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## Abstract

### **The Embers of Allah: cosmologies, knowledge, and relations in the mountains of central Bosnia**

This thesis is a study of living Islam and Muslims' lifeworlds in the margins of the postsocialist world, in the mountains of central Bosnia. Its main scope is an analysis of the scales of relatedness and the domains of knowledge traditions that assemble Muslims' lifeworlds as tangible, coherent and meaningful social forms. In doing so, the thesis draws inspiration from the Barthian anthropology of knowledge to shed light on 'what a person employs to interpret and act on the world'. A knowledge tradition, here understood as a local cosmology, is a product of multiple persons and relations that create the context in which knowledge and bodies of knowledge are produced and sustained. Therefore, I argue that it is a knowledge tradition that informs a 'meaningful agency' in the flow of everyday sociality and that continues to be Islam in the Bosnian mountains. In particular, I suggest that Muslim life in the mountains is lived along four complementary meaningful contexts, that is relatedness, spatiality, temporality and ritual.

Relatedness embraces multifaceted processes of 'living together' that (re)fabricate, relate and extend Muslim persons through *sharing* of substances, memories, identity and divinity (chapters 3 and 4). The flow of everyday sociality between persons who 'live in proximity' is tapestried from day-to-day forms of *exchange* such as hospitality, intimacy and mutuality between neighbours, and enacted within two overlapping spheres, that is immediate (*komšiluk*) and extended neighbourhood (*mahala*) (chapters 5 and 6). The lifeworlds of Muslims as well as the flow of the everyday in the mountains are orchestrated and punctuated by particular *rhythms* embracing multiple forms of time reckoning and calendars, and orchestrating various agricultural and religious activities and practices (chapter 7). Ritual is a *mode of appropriation* of personal or communal good luck, fortune, blessing and well-being (chapters 6, 7 and 8), and cuts across the spheres of intimacy and proximity and embraces Muslims' lifeworlds, well-being of the house, the land and the persons with the sacred landscape and divinity.

Throughout the thesis I argue that our research in the post-Yugoslav regions needs to take into account local knowledge traditions as a serious matter of concern, and situate the war atrocities or postsocialist transformations within the larger analytical scales entwining cultural continuities and historicities with social, political and economic breakdowns. In doing so, I show that the ways Bosnian Muslims value and conceive of being a Muslim are primarily focused on cultural creativity, knowledge, morality and domains that inform, shape and (re)create their lifeworlds and cosmologies, and through which Bosnian Muslims exchange, communicate, validate and understand their religious experiences and imagination in the context of turbulent social, economic and political transformations.

**The Embers of Allah: cosmologies, knowledge, and  
relations in the mountains of central Bosnia**

David Henig

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

Department of Anthropology

Durham University

Dr Stephen M. Lyon, Supervisor

Dr Iain R. Edgar, Supervisor

2011

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**The Embers of Allah: cosmologies, knowledge, and relations in the mountains of central Bosnia**

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I, the author, declare that none of the material in this Thesis has been submitted previously by me or any other candidate for the degree in this or any other university.

## **Acknowledgement**

Although the thesis was written by one author, this entire doctoral enterprise would not have been possible without the generous support of many people, colleagues and friends.

I would like to thank the Wenner-Gren Foundation for making my dream financially possible. Without generous support throughout all phases of my PhD study and providing me with a Wadsworth International Fellowship and a Wadsworth International Dissertation Write-Up Fellowship the whole project would not become possible. In the Czech Republic I would like to thank Dr Vlasta Christovová, my philosophy teacher who taught me read, write and think independently, and who authoritatively decided that I have to become an anthropologist. Her exemplary pedagogical work and wit will always be a great source of inspiration. My gratitude to Dr Daniel Sosna from the Anthropology Department in Pilsen is beyond words. His tireless academic support, sharp constructive criticism as well as friendship have been very important gifts in my life. Without his generosity I would not have been writing these lines now. During my studies I was lucky enough to meet excellent teachers and friends who influenced me immensely and I fear that I cannot hope to include them all. Nonetheless, I would like to express my gratitude to Doc. Martin Kreidl, Prof. Ivo Budil, and my friends Dr Michal Růžička, and Dr Ema Hrešanová.

In the United Kingdom, my deepest gratitude belongs to my supervisor Dr Stephen M. Lyon who taught me about being an anthropologist. Without his firm and contagious believe in my work I would never have decided to opt for a PhD. His continuous and generous support, tireless willingness to read draft by draft, and improvement of my arguments, have been beyond a supervisor's call of duty. I am afraid that I will never be able to pay him back for taking me under his (academic) wing. I can only offer my deepest appreciation and friendship in return. My second supervisor Dr Iain R. Edgar who joined me later on a PhD odyssey played an invaluable role and gave me enough support and confidence whenever I needed it, and taught me a lot about ethnographic imagination and academic writing. His visit during my fieldwork in Bosnia will always bring warm memories.

I would like to thank all the people from the Department of Anthropology, Durham University, where I have had the privilege to spend several extremely productive years of my life in an intellectually vibrant and stimulating environment. For academic generosity I am grateful to Prof. Michael Carrithers, Prof. Robert Layton, Prof. Robert Simpson, Dr Yulia Egorova, Dr Matei Candea, Dr Mark Jamieson and Dr Jamie Tehrani. Many thanks belong to my fellow postgraduates who provided me with collegial support whenever needed, and more importantly who navigated me through British (academic) culture, the university system as well as Durham pubs. I would like to thank Dr Stavroula Pipyrou and Daniel Knight for a shelter and a hug when I needed them, and Julian Kotze who always took me for a gorgeous walk in the Durham countryside whenever I was lost in the unknown. In particular, I am grateful to Gareth Hamilton for support, friendship and sharing of wonders from places ‘behind the Iron Curtain’, and simply for being such a fantastic postgraduate fellow.

Dr Tone Bringa generously and immediately provided me with initial contacts in the region. During the writing-up I was lucky to meet and discuss some of my arguments or chapters with Glenn Bowman, Prof. Michael Fischer, Prof. Stephen Gudeman, Dr Peter Parkes, Dr Frances Pine, and Dr Johan Rasanayagam whose publications have made me think very hard about my arguments. I am grateful to all of them.

Dr Tone Bringa and Prof. Robert Layton, the examiners of my thesis, provided me with encouragement, very welcome criticism, and stimulating comments.

In Bosnia I would like to thank all friends and families in Brdo who accepted me as ‘one of them’, and for their generosity and hospitality. Beyond words is my deepest gratitude to Zahid’s family who accepted me as their own, as well as the whole neighbourhood (*komšiluk*). Friendship with Mujo’s and Fadan’s family was truly a gift. I am grateful to sheikh Azmir and his *murids* as well as sheikh Ragib, and sheikh Senad for generosity, love, wisdom and showing me the ways of how one can become someone other. In Sarajevo, I always found support and help in the Zemalskij Muzej, and also friends Samir and Ernis. Likewise, the Czech Embassy provided me with generosity that I would never asked for, and His Excellency Dr Jiří Kuděla and Pavel Duchoň in particular. *Hvala!*

This thesis would have never been possible without the support of my family. In particular, I would like to thank my mother and grandmother for their continuous support despite never having got used to my nomadic way of life. My sister will be always a great source of inspiration, knowledge and creativity. I am thankful to my nieces Marjam and Aisha, my nephews Abdel and Ahmed who patiently tolerated that their uncle cannot always play with them, and to my brother-in-law Adam who will always provide me with a nice strong tea.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Emma O'Driscoll for her love, support, patience, inspiration, friendship, hugs and smiles. Without her unshakeable believe in me and my work this thesis would have never become reality. My wholehearted gratefulness to her is beyond any words.

# 1 Introduction

## The Gift of the night

*Zvijezda* is a Bosnian word that means ‘star’. However, *Zvijezda* is also the name of a highland range which is a historically significant Muslim region in central Bosnia. The magnificent hills that stretch above and along the river Krivaja are described as having a star-like shape in metaphors that are widespread throughout the region. Likewise, local narratives describe the night sky in the mountains as uniquely bright, swamped with countless flickering stars the beauty of which brings people closer to Allah.

The story originates in a Muslim village in the mountains on the 27th night of the holy month of Ramadan in 2009. This night is recognised as the Night of Power (*leilet-el-kadir*), and as one of the most important in the entire Muslim religious calendar. It commemorates the moment when the Qur’an was revealed. It was right after the evening prayer in the village mosque, after which the children and Imam sang songs of reverence for Allah (*ilahija*) and together with villagers collectively recited verses of *mevlud*. My fieldwork on living Islam in the Bosnian mountains was coming to an end. Nonetheless, the night seemed to be only just beginning. Villagers left the mosque and went to their homes to continue praying because they believed in the unique power of the night. Every prayer performed on the 27th night of Ramadan ought to be a thousand times more powerful than other prayers. I was also walking home, back to my cottage in the village (which I shall call in this thesis Brdo) accompanied by my two friends, Mujo and Nijas. It was about midnight; the sky was bright and filled with countless flickering stars. We stopped for a while and chatted, savouring the moment. We had observed the night sky very often during my fieldwork. However, it was only on that night that I was told the story of something that had happened in the village a few years ago. At the time, on the 27th night of Ramadan, right after the evening prayers when villagers were leaving the mosque, someone realised that the stars scattered over the sky resembled the shape of an Arabic letter, like an echo from Allah. The stars flickered in this way for a while, prolonging the importance of the moment, and after an hour or so melted into the darkness.

Muslims in the mountains of central Bosnia believe that the sky is a canvas on which Allah draws His messages. The powerfulness of such tidings is flickering on the night sky like fire embers. When I was a child I described the stars in the sky metaphorically as eternally gleaming and flickering embers. In the mountains of central Bosnia I discovered that children, and not only them, use similar metaphors. After the conversation I had with my friends Mujo and Nijas, I returned to my cottage and started thinking about the metaphor of embers and stars in the light of the story I had just been told by my friends.

In the mountains, the stars in the night sky are conceived of as the embers of Allah. These divine embers are flickering with a pulsing intensity throughout the various and ever-changing moments of human life; no matter what, they are eternally present. The metaphor of the flickering fire embers eloquently captures the significance and intensity of Muslims' divine encounters in the Bosnian mountains. Such divine experiences are entwined with the intensity of ever-changing individual piety and spiritual imagination during religious feasts and rituals, or decisive life events that are intimately intertwined with the multiple rhythms of living Islam in rural Bosnia.

