

Islamic Culture in Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue and its Reflection in the Czech Lands
Abstract

The general aim of the present Ph.D. thesis is a reflection of Islamic culture within the Euro-Mediterranean multi-cultural dialogue. Its specific aim is a study of reflection of the Arab and Islamic communities in the Czech Republic.

The first chapter provides methodological and theoretical analyses of the conceptions of “end of history” by Francis Fukuyama and “clash of civilisations” by Samuel P. Huntington, which provoked a wide and controversial discussion both around the world and in our country. It also provides an analysis of more recent “catastrophic scenarios” (Laqueur, Spencer, Rodríguez, Sarazin). The Islamic culture within the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and with the history of Barcelona process of cooperation of the European Union with the South-Mediterranean countries, which culminated in founding of the Union for Mediterranean in 2010, are also included in the chapter. Anna Lindh Foundation as a European non-government organisation and its network in the Czech Republic is an object of special interest. The last part of the chapter includes the controversial results of the “Arab Spring” characterized by the rise of Islamists to power.

The second chapter is focused on “Orientalism” in culture. The motto “Ex Oriente lux” expressed not only the interaction between Orient and Europe in Antiquity, which culminated in Hellenist syncretism, but also the Arab cultural influence on medieval Europe. According to Edward Said, Europe has never deeply understood the ideas, culture and civilisation of the Islamic world. Europe’s attitude toward the Islamic world changed in the Age of Enlightenment after the “Turkish danger” had disappeared. Cultural “Orientalism” was reflected in European painting in the 19th century (French, Italian, Spanish, German, British and Russian schools), which was “rediscovered” in Western Europe in the late 1980’s. Elements of “Orientalism” in the Czech lands existed in Czech literature (Josef Kajetán Tyl, Jan Neruda) and architecture.

The third chapter deals with the Muslim community in Europe focusing on the neighbouring countries like Germany, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary. The position of the Muslim community in the Central Europe is compared to the situation in France, the United Kingdom and Spain. The Muslim community in Balkans as a result of the Ottoman rule is also mentioned. The fourth chapter is devoted to the history of Muslim community in the Czech lands. The primary sources of this chapter were the periodicals of the Islamic community (Hlas, Al-Islám) and interviews with 75 members of the Arab community in the Czech Republic. Many members of this community are Christians or non-practising Muslims living in mixed marriages. The author of this thesis visited the mosques in Prague and Brno to discuss with the leading personalities (Vladimír Sáňka, Hassan Alrawi). Based on her own experience, the author paid attention to women rights in the Arab countries, which in reality do not correspond with the classical image of an Oriental woman in a harem.

The last three chapters analyse in detail the activities of the Czech non-government organisations related to the Arab and Islamic culture. The subject of the fifth chapter is focused on the history of the Czech-Arab Society founded in 1993, following the Czechoslovak-Arab Society. The cultural activities of the Czech-Arab Society are the subject of the sixth chapter. The seventh chapter deals with the activities of Czech-Arab Chamber of Commerce.

Key words: Multi-cultural dialog, Islam, Clash of civilisations, Orientalism, Arab community in the Czech lands, Czech non-government organisations