 127

ʿubūdīyya, 136
ʿulamāʾ, 146, see Islamic scholars
 ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, 157
 Umm Ayman, 139, 140, see traditionalists
 Umma, 13, 239
 Umma, burden on, 337
 Umma, converts on, 261
 Umma, disagreement among, 214
 Umma, diversity of, 230
 Umma, Hofman on, 203
 Umma, *salafī* on, 151, 158
 Umma, *salafīyya* on, 227
 Umma, Yusuf on, 224
 United Nations, 232, 325
 United States, vii, 15–16, 28, 54, 60, 87, 103, 109, 187, 174, 268, 295
 United States, Hofman on, 201, 202
 United States, IIFSO in, 118–19
 United States, immigrant situation in, 261
 United States, Islamic feminist theology in, 195
 United States, Islamophobia in, 77
 United States, Keller, 222
 United States, on Mahmoody, 66
 United States, Policy, 316, 154, 157
 United States, publishing houses in, 179–80
 United States, terror attacks on, 62, 235, 292
 United States, Yusuf, 224–25
 University of Wales, 247
unthā, 149
 Urban, 144
 Urdu, 122, 164, 210

 Van Gennep, 85
 Victimization, 62–64, 71, 245–46
 Vogt, Kari, 47–48, 127, 141, 319

 Wadud, Amina, 12, 13, 195, 206
wahhābī, 170
 wahhābī, movement, 150–51
 wahhābī, Philips on, 219
 wahhābī, school of thought, 150
wahhabism, 151, 170
 WAMY, 119
 Watt, Montgomery, 130
 Werne, Bo, 135, 141, 162–63
 Werner, Yvonne, 23–24, 88–89, 208
 Westerlund, David, 28, 80, 299, 318–19, 340
 Western materialism, 203

- Xenophobia, 46, 54
Xenophobia, European Union centre
for supervision of racism and
xenophobia, 71
- Young, Michael, 185 (footnote), 232,
253
Young, on born Muslims, 260
- Yusuf, Hamza, 22–30, 291–93, 295,
298, 347
- ẓahīrī*, 147, 147 (footnote)
- Zetterstéen, Karl Vilhelm, 162,
165–66, 168
- Zoroastrianism, 319

MUSLIM MINORITIES

ISSN 1570-7571

1. Allievi, S. & Nielsen, J. *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and Across Europe*. 2003. ISBN 90 04 12858 1
2. Maréchal, B., Allievi, S., Dassetto, F. & Nielsen, J. *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe: Religion and Society*. 2003. ISBN 90 04 13201 5
3. Daun, H. & G. Walford. *Educational Strategies Among Muslims in the Context of Globalization*. Some National Case Studies. 2004.
ISBN 90 04 13575 4
4. Roald, A.S. *New Muslims in the European Context*. The Experience of Scandinavian Converts. 2004. ISBN 90 04 13679 7