Anthropologists have argued already for some time that figurative thinking enables the accommodation of natural symbols into spiritual cosmologies (e.g. Douglas 1970; Holy 1991; Lienhardt 1961). Figurations and transfigurations reconcile the vicissitudes of everyday life with clarity, expectations and certainty that people draw upon in keeping their lifeworlds coherent and tangible (cf. Carrithers 2009). Hence, lifeworlds of Muslims in the Bosnian mountains cannot be separated from the metaphors by which they live. Certainly, Muslims' narratives and stories, as with any other rhetoric tropes, bear the power to allegorise abstract or burdened problems and issues as intersubjective and lived dramas of human existence (Jackson 1998). Therefore, by taking seriously the story of flickering stars as being Allah's embers as an allegory of Muslims' encounters with divinity, this thesis is an attempt to cast light on one such story, that of being a Muslim in the mountains of central Bosnia.

\*\*\*

This thesis is a study of living Islam and Muslims' lifeworlds in the margins of the postsocialist world. The thesis's focus is on cultural knowledge and domains that inform, shape and (re)create the lifeworlds and cosmologies of Muslims in a mountain region of central Bosnia, and through which Bosnian Muslims exchange, communicate, validate and understand their religious experiences and imagination in the context of turbulent social, economic and political transformations. Its chief concern is with the vibrant knowledge traditions that shape the domains of Muslims' everyday life in the region. Whilst the thesis is chiefly embedded in rural village life, its concern is broader. Here the lifeworlds of Muslims are situated and understood in thorough post-Yugoslav transformations of Islam and Bosnian society at large. Furthermore, the thesis illuminates the ways in which Bosnian Muslims reappeared on the map of the Muslim world after the breakdown of socialist Yugoslavia. Yet by tracing particular case studies of the influence of Islamic aid organisations and the reemergence of dervish orders, questioning the sources of spiritual authority within Muslim families, and observing the morality of neighbourhood relations and relatedness, or re-appropriation of the sacred landscapes, the thesis points to the contradictory experiences and encounters of Muslims living in the mountains with contemporary global issues at the grassroots level. Put in this way, this thesis might be read as an attempt to establish what Marsden succinctly outlined as 'a new and different understanding of the relationship between Islam, everyday religious experience and interpersonal relationships in Muslim societies' (2005: 22-23). In doing so, the arguments discussed in this thesis provide an alternative perspective on a Muslim society in the Balkans.

The ethnographic chapters presented here shall navigate the reader away from the hegemonic interpretative analytical frameworks portraying Bosnian Islam as entrapped in the politics of identity and ethnonational difference, and Bosnia-Herzegovina solely as a post-war society. Nevertheless I am concerned with the interrelationships between cultural knowledge, the micro-politics of everyday life and the lifeworlds of Bosnian Muslims. Through attending ethnographically to Muslims' actions and interactions, intentions, concerns and moral reasoning, narratives and experiences, I show that being a Muslim person is closely entwined with the cosmologies of life. Neither the local cosmologies, nor Muslims' lifeworlds are fixed domains. On the contrary, they are constantly in the making; negotiated, transmitted, and validated through a continuity of knowledge traditions and embedded within everyday sociality and moral reasoning and imagination (cf. Barth 1987, 1990, 2002; Carrithers 1992; Lambek 2000; Rasanayagam

2010). More generally then, the main aim of the thesis is twofold. First, to embrace the region of former Yugoslavia within postsocialist studies and anthropological studies of social breakdowns, (dis)continuities and changes (e.g. Hann 2006a; Layton 2006). Second, to shed light on living Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Balkans today, and hence to contribute to the body of work on the anthropology of Muslim societies at large (e.g. Marranci 2008).

### **1.1 The Argument**

This thesis starts with its main objective, that of an anthropological perspective on living Islam in the margins of the postsocialist world. However, the juxtaposition of Islam, postsocialism, marginality and Bosnia is not easy to grasp, and yet such a *perspective* might not be in concordance with the dominant view on contemporary Bosnian society. As the authors of *The New Bosnian Mosaic* (Bougarel, Helms and Duijzings 2007) inform us, in the post-Yugoslav and post-war debates the main issue became ‘the reduction of Bosnian realities to their ethnic dimensions’ (ibid.: 13). Indeed, the Bosnian tragedy of the 1990s war accelerated research interest in and knowledge production about the margins of Europe, in which the abiding tradition of multiethnic coexistence or hatred, depending on the position of the author, were depicted in particular (e.g. Donia and Fine 1994; Mahmutćehajić 2000; Rieff 1995; Sells 1996). The number of studies has mushroomed since the breakdown of Yugoslavia, and it has since become almost impossible to provide a critical assessment of the post-war literature on Bosnia that often replicates the (post)conflict and nationalistic rhetoric (cf. Bougarel, Helms, and Duijzings 2007: 11). There is, understandably, a voice of detachment in such critical arguments. At the grass-roots level ethnonationalism is as important as newly aggravated poverty, reconfiguration of gender relations, or intimate discontents that many actors associate with the newly established hierarchies and the corrupted state, to name just a few examples that are vexing Bosnian society. During my fieldwork these issues were also discussed constantly in the media as well as in everyday intimate conversations. Nonetheless, some anthropologists felt uneasy with such detached, or constructivist arguments. For example the anthropologist Robert Hayden argues, based on such ‘skeleton-without-flesh’ data as public opinion polls and other censuses, that ethnic differences and antagonisms are truly lived in Bosnia (2002: 207; 2007). In arguing so, Hayden opposes the arguments of those scholars (e.g. Jansen 2005a) who argue for a

critical distance from the dominant modes of reasoning in/of Bosnian society, in particular ethnonationalism. Hayden is right that Bosnia-Herzegovina is still in many respects an ambiguously divided society, even despite the moral visions that are projected into the country by many international stakeholders engaged in the post-war reconstruction processes. However, what is often missing in his arguments and other similar debates is the perspective from 'below'. Such a perspective and a detailed, yet critical examination of the intimation of human sociality might provide 'flesh' for detached top-down driven generalisations.

The importance of ethnographic fieldwork and an 'experience-near' anthropological perspective in post-socialist research has been widely recognised (e.g. De Soto and Dudwick 2000; Hann 1994: 231, 2007: 5).<sup>1</sup> The notion of a *perspective* is poignant here as it opens new insights, angles, possibilities of understanding, or simply new perspectives. Indeed, as Strathern (2004 [1991]: xix ) pointed out 'the idea of perspective suggests one will encounter whole fresh sets of information as one moves through various scales'. In arguing so, let me make several points clear at the very beginning of my argument. This is not a thesis about the Bosnian war and its horrific massacres. Here I do not describe ethnic conflict, and pay little attention to ethnoreligious nationalism. Neither is Muslim identity highlighted, nor are inter-communal relations explored. Instead of adding another 'ethnically biased' argument (for a critique see Brubaker 2002), I explore what it means to live a Muslim life in the Bosnian mountains today. Furthermore, I analyse the ways an individual becomes a Muslim person, and hence how Muslim personhood is assembled in the flow and turbulence of social life. In doing so, this thesis is an anthropological analysis of particular knowledge traditions and domains that inform these processes in the mountains of central Bosnia.

## **1.2 Bosnia, marginality and the work of imagination**

I remember the conversation vividly. I walked through a meadow with an old villager, Rajf, and we discussed various topics. The stream of narratives and memories led us from one theme to another up to the moment when Rajf poignantly said 'Bosnia is like a wrongly parked car, it has always obstructed somewhere or somebody'. We stayed

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as Hann (*ibid.*: 7) argues, 'light is shed on invisible, tacit forms of knowledge, on beliefs and practices which can never be captured in the statistics of economics or even the most sensitive surveys of sociologists'

silent for a while, and then the conversation flowed in another direction. This short snippet from an intimate fieldwork encounter neatly brings to the forefront the enigmatic ambiguity, irony and uncertainty that have overcast Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Balkan peninsula in Western thought for a long time (e.g. Green 2005; Herzfeld 1987; Todorova 1997). The violent dissolution of Yugoslavia, and here in the case of Bosnia fresh memories of the recent war and its atrocities, only highlight the shadows of this ambiguity.

The Balkans is a region of stunning beauty that has attracted many travelers and travelogues for centuries, and Bosnia is no exception (e.g. Bracewell and Drace-Francis 2009; Durham 2000 [1909]; West 1993 [1942]). Bosnia, like other regions of the Balkan peninsula, however, has also been a fertile source of conceptual ambiguity, marginality and reification. The Balkans served as a rhetoric trope that captured the geo-political liminal space between ‘civilised’ Europe and the Orient ‘other’. Initially, the debates on the symbolic geography of the Balkans drew upon Edward Said’s (1978) deconstruction of the ‘Oriental other’ in particular. So for example Hayden and Bakić-Hayden (1992) argued that Orientalism and Balkanism share the same underlying logic; and later Bakić-Hayden (1995) wrapped these lines of reasoning into the Western discursive practice of ‘nesting Orientalism’, that is

‘a pattern of reproduction of the original dichotomy upon which Orientalism is premised. In this pattern, Asia is more “East” or “other” than eastern Europe; within eastern Europe itself this gradation is reproduced with the Balkans perceived as most “eastern”; within the Balkans there are similarly constructed hierarchies’ (ibid.: 918).

These arguments highlight the liminal position of the Balkans as ‘matter out of place’ (Douglas 1966), escaping from clear classifications; it is a betwixt and between space. However, this ambiguity points to a kind of marginality rather than otherness. Indeed, as Michael Herzfeld (1987) and Sarah Green (2005), who have both been working in Greece, pointed out, it is a place in the margins of Europe. But if the Balkans is located in the margins of Europe, the Orientalist perspective becomes problematic. The orientalising logic of the self–other relationship that would ascribe the meaning of categorical difference and otherness to the place is then untenable. The notion of marginality associated with the Balkans leads the argument to questions about difference *within* identity.

In order to grasp such ambiguity and marginality, Maria Todorova (1997) in her tour de force argument analysed the theme of the Balkans in European imagology. She uses the term ‘Balkanism’, rather than ‘nesting Orientalism’, by which she understands ‘the other within the Self’. As Todorova argues, Orientalism is a discourse about an imputed opposition, whereas Balkanism is a discourse about imputed ambiguity (ibid.,: 17). In the language of symbolic geography Balkanism is a set of discourses through which the ‘other within’ was dominated and subordinated but has never fully become the Other. Moreover, as Todorova reminds us, the Orient is an intangible entity, whereas the Balkans is a concrete historical and geographical entity.

Nonetheless, the Balkans was historically conceived of as a transitory region and buffering zone between multiple Great Powers competing over domination of the area. The Byzantium Empire, Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire as well as the Cold War axes of power influenced life in the region to a greater or lesser extent. Recent war events in the region after the collapse of communist regimes resulted in an understanding of the Balkans as a buffering zone between three civilisations, one of which (Islamic) has bloody borders here (Huntington 1996). The popularity of the clash of civilisations paradigm is then only an epitomisation of this continuing ambiguity and marginality ascribed to the region, that was so poignantly captured in the narrative of my friend Rajf.

### **1.2.1 Bosnia and history: a bird’s eye view**

An analysis of both Orientalism and Balkanism deals with the discursive practices and political processes of the domination–subordination, hegemony–resistance in particular. However, as Sarah Green shows, marginality might be attended to and understood differently. And she argues, ‘rather than resistance, this approach emphasises inventiveness, the possibility of making something new out of making things uncertain’ (Green 2005: 4). In other words, another perspective might be to examine the Balkan region, and Bosnia specifically, as a vibrant place where multiple cultural continuities and knowledge traditions intersect.

So for example John Davis, in his thorough comparative analysis of the Mediterranean region along both shores, eloquently pointed out that ‘Ottoman expansion brought

Morocco and Montenegro under the same hegemony with Palestine and Egypt' (1977: 11). Heppell and Norris argue in the same vein

'In addition to its connections with Ottoman Turkey, it was linked in faith and in culture with the Arab Middle East, especially with Egypt and with Syria. It was also extensively influenced by Iranian thought and material culture, intellectually in the case of part-Shiite Albania and culturally in the case of pre-Muslim Bulgaria' (2001: 6)

Bosnia also embraces a tapestried fabric of ideas, practices and material culture embedded in multiple cultural continuities (cf. Andrić 1990; Fine 2002; Malcolm 1994; Norris 1993). It is a place where Byzantine, European and Ottoman influences met and intermingled for centuries. Bosnia is historically a region in the Balkans populated mainly by South Slavs (Hammel 1993). In the history of Bosnia, we can find the enigmatic and often disputed schismatic Bosnian Church that broke away from Catholicism in the 13th century, as well as the subsequent spread of Franciscan missionaries in the 14th century. In the second half of the 15th century Bosnia was conquered by the Ottomans and Islam slowly overwhelmed. The conversion of the local Slavic population to Islam became a delicate topic in many fiercely nationalistic debates. It was for example argued that the conversion was either forced or utilitarian. Other authors argued that the conversion was rather a crisscrossed process between the disciples of the Bosnian Church and those of the Christian or Orthodox Churches, as there was historically no strong church organisation in Bosnia (cf. Bringa 1995; Friedman 1996; Malcolm 1994).

However, with the Ottoman administration the millet system was also adopted in the Bosnian lands, that is, classifying people by religion. The millet system was based on the administrative division of Ottoman society according to religious affiliations and distributions of unequal privileges for respective millets in the Ottoman hierarchy. With the spread of nationalism during the 19th century the millet communes in Bosnia became nationalised (cf. Bringa 1995: 20; Fine 2002: 9). However, as Todorova (1997) pointed out, Muslims in the Balkans could hardly develop any such national allegiance as they associated themselves with the Ottoman empire, in contrast for example to Catholics with the idea of 'Croatness' and Orthodox with 'Serbianess'. Hence, Todorova argues, Balkan Muslims 'were in many respects practically excluded from the process of national formation' (ibid.: 170-171).

The legacy of millets in Bosnia can be found in local notions of *nacija*. It is a category that replicates in many respects the Ottoman millet-like classification and embraces religion and ethnicity (i.e. cultural identity and/or difference) under one roof. Bringa (1995: 20) rightly observed that the local understanding of *nacija* might be conceived of as an ethnoreligious identification. In the Bosnian context this process resulted in the emergence of three *nacije*, that is, Orthodox, Christian and Muslim. Furthermore, as Bringa also illustrates, the difference between the respective *nacije* was drawn from religion in particular. During my fieldwork I was asked several times whether in the Czech Republic, the country of my origin, there lived more Croats or Serbs. My first reaction was that neither Croats nor Serbs lived there. However, the person who asked me explained that he meant Catholics or Orthodox respectively. Although the differences between *nacije* were recognised in rural Bosnia, they did not create categorical boundaries. Bringa shows throughout her ethnography that everyday life in a multiethnic village embraced various forms of sociality and relatedness that crisscrossed ethnic differences. What created the boundaries between the neighbours was top-down ethnonationalism and a rhetoric of ethnic hatred (cf. Barth 2000: 33). However, the leap between *nacija* and nation(alism) in the Bosnian context needs to be examined on a broader historical scale.

After the withdrawal of the Ottoman empire from the Bosnian lands, when the Austro-Hungarian administration took over, there was an increased process of nationalisation among Croats (Christians), Serbs (Orthodox) and later Bošnjaks or Muslims. The politicisation of their collective identities was considerably vigorous between the former two communities in particular with the latter wedged in between (cf. Malcolm 1994: 136-155). This ambiguity and the nationalistic tensions, mainly between Croats and Serbs, continued between and during the World Wars.

Tito's socialist Yugoslavia was born and united from the ashes of the Second World War. As Malcolm (1994: 193) pointed out, Tito was more interested in power than in reconciliation between the nations, and his politics of 'brotherhood and unity' was enacted via all possible means. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was a multiethnic federation with a complex organisational system. The constitution eventually recognised six Yugoslav nations, namely Croat, Serb, Slovene, Macedonian, Montenegrin and Muslim. Each dwelled in one of the federal republics, yet Bosnia was

co-constituted by three nations, Muslims, Croats and Serbs (Bringa 1995: 26).<sup>2</sup> However, in the case of ‘Muslims’, they became part of the constitutional matter of concern only in the 1960s.

In 1961 ‘Muslims’ were recognised in the census in the ‘ethnic sense’ (Malcolm 1994: 198). In 1971, after a series of negotiations, ‘Muslims’ appeared in the census in the sense of a nation, and in 1974 they were included in the new constitution. Nonetheless, this was not an Islamic religious movement which struggled for recognition of a ‘Muslim’ nation; on the contrary ‘it was led by Communist and other secularized Muslims who wanted Muslim identity in Bosnia to develop into something more definitely non-religious’ (ibid.: 200). This resulted then into two contradictory processes. First, Muslim nationalism was shaped in contradistinction to Croat and Serb nationalism respectively. In other words, as Gellner (1983: 70) lucidly pointed out, ‘[n]owadays, to be a Bosnian Muslim you need not believe that there is no God but God and that Mohamad is his prophet, but you do need to have lost that faith’. Second, anti-communist ‘Islamic revival’ aimed at reuniting Bosnia Muslims with the Islamic Ummah (Irwin 1983; Malcolm 1994: 201; Sorabji 1988, 1994). However, the former process prevailed and Bosnian Muslims were drawn into the ethnonational debates that accelerated especially in the late 1970s and 1980s, and that eventually tore the country apart.

This short historical account indicates that the history of Bosnia has been for a long time a contested field in the nationalistic, often contradictory interpretations of the past (Bougarel, Helms and Duijzings 2007; Brigna 1995; Jansen 2002, 2003; Malcolm 1994). Indeed, as Milan Kundera (1980: 4) once remarked, ‘the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting’. In the Yugoslav as well as post-Yugoslav periods the negotiation and control of historical memory became a highly valued currency in nationalist rhetoric, mobilisation and state building. Nonetheless, this was not a unilinear and causal process of any historical necessity.

There are various forms and practices that people have invented and used to cope with those turbulent political changes. In the post-Yugoslav space we can find multiple

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<sup>2</sup> The other two national categories recognised in the Yugoslav constitution were ‘nationalities of Yugoslavia’ (*narodnosti*) for Yugoslav groups outside the federation; and ‘other nationalities and ethnic minorities’, including for example Jews, Greeks or those who considered themselves as Yugoslavs (Bringa 1995: 26).

creative ways of remembering and imagination of the past that resist the dominant interpretative frameworks, in particular those of ethnonationalism. In his ethnographic fieldwork in Belgrade, Jansen (2001) for example revealed everyday forms of anti-nationalism and protests against Milošević's regime in the 1990s. The last several years have also witnessed a boom in the study of symbolic resistance against the hegemonic interpretations of memory, that resulted into phenomena such as the postsocialist Yugonostalgia or Titostalgia (e.g. Velikonja 2008; for critical arguments see Todorova and Gille 2010). These phenomena are not dissimilar from what Berdahl (2010) analysed in the postsocialist parts of Germany as a memory industry known as *Ostalgie*. In her work, Berdahl reflected upon asymmetrical forms of remembering in the newly reunited Germany, and argued that '(n)ostalgie' is a way in which individuals might construct and express a kind of counter-memory (ibid.: 55). Berdahl described the complexity of resisting memories in the reunited Germany as follows:

'those who dismiss Ostalgie as trivial or inconsequential are similarly entangled in a "politics of significance" (...) moments and processes of transition are not to be measured solely by their political outcomes. Ostalgie and similar practices reveal and contest official master narratives of a united Germany by proposing an alternative vision of "Germanness"—of eastern German particularism' (ibid.: 58)

The politics of memory as well as a memory industry flourished in the former Yugoslavia as well. Anti-nationalism or Yugonostalgia, and other similar processes point to multiple temporalities that converge, intersect and bifurcate in the post-Yugoslav present, and that inform the lifeworlds of people from all walks of life in the region. Contemporary Bosnia is a post-war, and yet post-socialist society. However, whereas the former temporal layout has been studied extensively, the latter was rather omitted. Yet the integration of a postsocialist perspective into anthropological research on Bosnia, as this thesis shall illustrate, is highly relevant. It sheds light on pulsing continuities and discontinuities of ideas, practices as well as interpretative discursive frameworks at the grass-roots level (cf. Bougarel, Helms and Duijzings 2007: 14; Gilbert 2006; Gilbert, Greenberg, Helms and Jansen 2008: 11).

### **1.3 *Fin de l'époque?*: Bosnia and a postsocialist perspective**

Postsocialism is not easy to grasp. It is a tricky word by which social scientists describe wide-ranging social, economic, cultural and political changes ensuing from the collapse of socialist regimes dominated by command economy and communist ideology throughout Eurasia (cf. Hann 1994, 2002, 2006a; Verdery 1996). The point of departure is usually associated with a certain 1989 *fin de l'époque*. Indeed, the breaking up of Yugoslavia and of the USSR, or the re-unification of the Federal and Democratic Republics of Germany are but a few examples which remind us of the profound and often dramatic impacts that these events have had on the everyday lives of the people living in/on the scattered margins of Eurasia in the ensuing two decades.

However, most of the social and political scientists researching post-socialism have drawn upon the societal transitions and teleological maps of progress and development influenced by the rhetoric of triumphalism, epitomised in Fukuyama's argument about the end of history and the triumph of democracy and capitalism (Fukuyama 1992). Unlike those 'transitological' theories, anthropologists have followed their (temporary) consociates into the complex ever-changing post-socialist topographies of uncertainties and the unknown, in order to 'explore the *terra* previously *incognita* of the everyday' (Kundera 1988: 5). The unique character of ethnographic knowledge production, that is an intimate intersection of otherwise often mutually-exclusive lifeworlds, has been reshaping and correcting the 'top-down' oriented analytical frameworks of understanding the events and rapid changes within the region (e.g. Berdahl 2000; De Soto and Dudwick 2000; Hann 1994, 2007). These macro-societal changes, often understood merely as 'the transition', have in no way been teleological or linear (cf. Burawoy and Verdery 1999). Instead, as has been portrayed in finely-grained anthropological studies, the changes are rather contradictory, paradoxical and ambiguous (cf. Berdahl 2000).

The anthropology of postsocialism does not take the breakdowns of state socialist societies for granted as a point of departure for any analysis. In the everyday life of people anthropologists have found important continuities between socialist and post-socialist eras, consisting of multiple temporalities, and forms of actually living (post)socialism (cf. Hann et al. 2007; Humphrey 2002a). Despite 'the rupture' perception, ordinary people have creatively striven to make coherent, understandable,

yet intimate narratives in order to orientate themselves in the flow of (critical) historical events (cf. Das 1995). In doing so, even the past, memory, and the materiality of everyday life have been recalled and reinterpreted rather than lobotomised (Berdahl 2000, 2010; Pine, Kaneff and Haukanes 2004). In other words, the ‘bottom-up’ analytical focus persuasively portrays how the micro-aesthetics of everyday life intersect with the macro-politics of the state, economy, and the politics of memory.

Nonetheless, at the level of anthropological knowledge production, the concept of postsocialism has been thoroughly questioned. Only a few western anthropologists were privileged enough to be able to conduct research during the socialist era. They produced valuable insights into certain spheres and segments of socialist societies (Hann 1980, 1985; Humphrey 1998; Kideckel 1993; Verdery 1983). Understandably, the research agendas had to be approved by suppressive political regimes, and therefore, some research questions could not be officially raised at all (like the question of religion for example, cf. Hann 2006b). Following the collapse of formal regimes, the concept of postsocialism has enabled anthropologists to approach these turbulently changing field sites (cf. Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Hann 2002; Verdery 1996). As Humphrey pointed out (2002b: 12), the concept is a construct of the academy but does also correspond to certain historical conditions. Nevertheless, as she concludes

‘many younger people across a wide swathe of the region are already beginning to reject the term, which can be seen as a constricting, even insulting, label, something imposed from outside [...] If people themselves reject the category, we as anthropologists should not cling to it, but pay attention to whatever other frameworks of analysis arise from within these countries themselves’. (Humphrey 2002b: 13–14)

The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk once remarked that many places in the former Soviet bloc, which used to be veiled behind the Iron Curtain, nowadays resemble rather the corroding laboratory of a failed social(ist) experiment (Sloterdijk 1994). Indeed, the hallmark of a social experiment, yet one matched with an aura of a long lasting timelessness and hiddenness, has attracted the attention of many western anthropologists for its suppressed exoticism and thus created an image of a desired ‘Other’. Younger scholars, as well as scholars from the postsocialist countries themselves, have in such circumstances started to explore and critique a hierarchical knowledge production in/on Central-South-Eastern European anthropology. Put in this way, they moved research on postsocialism ‘from exotic Other to stigmatized brother’ (Buchowski

2006; also see Buchowski 2004; Kürti and Skalník 2009; Skalník 2002). In so doing, the anthropology of postsocialism since its very outset has been seen rather as a western academic research agenda conducted by western scholars who very often ignored local ethnographies and ethnographers. Moreover, as critical 'local' anthropologists pointed out, a western-defined scholarly paradigm has prevailed, which profoundly shaped and defined the field of study. Hence, many other urgent questions and research agendas have been excluded. One of these is the almost nonexistent anthropological analysis of post-Yugoslav societies from a postsocialist perspective (Gilbert 2006: 14).

The post-1989 changes in the former socialist Yugoslavia need to be understood as a 'conflict-driven transformation' (Leutloff-Grandits 2006: 2). Hence, the violent path that was taken in the early 1990s and the war that resulted have directed the analysis of the region primarily towards the questions of ethnonationalism, ethnic conflict and the 'failed states' (Gilbert, Greenberg, Helms and Jansen 2008: 10). In developing these critical arguments in the case of Bosnia, it was argued that despite the burden of the war legacy, the difficulties 'faced by post-war Bosnia share much in common with those experienced by other post-socialist countries', such as perception of the state as corrupted, or reliance on kinship and other solidary networks (Bougarel, Helms, Duijzings 2007: 32). Indeed, my fieldwork experiences with the Bosnian economies of favour (*štela, veze*) were not dissimilar from what was described as '*blat* economy' in post-Soviet Russia (cf. Ledeneva 1998), to name just one example.

The recently flourishing debates about postsocialism in post-war Bosnia brought about a consensus that the analytical concept is relevant for enhancing our understanding of the multiple processes that are taking place in contemporary Bosnia. Likewise, the debates demonstrated its ambiguity, because Bosnia is today an assemblage of socialist forms, ethnonationalist rhetoric and values as well as hampered democratic structure (Gilbert 2006: 15). However, one domain of postsocialist research has remained virtually unexamined by critical scrutiny so far, that is the domain of religious life and divine experience during Bosnian (post)socialism.

### **1.3 The postsocialist religious question and Bosnia**

Socialist regimes and communist ideologies left a decisive mark on religious life across Eurasia (Hann 2006a). The communist ideology treated religion as an obstacle to societal progress and also as a threatening worldview. The socialist states controlled and oppressed, though with various intensity, religious freedom. Although the pressure to eradicate various local beliefs and spiritual traditions was often immense, these had never been lobotomised.<sup>3</sup> Dragadze (1993) describes the development of religious life under communism as a continuous process of domestication of religion, that bifurcated into two trajectories simultaneously. First, religious conduct was transformed and relocated from the public to the interior (ibid.: 150). Secondly, it brought an increase of ritual observance and customised religion on the one hand. On the other, it often led to a decrease in the knowledge of orthodoxy (ibid.: 153). In various comparative works on postsocialism it has been widely discussed that in the late phases of socialist regimes, religion was often bound up with the rhetoric of ethnic or national identities, and thus highly politicised (e.g. Hann 2006b). Indeed, as Hann pointed out ‘the politicisation of religion under socialism meant that no aspect of religious identity after socialism could be free of the political’ (2006c: 6). A similar argument was made by Verdery (1996), as she argued that in the post 1989 years, ‘retraditionalisation’ of values flourished in many corners of the postsocialist world.<sup>4</sup>

The collapse of communist regimes in the Balkans considerably influenced religious debates as well as practices of piety in the region. In the former Yugoslavia, and specifically in Bosnia the abovementioned processes accelerated in the post 1989 period. Indeed, prior to 1990, as Bringa argues (2002: 28-29), religion was located primarily in the private sphere. Although there was officially declared religious freedom in socialist Yugoslavia, in practice the expression of religion was kept from the public sphere. However, after 1990 we can observe two different processes in Bosnia. On the one hand, there is the liberation of religious conduct by and large; on the other, the

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<sup>3</sup> An extreme example was communist Albania under Hoxha’s rule, where religion was officially outlawed in 1967, and this was followed by a thorough destruction of the religious infrastructure across the country. Trix provides us with a detailed survey: ‘within three months [in 1967], 2,167 religious institutions were either destroyed or damaged (...) before 1967, there were 1,050 mosques in Albania. Now 800 survive, but most are damaged and in various states of disrepair. Of the fifty-three Bektashi Teqes that had existed, six were left standing’ (Trix 1994: 537)

<sup>4</sup> Another trajectory of religious development after socialism is the spread of various pentecostal missionary sects and considerable mass conversion of local communities across postsocialist Eurasia, and in Central Asia in particular (e.g. Pelkmans 2009).

instrumentalisation of religion in ethnonational discourses. Bougarel (2003) made similar observations and argued that Islam after the collapse of communist regimes in South East Europe developed in three trajectories. First, Islam was employed for national and political aims. Second, the Islamic religious institutions monopolised and authorised the orthodoxy. Third, Muslims' religiosity has become either individualised or Muslims have become secularised. However, the latter two propositions are problematic.

Bringa (1995, 2002) elegantly illustrated that the intra-community tensions over the interpretation and conduct of 'correct' Islam between Bosnian Muslims existed already before the 1989 changes. Socialist Yugoslavia cooperated during the Cold War with other so called non-aligned states, and with the Middle East in particular. As a result a number of Bosnian Muslims were allowed to study Islamic theology abroad, at renowned universities such as Al Azhar in Cairo or in Istanbul, to name just a couple (see also Malcolm 1994: 201).<sup>5</sup> However, these new religious elites adopted more scripturalist versions of Islam during their studies and after returning to Bosnia their understanding of what constituted 'proper' Islam was different from the local ones. Put even radically, their views have often been in sharp contrast with the local living practices and beliefs of the majority of Bosnian Muslims, that came to be considered as un-Islamic. Hence, the outlined tension between religious knowledge traditions and imported knowledge that existed already before the 1989 changes, were if anything intensified after the collapse of Yugoslavia as I show in chapter eight (cf. Bringa 1995, 2002: 30-32).

The last argument opens another myriad of questions that go beyond the political identity debates while relating Muslims and Islam to the postsocialist development of Bosnian society. First, it points to the tensions among Bosnian Muslims themselves that existed before the 1989 breakdown, as well as after the 1990s war. Thus it highlights the political and social continuities that need to be analysed thoroughly in order to understand what constitutes Muslim life in Bosnia after socialism. Second, the argument leads us to question what it means to be a Muslim and to live a good Muslim life, after the war or after Yugoslavia, at a personal level, and hence how Muslims' lifeworlds and moral imaginations are (re)assembled. In other words, the argument opens up space for

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<sup>5</sup> Moreover, 'in 1977 a Faculty of Islamic Theology was set up (with Saudi Arabian money) at Sarajevo University' (Malcolm 1994: 201).

exploring how Bosnian Muslims in turbulent and uncertain times draw upon knowledge traditions, cultural resources, and the practices of living Islam in order to produce tangible answers to human existence, and provide navigation in the flow of everyday life. Interestingly but not surprisingly, an identical set of questions and issues has been explored by anthropologists engaged with the postsocialist religious question, and with Muslim societies in general.

#### **1.4 Living Islam in Bosnia**

The vast majority of arguments on Bosnian Muslims in the last two decades were wrapped in the language of collective identity, and of ethnonational identities in particular. In her thorough analysis of a rural Muslim community in a multiethnic social setting Bringa carefully illustrates that the ways of being Muslim in Bosnia are manifold and can only be roughly generalised into two perspectives. On the one hand, Bosnian Muslims derive their religious identity from Islamic orthodoxy and their belonging to Umma; on the other, it is a cultural identity constructed through interactions with and in contrast to the non-Muslim groups, that was politicised in recent decades (cf. Bringa 1995; 2002).

As I shall argue throughout the thesis, there is a third perspective or way of thinking about the formation of 'being Muslim' differently. This perspective calls for the provision of a micro-analysis of the everydayness of Muslims' lifeworlds. The lifeworlds of Muslims in the Bosnian mountains emerge from everyday sociality, a particular practice of piety, divine experience and moral imagination. The coherence of these processes is appropriated through entwining them into the local cosmologies, another word for knowledge. Put in this way, this thesis draws upon an analysis of knowledge traditions of Bosnian Muslims from the mountains of central Bosnia. The idea of a knowledge tradition is understood throughout the thesis in the Barthian way as an analysis of 'what a person employs to interpret and act on the world' (Barth 2002). A knowledge tradition (i.e. local cosmology), then, is a product of multiple persons and relations that create the context in which knowledge and bodies of knowledge are produced and sustained (ibid.). Therefore, in this thesis I attend ethnographically to the knowledge tradition that informs a 'meaningful agency' (Lambek 2000: 309) in the flow of the everyday in the Bosnian mountains, and that is Islam.

Anthropologists studying religion, and Muslim societies in particular, already illustrated rather abundantly that the very subject matter is a historically situated religious knowledge tradition embedded in nexuses of power where the meanings of authority, symbols and practice are constantly negotiated by multiple actors (e.g. Asad 1986; Bowen 1993; Eickelman and Piscatory 1996; Marsden 2005; Rasanayagam 2006, 2010). These debates are useful and might be well adapted to the Bosnian context as well. In doing so, the question of what it means to be a Muslim ‘is inherent within experience itself, in an embodied, ongoing engagement in a social and material world’ (Rasanayagam 2010: 3). Hence, by exploring the lifeworlds of Muslims and the knowledge tradition they draw upon, this thesis sheds light on living Islam and the ways of being Muslim in the mountains of central Bosnia today.

### **1.5 Plan of thesis**

The argument of the thesis is build gradually, and the objective of my research, that is living Islam in the Bosnian mountains, is assembled around the Embers of Allah metaphor to provide insights into the intimacy of Muslims’ lifeworlds from various angles. In the following chapter (chapter two) I introduce the fieldsite and the region of my research. Furthermore, I discuss the methodological framework used during fieldwork.

Chapters three and four introduce the domain of relatedness, that is characterised by the idiom of ‘living together’ (*zajedno*). In chapter three I critically reassess the model of *zadruga* and household at large. By taking local idioms and practices of ‘living together’ seriously, I suggest and also illustrate that it is more appropriate to analyse the house (*kuća*) as a core domain of relatedness. In doing so, chapter three outlines social processes and a political economy of the house. However, the house needs to be conceived of as a cultural domain as well as a scale of relatedness, as is shown in chapter four. Here I also illustrate that the house is the cornerstone of socialisation and thus plays the key role in the process of shaping an individual’s ways of being a Muslim, and yet it cultivates a particular social aesthetic associated with Muslim persons.

Chapters five and six provide an analysis of the domain of space and symbolic geographies of Muslims’ lifeworlds; both are embraced in the idiom of ‘living in

proximity'. In chapter five I provide a detailed reassessment of the next-door neighbourhood sphere (*komšilik*). It is argued that *komšilik* needs to be conceived as a culturally constituted relational logic and a regime of morality underpinning various interactions in an immediate extra-household space of physical proximity. Chapter six introduces *mahala*, that is the sphere of extended neighbourhood, as a serious matter of concern. In particular, *mahala* is associated with two general processes of social life in the mountains, that is, ritual and exchange. I argue that it is a sphere in which three extensive layouts of moral economy intersect, that is, the spheres of communal participation, the ideas about *halal* exchange, and ritual giving of sacrificed meat.

The ways that temporality and sacred space are interwoven with the appropriation of divinity and personal piety are introduced in chapters seven and eight. Muslim life as composed of multiple rhythms is introduced in chapter seven. Here I analyse the rhythms, processes, actions and ways of temporal reasoning in the mountains. In doing so, I show how the rhythms of Islam are intermingled with agricultural rhythms as well as with multiple, and yet overlapping calendars. However, in chapter eight I show that veneration of holy sites as well as ritual conduct as a means of access and appropriation of individuals' fortune and luck in the flow of uncertainties of everyday life has its political edge. In particular, I analyse how the ways in which sacred landscape is constructed and appropriated have been questioned in the post-Yugoslav times. Hence, I analyse the public rhetoric as well as intimate conversations of what constitutes a 'correct' Bosnian Islam in the mountains today. In doing so, chapter eight as well as the final concluding chapter shed light on the processes of recasting living Islam and Muslim lifeworlds in contemporary Bosnia.

## 2 Methodological framework

*'[t]he Ethnographer has to be inspired by the knowledge of the most modern results of scientific study'* (Malinowski 1984 [1922]: 8)

*'[a]nthropology is the most humanistic of the sciences and the most scientific of the humanities'* (Wolf 1964: 88, quoted in Bernard 1998: 10)

Whereas doing anthropological fieldwork is by and large a collective enterprise, the process of writing an ethnography down is in many respects a lonely and solitary activity. Moreover, the ensuing outcomes are always partial. The process of searching for relations between data and meanings collected during fieldwork always bears these precarious moments, and the feeling that everything could be done otherwise. Nonetheless, in the past decades more and more anthropologists have become aware of these problems. An increased recognition of possible pitfalls has stimulated debates on how ethnographic research could be more robust both in validity as well as in the reliability of its outcomes (e.g. Bernard 2002, 1998; Ellen 1984; Handwerker 2001).

There is a long-standing tension in the discipline over the ways anthropology produces ethnographic data, descriptions and representations, and thus anthropological knowledge (e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986; Hastrup and Hervik 1994; Moore 1996). On a more practical level, there is also an uncertainty about the ways ethnographic fieldwork ought to be carried out. Both pose methodological issues as to how anthropological practice ought to be carried out. Nonetheless, these debates on the theory and practice of anthropology are not in any case new or unique. In one of his well-known BBC lectures, Evans-Pritchard (1967 [1951]: 64-85) formulated this argument clearly: anthropological theory and empirical fieldwork are inextricably interrelated, and hence mutually influencing each other. This is the tradition in which anthropological practice and writing<sup>6</sup> are thoroughly grounded, and this thesis is part of such an ongoing and long lasting enterprise. Nonetheless, unlike our anthropological

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<sup>6</sup> After Geertz (1973: 19) these two are often used interchangeably, as Geertz himself noted “‘What does the ethnographer do?’” – he writes’.

forefathers, this thesis is not strictly an account ‘from the door of my tent’.<sup>7</sup> This is an account of a long conversation<sup>8</sup> I had on the doorsteps of my friends’ houses, in the shadows of haystacks, in the village mosques and pilgrimage sites, or even more importantly ‘in spaces in-between’ where *our* lifeworlds temporarily intersected.

In this chapter I outline, discuss and assess the general methodological framework of my thesis. The main purpose of doing so is twofold. Firstly, I outline a general account of my field site, fieldwork and particular methods that I used while carrying out research. Secondly, I situate my own conduct and experiences of doing fieldwork into more general debates on anthropological practices, sometimes labelled as the ‘postmodern turn’ or ‘critique of representations’ (e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986). In my view, there are more doubts and blind spots in these debates than a range of possibilities where anthropological practice ought to go. As I shall demonstrate, one of the ways to overcome the gap that has arisen within anthropology is a careful combination of both humanism and pragmatism in the ways anthropologists reflect upon their own conduct (e.g. Hastrup 1995). For the purpose of this argument I operationalise this debate into the two general issues of anthropological practice: reflexivity and historicity.

## **2.1 Region and fieldwork**

The research for this thesis was carried out in the mountain region of central Bosnia around the Zvijezda highlands and the Krivaja river, situated about fifty miles north of the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo (Map 2.1). In total, I spent nearly 15 months in Bosnia on three separate visits. Before my first visit, I was provided with the first initial contacts by Dr Tone Bringa (Bergen University, Norway). Thanks to her advice and mediating first contacts I got in touch with the Ethnographic department of the Zemaljski Muzej in Sarajevo. After my arrival in April 2008, all members generously discussed my ideas, gave me suggestions about the places I was contemplating to visit, and eventually helped

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<sup>7</sup> In his famous passage introducing *The Nuers*, Evans-Pritchard writes (1940: 15): ‘From the door of my tent I could see what was happening in camp or village and every moment was spent in Nuer company. Information was thus gathered in particles, each Nuer I met being used as a source of knowledge, and not, as it were, in chunks supplied by selected and trained informants. Because I had to live in such close contact with the Nuer I knew them more intimately than the Azande, about whom I am able to write a much more detailed account. Azande would not allow me to live as one of themselves, Nuer would not allow me to live otherwise. Among Azande I was compelled to live outside the community, among Nuer I was compelled to be a member of it. Azande treated me as a superior, Nuer as an equal’.

<sup>8</sup> As Gudeman and Rivera (1990: 1) eloquently put it ‘Good conversations have no ending, and often no beginning. They have participants and listeners but belong to no one, nor to history.’

me to arrange my first trip to the region of my fieldwork. Subsequently, after a few days spent in Sarajevo I travelled to the municipal town with two colleagues from the Museum. They helped me to arrange a meeting with the local head Imam with whom we discussed the possibilities of conducting my doctoral fieldwork in the region. Fortunately enough the Imam was very excited about my project and he suggested the village where he lived as a possible place for my fieldwork, and which I will refer to here as Brdo. He proposed that I could stay with one of his neighbours who owned a small unused cottage, so I could always have enough privacy. As everything went well so far I decided to stay for ten days in the village to carry out preliminary fieldwork and explore further possibilities of continuing my research in the village and the region. My second visit was between July and August 2008 for one and a half months, during which time I already conducted more systematic fieldwork, and surveying in particular. This also helped me to consolidate my relationships in the village, and with my landlord with whom I negotiated my further stay, as well as arranging my payments. My landlord has been unemployed for nearly eight years, living in an old house with his wife and three daughters, and without any regular income. Therefore, we agreed that I would stay in the cottage that was right next to his house, and that I would eat with the family together and pay him for my accommodation and food. The contract we had negotiated at the beginning seemed to be beneficial for both. Nonetheless, it turned into a real friendship and as I have been assured ever since, the doors of the landlord's house are always open for me. The third trip was from mid September 2008 to the end of September 2009 during which I conducted most of my research for this thesis.



Map 2.1

Map of the region where the fieldwork was conducted (© Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection<sup>9</sup>)

### 2.1.1 Constructing the field site

The anthropological field site is in many respects an arbitrary and constructed terrain (Amit 2000; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Hence, ‘the field site’ had emerged from the ways the research for this thesis was outlined and conducted. From the very beginning of my research I was driven by a particular set of ideas, and these determined to a great extent the location for my fieldwork. I searched for a Muslim village, possibly with no direct or extreme experience with the 1990s war, as well as a place that would be affected as little as possible by the issues of so called multi-religious or multi-ethnic coexistence because my primary interests were living Islam, ritual and moral economy in the margins of the post-socialist world. Therefore, I decided for a region of stunning beauty around the Zvijezda highlands and the Krivaja river as this is a historically significant Muslim region. Moreover, there has been a significant demise of the forest industry on which most of the local population economically relied in the past socialist

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/bosniaherzegovina.jpg> (last accessed 25 February 2011)

decades, and the economic hardship became a constitutive part of the everyday reality. Indeed, I was constantly confronted in the conversations with people as well as in the media that the years of my fieldwork were some of the worst and most difficult in the entire post-war period. These conscious decisions I had made at the beginning of fieldwork partially eliminated other, rather well studied issues such as the 1990s war and ethno-religious coexistence and/or conflict (e.g. Bougarel, Helms, and Duijzings 2007). Although I could not ignore them entirely, I made sure that these did not overshadow my research agenda.

The fieldwork for the thesis was carried out by and large in a village setting. Nonetheless, this is not a traditional village study per se. During my fieldwork I travelled extensively throughout the region, talked to people, interviewed them, conducted surveys in various villages, shared food from one *tepsija* (pot) and slept in their houses. Moreover, after several months I was involved with a dervish group of the Rifa'i order from a nearby mountain provincial town who kindly and generously offered me to stay in their *tekija* (the dervish lodge) whenever I wanted and needed. Furthermore, in summer at the time of prayers for rain I travelled from place to place and observed and recorded these ritual activities. Hence, my fieldwork was marked rather by a constant movement and immersion into a tremendously rich cultural history of the region. Likewise, I explored through my constant engagement in social relations, conversations, observing and co-experiencing, the impact of economic constraints and hardship of the new, rather uncertain postsocialist and post-war Bosnian state at the grass roots levels. Apart from that I followed various media such as newspapers *Oslobodenje* and *Dnevni Avaz*, magazines *Dani* and *Slobodna Bosna*, and watched television in people's houses. In doing so, another perspective emerged, that is, the circulation, multi-sitedness, and social life of imagery and its entanglement with the local perceptions of national and global issues.

### **2.1.2 The region: Authenticity and tradition**

The region where I carried out my fieldwork is thoroughly interwoven with the early history of Islamisation of Bosnian lands by the Sultan Mehmet II. Fatih (during the second half of the 15th century). There are many *šehitluci* (Muslim martyrs' gravestones) and *turbeta* (mausoleums) from this period in the region, which have been worshipped by the local Muslims up to the present day. Moreover, one of the locations for rain prayers, *Kurban kamen* (Kurban's stone, Stone of the sacrifice), is recognised as the place where the

Sultan sacrificed a ram during the Islamic *Kurban Bajram* (*Eid al-Adha* in Arabic) feast more than five hundred years ago. Of particular importance that spreads beyond the region is the Karići pilgrimage site with hundreds of years' long lasting continuity of the annual Muslim pilgrimage and known also as a Bosnian *hajj*, and rather distinctively regional 'little tradition' of prayers for rain (*dove za kišu*) (Mulahović 1989; Hadžijahić 1978). Both the visible material imprints of the past inscribed into the sacred landscape, and the vivid narrative culture have moulded a distinct regional identity and self-understanding as firmly embedded in this heritage as an enduring historical stream of Islam and being a Muslim in the region around the Zvijezda highlands and the Krivaja river (e.g. Muftić 2004).

### 2.1.3 The village

The material culture scattered around Brdo reveals an enduring history of an inhabited place. There are *stećci* (Bogomil graves) nearby the village cemetery, as well as several very old crumbling Turkish tombstones. The story I was often told about the history of the village says that once upon a time there was a plague in the entire region. In order to secure themselves people moved from the valley where the settlements originally were uphill to the current location of Brdo. Today, there are still remnants of an old Muslim cemetery in the valley, and the two biggest and oldest agnatic groups from Brdo still own large parcels of land in the valley. I was also shown by a local amateur folklorist and historian a republished document of old Ottoman taxation records from the early 17th century that include census data, and where the name of a neighbouring village is included, and yet indicating that the place was historically inhabited mainly by Muslims in the past centuries.



Picture 2.1

The *Stećak* gravestone in the village

The valley

As I argue in detail in chapter three, population development seems to be rather stable until the 1950s. The 1945 post-war modernisation of Yugoslav society transformed economic undertakings in the countryside by and large, and in Brdo subsistence farming and pastoralism were no longer the major means of livelihood. Newly created opportunities in the industry led to the increased economic independence of the households and dissolving communal cooperative social forms in the village. Moreover, an increased access to medical care decreased child mortality in the mountains, and brought about temporary population growth.

Brdo was not directly hit during the 1990s war. However, the fault line stretched over the hills above the village, and majority of the male villagers actively defended the line and the village. Although the village as such survived the war rather untouched, several tragic deaths occurred. Moreover, there are still land mines scattered throughout the surrounding forests, and even bullets and shells hidden in trees. This war waste became a tacit everyday source of memories of the horrific times. Nonetheless, everyday economic hardship and loss of economic opportunities dominate the local conversations.

Today, there are about 250 inhabitants in Brdo. This seems to be an average size for a village in the mountains of central Bosnia.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, the 1990s post-war economic hardship is dragging more and more villagers from the mountains to search for a better life in cities. Compared to other villages in the region, Brdo has not yet been affected by any massive population withdrawal. Nonetheless, during my fieldwork villagers were deeply concerned about this issue as it was the case in many neighbouring villages. Put in this way, in the conversations with people in the mountains these changes are conceived as a profound metamorphosis of sociality of the mountain communities by and large.

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<sup>10</sup> In terms of local politics and administration Brdo together with the neighbouring village are recognised as the local community (*mjesna zajednica*). Each local community has its own chief representative (*predsjednik mjesne zajednice*) who also negotiates and mediates relations between the village and the municipality. Municipalities then consist of the local communities (for an extensive description of the local government in Bosnia-Herzegovina see Jokay 2000).

#### **2.1.4 The Alchemists of the soul: Dervishes**

The restoration of small dervish groups in the region of the Zvijezda highlands dates back to the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>11</sup> There are numerous material imprints of the presence of dervishes in the regional sacred landscapes (Muftić 2004: 73-74). The pilgrimage site Karići as I discuss in great detail in chapter eight refers in many respects to the practice of Sufism in the region as well. Nonetheless, unlike the traditional cradles of Bosnian sufism in the western parts of central Bosnia around Fojnica and Visoko (cf. Algar 1971; Bringa 1995; Čehajić 1986; Mičijević 1997) the continuity of *tarīqat* (dervish orders) was severed in the northern parts.

During my fieldwork I was involved with a dervish group of the Rifa'i order that dates its origins back to the late 1980s. The charismatic sheikh Azmir-baba who assembled his *murids* (disciples) from the entire region is also a local patriot and an amateur folklorist. After reading one of his books about the cultural history of the region I made an attempt to meet him as I thought that it would be a great opportunity to talk to him about my research. The sheikh got very excited about the fieldwork, and invited me to his *tekija*. Eventually, it became a very good and intimate friendship. The sheikh's house as well as the dervish lodge became my second Bosnian home, apart from the cottage in Brdo, and thus my second field site.

#### **2.2 Methods and methodology**

The relationship between theory and methodology of anthropology has been historically peculiar (cf. Ellen 1984; Holy and Stuchlik 1983). For many generations of newbie fieldworkers an implicit spectre of Malinowskian immersion into the everyday life of a community, and hence the practice of participant observation, was the main way to carry out fieldwork. This inchoate practice seems to be gone now, and thinking about methodology became an indispensable part of the whole research enterprise (e.g. Bernard 1998: 9-36). Indeed, powerful research methodology might help at both levels of conducting research, that is, data elicitation and data analysis. This argument seems to be timely if we take seriously Rosaldo's argument that anthropology produces a

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<sup>11</sup> It would go beyond the scope of this chapter to introduce a full account of the dervish group I worked with as it needs to be understood in the historical context of a complex of terrain of the regional cults and networks spanning from western Anatolia, via Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, to Bosnia.

‘peculiar disparity between thick descriptions and thin conclusions’ (Rosaldo 1989: 94, quoted in Fischer 2006: 9).

During my fieldwork I used combined methodology. This research strategy enabled me to produce rich data sets on cultural and social domains. The use of specific methods was related to particular research questions, phases of the research and my continuous familiarisation with people and local social settings in general. Moreover, all data were gradually organised, managed and analysed with specific IT tools for several purposes. Firstly, computer databases and file management in combination with particular ways of coding and search engines offer a powerful tool for quick and effective data organisation, data mining and searching (Fischer 1994). Secondly, they then enable innovative and more reliable forms of data analysis (cf. Fielding 1993). Thirdly, systematic approaches to fieldwork, data management and production might facilitate future research by myself as well as bona fide secondary scholars (see e.g. Fischer 1994; Lyon 2004).

#### *Participant observation*

During my fieldwork I followed a tradition of anthropological research and therefore one of the principle methods that I employed was participant observation. However, rather than a method or a set of steps and actions that ought to be done, I think that it would be more appropriate to speak about participant observation as a ‘framework for living in the field’ (Crane and Angrosino 1974: 64). In my view and research experience I understand participant observation as a continuous process of ‘engaged learning’ (Carrithers 2005). This is a continuous process of building up morally accountable relationships between researcher and informants whose lifeworlds mutually intersect. Only thanks to mutual trust, recognition and engagement in the lives of others would an anthropologist be able to learn about others and therefore about oneself and, thus, about humanity in general.

#### *Observation and engagement*

Observation methods offer a wide range of applicability (cf. Bernard 2002: 136-164, 310-359; Dewalt, Dewalt and Wayland 1998). These oscillate at the scale of intimacy between observations and participations, and hence at the scale of ethnographer’s engagements in the flow of particular events and social life in general (cf. Bernard 2002: 138-139). The observation methods were used during my fieldwork to collect data on performative aspects of culture (cf. Fernandez and Herzfeld 1998), and the study of

social poetics in particular (Herzfeld 1985). This was a useful research tool to record everyday rituals, life cycle rituals and nonverbal symbolic expressions such as physical contacts, clothing and so forth. Moreover, it helped me to record and understand the processes of cultural knowledge transmission and distribution at the individual level, in a community and also between generations. In other words, the observation method sheds light on the social and situated learning processes (Lave and Wenger 1991), or, to use Bloch's famous phrase, it helps to unwrap the 'what-goes-without-saying' forms of cultural knowledge and communication (cf. Bloch 1998). Furthermore, thanks to direct observations combined with interviews and subsequent data management and analysis I was also able to collect data systematically. Subsequently, I could elicit from fieldnotes relational data in formalised ways about various kinds of social networks such as forms and processes of relatedness, mutual help and ritual exchange, as well as integrating these data with the spatial fabric of the village.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Conversations and Interviews*

As I have already pointed out, fieldwork is a kind of ongoing conversation with people, the landscape, and oneself. Indeed, as Herzfeld noted 'conversations create intimacy and intimacy is the key to successful ethnography' (Herzfeld 2000: 221). Fieldwork in the mountains of central Bosnia was marked by a flow of unstructured chats, semistructured dialogues, and highly structured interviews (e.g. Bernard 2002: 208-255). Indeed, as Bernard (2002: *ibid.*) points out, informal interviewing is conducted all the time during fieldwork, and takes place everywhere and all the time (i.e. in mornings, evenings, in bars, on roads, in homes). Nonetheless, during my fieldwork I used ethnographic interviewing extensively, that is 'to get people to open up and let them express themselves in their own terms, at their own pace' (Bernard 2002: 209).

In later phases of my fieldwork I also used more systematic interviewing, such as simple forms of the free listing method, to determine various ranges of emic categories used in the mountains. This helped me to determine semantic networks that organise particular cultural domains (cf. Gravlee 2005; Weller and Romney 1988). Ethnographic interviewing allowed me to record a wide range of people's narratives. As Rapport (2000: 74-75) pointed out, a narrative activity embodies people's worlds and how they

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<sup>12</sup> Here, I found particularly inspirational Johnson and Johnson's paper in which they convincingly argue and show that '[q]ualitative data can be transformed into quantitative data without abandoning an integrative position between science and humanities' (Johnson and Johnson 1990: 165).

perceive order and organise meanings about the world. It is a powerful way to capture life histories, contrasting memories, images of self, community, and so on. This was an especially useful research tool in collecting oral histories. I recorded a dozen in-depth interviews, each several hours long, of rather older tremendous storytellers, that I met throughout the region. The size and selection of the sample was big enough to increase the reliability of the information I was told and to produce a relatively plastic picture of a cultural history of the region. Furthermore, I recorded another dozen in-depth interviews with dervish sheikhs, Islamic healers and *hodžas* (Imams) from the region.



Picture 2.2

Collecting oral histories - Bego (left) and Sulejman (right) are tremendous storytellers

### *Surveying*

Several specific types of surveys, or rather standardised listing forms of data elicitation were employed during particular phases of the fieldwork. At the beginning I conducted a basic survey of the village and created a rough map of the village, and more detailed map of the neighbourhood and *mahala* (quarter) where I lived. This proved an effective tool in order to establish new contacts in the village and precisely explain the purpose of my research (Crane and Angrosino 1974: 28; Lyon 2004: 44-45). In the later phase I collected other more detailed socio-spatial data on households' and kinship networks. These more formal data elicitation methods were used by virtue of the fact that since the end of the Yugoslav war no official census has been carried out in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Furthermore, the data I collected on households' composition were useful in exploring continuity and/or change of household patterns described in pre-war ethnographies. The main foci of my questioning were household economy, production, property relations, and information on animal husbandry.

### *Images*

There are several advantages of using photographic images as part of the data production toolkit in the field. Taking of pictures may capture important aspects of social interactions during particular events (e.g. Bateson and Mead 1942); they may also be used to document material culture. In addition, photos can be valuable templates for recording areas of a village, or land divisions (Crane and Angrosino 1974: 158-159). However, working with images, graphics, drawings or diagrams during and after fieldwork has greater potential. Indeed, a graphic channel of expression, as Alfred Gell (1999: 31) eloquently argued, is, alongside verbalism, another mode of anthropological communication. Moreover, as Banks (2001) suggests there is great potential to further explore multifaceted and multi-sited images so as to see how these operate at the local level, such as watching television or movies, or studying newspapers.

During my fieldwork I took pictures extensively (over six thousand pictures). Moreover, a few people with a collection of old pictures were kind and generous enough to share these pictures with me. Thus, I used photography in two ways. Firstly, this was an effective tool of data elicitation during interviews about particular topics. Secondly, I used pictures and other images, such as newspaper pictures and articles, taken during my fieldwork, as powerful and abundant sources of data in the post-fieldwork period (about photo-elicitation see also Banks 2001: 87-96).

The other important tool I used in the later phase of fieldwork was a camcorder and filming. Originally, I did not intend to use a camcorder as one of my digital cameras can record short, relatively good quality footage. The reason why I excluded video recording from my research toolkit was entirely a pragmatic one. The video footage I would produce during 15 months' long fieldwork would be enormously huge and very difficult to analyse, and my research interest was driven by different sets of questions and ideas. However, when I was allowed by the group of dervishes to take footage of their *zikr* praying rituals, I eventually decided to buy and use a camcorder. Therefore, at the end of my fieldwork I ended up with more than thirty hours of video-footage mainly of dervish rituals, and Ramadan related activities in the region, and in the village in particular.

### *Computers, software and blogospheres*

The use of information technologies (henceforth IT) during ethnographic fieldwork and post-fieldwork analysis continues to be a rather omitted topic for discussion and reflection. Since I have extensively relied on IT in the course of my entire fieldwork and writing-up process, my research can be considered as computer-assisted (cf. Fischer 1994), and hence it is necessary to say a few words about the use of IT in my work.

Today, computers offer a powerful toolkit in research, and social science research is not an exception. There are at least two advantages of using computers, practical and analytical. Laptop computers provide an immediate mobile interface to fieldworkers, and rechargeable batteries and external memory disks enable their nearly uninterrupted usage. Photos, video footage or audio interviews, all can be downloaded and stored immediately, likewise fieldnotes. Nonetheless, this requires good data management from the early stage of research (cf. Bernard 2002: 180-207). However, this is only the first step. As Lee and Fielding (1993: 3) put it, the ‘material produced in fieldwork is analytically demanding. It requires the analyst to “cut” the data in a number of different ways across a range of cases’, and IT is tremendously efficient in helping to solve these problems. Here, I reflect only on the main analytical IT tools I used during my fieldwork and post-fieldwork analysis. Apart from a word processor and drawing programmes (e.g. La Pelle 2004), I benefited from three IT tools in particular.

Firstly, the VideoGrok software that is designed to code or relate keywords or metacodes to audio or video files. During my fieldwork I used this software to manage my audio interviews in particular. In doing so, I did not need to transcribe all my interviews as I directly coded the audio files instead. This proved to be a time saving strategy. Hence, whenever I was searching for interlocutors’ notions for example about ‘kinship’ or ‘death’ I simply used the software’s search engine that led me directly to the chunks of the interviews which referred to the topics. Secondly, I used the CSAC XML Kinship Editor (for a thorough assessment of the software see Lyon and Magliveras 2006). This tool enabled me to manage various kinship data very easily. Thirdly, I used Agna software for analysing social networks. Compared to other SNA packages (such as Pajek or UCINET) Agna runs easily on Mac OS X. It is a very simple yet powerful tool for organising and analysing various relational data, and moreover for visualising them in the form of network diagrams.

In addition to the IT discussed above I also used the internet during my fieldwork, and a research blog in particular. In doing so, I tried to provide first-hand information about my fieldwork. This idea of a public research blog was driven by notions about ‘open-ethnography’ and followed an online project by my supervisor in a Punjabi village in Northern Pakistan (Lyon 2004). In general, the idea of the open-ethnography-based research is to contribute to better communication and sharing of anthropological knowledge on the one hand, and to carry out more transparent, reflexive and accountable research on the other. In doing so, I tried to share my fieldwork experiences world wide and let people comment on them. Although this was not really a research tool, the blogosphere helped, at times, to overcome some of the difficulties and emotional uneasiness I was struggling with during my fieldwork.

### **2.3 Fieldwork and reflexivity**

Ethnographic fieldwork that generates anthropological knowledge is influenced by the individual experiences of the researcher (cf. Hastrup and Hervik 1994). Through experiences of ‘otherness’ one discovers and learns also about the self (Rabinow 1977). Indeed, the anthropologist’s self and experiences are inherently part of the process in which ‘the field’ is constructed and conceptualised. Therefore, anthropology is in many respects a self-reflexive enterprise, and reflexivity as such is an inherent part of anthropological epistemology (Hastrup 1995). Nonetheless, the debates concerning self-reflexivity in anthropological practice that have arisen in recent decades are unfinished and yet fragmented. Here I arbitrarily divide my reflexive section into the two operationalised themes of positionality and historicity respectively.

#### **2.3.1 Positionality**

Since the early stages of my anthropological training I have been interested in the comparative anthropology of Eurasia by and large and in marginal areas of its post-socialist corners in particular. This was also the reason why I decided to carry out my doctoral fieldwork in Bosnia-Herzegovina. My continuous interest in this part of the world has been driven by the fact that a part of my childhood and upbringing need to be traced back to the socialist and communist times in Czechoslovakia during the late 1980s. Moreover, one part of my family is originally from the former Soviet Union. On the other hand, I was mainly raised by my mother and grandmother whose values are embedded in Central European Jewish cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, my sister’s half

Czech and half Sudanese identity and her conversion to Islam, as well as her marriage with a Daghestani fostered my research interest in Muslim societies in general, and in the post-socialist context in particular.

Some of the outlined fragments of my (self)identity became important sources of understanding, empathy and knowledge during my fieldwork. Although the socialist systems of the former Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia differed immensely, they also had a lot in common.<sup>13</sup> In particular, I was intrigued by so many conversations and questions I had in the mountains concerning the dissolution of Czechoslovakia into two independent states, that is, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic respectively. My Bosnian friends constantly made comparisons between the peaceful divorce of Czech and Slovaks and an emerged violent ethnic hatred that tore Yugoslavia into pieces. Although I could not obviously provide any answer, this ambiguous sharing of a specific kind of experience created moments of resonance and converged our lifeworlds towards mutual understanding (cf. Wikan 1992).

### **2.3.2 Historicity**

As argued above, both fieldwork and a field site are processes and spaces of construction, conceptualisation, and appropriation. However, these are not the sole product of an anthropologist's intentions or a particular disciplinary practice. Contrarily, anthropologists conducting fieldwork as well as ethnographic writing are entwined with historicities (Fabian 1983), likewise with multiple scales of power relations (Wolf 1982). The socialist landscapes posed a particular set of issues at both theoretical and methodological levels. In particular, only a few western anthropologists were privileged enough to be able to conduct their research during the socialist era and they produced valuable insights into certain spheres and segments of socialist societies (Hann 1980, 1985; Humphrey 1998; Kideckel 1993; Verdery 1983). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the fieldworkers' research agendas had to be approved by suppressive political regimes, and therefore, some research questions could not be officially raised at all (like the question of religion for example, cf. Hann 2006b).

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<sup>13</sup> This was portrayed by Slavenka Drakulić (1993, 1996) in her engaging and compelling cultural-sociological journalism.

These general constraints also apply for the Bosnian context. Indeed, in her ethnographic account of Muslim identity in rural Bosnia in the 1980s, Bringa (1995: xv) describes how she avoided mentioning ethnicity or Islam in her research proposal to gain permits for her fieldwork. It was argued even more explicitly elsewhere that ‘during the socialist period, the political climate in Bosnia was one of the most repressive in all of Yugoslavia, which meant that ethnographic research on ethnicity, religion, or interethnic relations was especially controlled’ (Bougarel, Helms, Duijzings 2007: 15).<sup>14</sup>

However, the (post)socialist landscapes as a field site pose a new set of problems for the anthropologist’s reflexivity as well (cf. Berdahl 2000; De Soto and Dudwick 2000; Burrawoy and Verdery 1999). In the Bosnian context, this is the reflection on one’s own epistemological and moral position. As I have argued in the previous chapter, the contemporary anthropology of Bosnia is burdened, understandably, with the issues of nationalism, ethnic hatred and reconciliation, memory and forgetting. Hence, researching these sensitive issues requires one to make a particular commitment and take a reflexive moral position (Hayden 2007; Jansen 2005a).

## **2.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I showed how a particular methodological framework shaped my research and the writing of my thesis. Indeed, as Buchowski put it ‘our writings do not merely describe people and the places they live in, but co-construct them’ (2006: 477). Therefore, I also took into account the practice of reflexivity, and questioned my positionality and historicity. Although the two are presented separately, one’s own position is always embedded in the stream of sociality and events. In other words, I introduced and assessed by and large my own self-reflexive awareness of the historical and political embeddedness of my fieldsite and research.

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<sup>14</sup> For a reflexive account from socialist Yugoslavia (Serbia) see Halpern 2005.

### 3 **‘Household retreated?’: Practice and reassessment of the domestic domain**

In September very soon after my third arrival to Brdo, villagers started to be concerned with preparing their houses for the upcoming winter. One day during the obligatory morning coffee my landlord eventually decided to go to the forest and get firewood. After an hour of my insistence and another *džezva* (pot) of coffee he agreed that I could go with him and his wife to help them. On the way to the forest we crossed the field of our neighbour Nijas who had been working there with someone I could not recognise from a distance. ‘Look, there is Nijas and ...’ I said. ‘Oh yes, that’s Nijas and his *amidža*’ commented Ika, my landlord’s wife. ‘*Amidža?*’, I wondered because I was not used to the local kinship terminologies yet. ‘You know *amidža* ... well, Nijas’ father’s brother, they are all together’ (*oni su svi zajedno*), Ika explained. ‘What does it mean precisely *zajedno?*’, I asked as I remembered that Nijas’ uncle lives alone in a separate house close to mine, and hence I was confused. And Ika continued, ‘*zajedno*, you know, they all eat together, like Mujo and Fadil, or like Menso and Rajf, and like you do with us, we also live *zajedno*’.

Soon after the conversation with Ika, it became clear that she provided me with a firsthand account of how Muslims in the mountains conceive the household today. In her explanation ‘they are all together’ (*oni su svi zajedno*), Ika embraced key ideas through which villagers understand, experience and enact the local meanings of the household and relatedness in the processes of everyday life. The household in the mountains of central Bosnia is conceived as a social form of living in proximity. In particular, it embraces unanimous ways of sharing food, resources and help, that are always embedded into the intimate networks of relatedness.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, as in many other parts of the Balkans, the extended communal and cooperative households, recognised as *zadruga*, have been frequently described as the cornerstone of rural society. The socio-economic changes that accelerated since the end of the second world war in socialist Yugoslavia and the turbulent changes of the past two decades, have considerably reshaped the societal topology of Bosnia-Herzegovina at large, and the household in the countryside in particular. The communal households,

which were conceived as a residential unit defined by kinship bonds<sup>15</sup> and/or an elementary socio-economic unit of rural society across the Balkan peninsula, largely disappeared or have been profoundly changed. In this chapter, I reassess the ideas on the household and the domestic domain, and introduce the anthropologically informed debate on house societies. It is shown throughout the following two chapters that the house (*kuća*) is the core cultural category and semantic domain through which the human activities of 'living together' are constructed and understood by Muslims in the mountains. Subsequently, I introduce the sociological-historical context of the *kuća* in order to shed light on the interplay between the house and other aspects of local social organisation. In doing so, I provide an ethnographic account of enduring householding processes. These are the dynamics of fission of households, marriage and inheritance processes.

### **3.1 *Zadruga* reassessed**

In the context of the anthropology of the Balkans, research on the household domain was predominantly focused on the *zadruga*. *Zadruga*, the term for extended peasant household and family, was seen as an elementary unit of production, consumption and socialisation among South Slavs in the Balkans, and rural Bosnian society was no exception. Therefore, the *zadruga* was widely acknowledged as a synonym for the elementary unit of peasant society in the Balkans (cf. Barić 1967: 5-10, Bringa 1995: 42-54, Byrnes 1976, Halpern and Halpern 1972: 16-44, Halpern and Kideckel 1983, Hammel 1968, Hammel 1972; Wolf 1966: 38).<sup>16</sup>

In his classic study on the *zadruga*, Mosely provides a very general definition:

A household composed of two or more biological or small families closely related by blood or adoption, owning its means of production communally, producing and consuming its means of livelihood jointly,

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<sup>15</sup> In some parts of the Balkan peninsula, the extended households were either integrating, or adopting also non-kin members and operated primarily as an economic unit. However, the large households known from Bosnia and described as '*kućna zadruga*' or '*porodična zadruga*' implicate a kin-based residential and economic unit (cf. Filipović 1976, 1982: 3-26; Hammel 1968: 13-14).

<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, this argument was nuanced by Filipović, as he argued that 'it was not the type of economy which was a condition of the founding and maintenance of a *zadruga*, but rather (along with other factors) the way the work was done' (1976: 273).

and regulating the control of its property, labor, and livelihood communally (Mosely 1976a: 19).

Elsewhere, Mosely (1976b) determined three different historical-geographic forms of the *zadruga* disseminated across the Balkan Peninsula. The first consists of the tribal society of pre-1912 Montenegro and of Northern Albania, which represents the most ‘ancient’ social system that largely disappeared (Mosely 1976b: 60). The second spreads throughout the mountain systems of Bosnia, Herzegovina, western Croatia, northern and central Macedonia and central Albania, which Mosely conceives as a non-tribal zone (Mosely 1976b: *ibid.*).<sup>17</sup> The third extended out irregularly across the plains and rolling valleys of Macedonia and southern Albania (Mosely 1976b: 61). As Boehm concludes (1983: 33), Mosely singled out four elementary factors of the *zadruga*: 1) Community of kinship by blood or adoption; 2) Community of life and work; 3) Community of property; 4) Recognised leadership.

Hammel, in his pivotal book, *Alternative social structures in the Balkans*, provides a similar definition of the *zadruga*

The basic property-owning group among Yugoslav peasants was and is the family, but one which formerly had a longer developmental cycle than the ordinary European family (...) The *zadruga* was a property-owning corporation with title to land, stock, implements, money, seed, food, water rights, mill rights. (Hammel 1968: 13-14)

In the Bosnian context, the *zadruga* was largely discussed by Lockwood (1972, 1975: 58-59) who argued that the *zadruga* was an extended family household, which is ‘producing and consuming the means of its livelihood communally’. Communality as the core meaning of the *zadruga* was highlighted by Filipović, who also includes Bosnia-Herzegovina into this framework, that is

The *zadruga* union consists of a number of families (at least two) whose members live and work communally according to the principle of division of labour, communally distribute the means of production which belong to the union, and communally consume the fruits of their own labour. (Filipović 1976: 268)

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<sup>17</sup> For a rather romanticized historical account on *zadruga* in highland Albania see Durham ([1909] 2000). For an extensive account from Serbia see Halpern 1958; and Boehm’s from Macedonia 1983.

However, the term *zadruga* has never been an entirely indigenous category. The term was introduced by a Serbian folklorist Vuk Karadžić in 1818 (Filipović 1976: 269; Halpern and Halpern 1972: 17; Hammel 1968: 13; Kaser 1994: 243-244, 264; Todorova 1989: 38). In the last three decades social historians and demographers in particular have widely analysed and extensively discussed the household structures and processes in the Balkan context. As a matter of fact, the ideas on *zadruga* and the joint household were profoundly reassessed. Kaser (1994) and Todorova (1990, 1993) attempted to develop a regional model of the *Balkan family household* as a counterpart to the predominant European family models (i.e. Hajnal 1965, Laslett and Wall 1972).<sup>18</sup>

As they both argue, there is nothing intrinsically or ethnically specific in the patterns of social organisation and livelihood among South Slavs compared with other communities in the Balkans. Moreover, as for example Kaser (1994: 250, 263), Kertzer (1989), and Brunnbauer (2003: 189) showed, there is considerable diversity in the patterns of social organisation within the entire region, yet with subregional differences. Therefore, this diversity needs to be understood as a result of various interacting processes between economy, demography, politics or culture. In documenting so, the *zadruga* has been widely abandoned as an analytically misleading and historically inaccurate concept, yet with scarce evidence (Todorova 1990: 33-38, 64; 1993). Joint family households dominated mainly in those Balkan regions in which the state was weak and patrilineal kin groups were responsible for maintaining security (Brunnbauer 2003: 195-196). Nonetheless, as Brunnbauer concludes, there is a lack of ethnographic studies in the fields of everyday life to understand the complex family patterns and overall 'process of continuities as well as changes that affected the lives of the people of the formerly Ottoman territories in the Balkans' (ibid.: 197-198).

Bringa, in her ethnographic research in rural Bosnia points out the need to differentiate between the two meanings of *zadruga*. Firstly, she describes the extended family household as discussed above, but it was not used in the village of her research as an indigenous category. The only meaning of *zadruga* known to villagers studied by Bringa was 'a cooperative or "social property" run according to the Yugoslav self-management system' (Bringa 1995: 42). Instead, as Bringa argues, indigenous terms used in the village

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<sup>18</sup> It would be beyond the scope of this chapter and thesis to outline and discuss the entire debate about the origin and nature of family and household in Eurasia (see also Goody 1983; Laslett and Wall 1972).

are either *zajednica* or *kuća* (Bringa 1995: *ibid.*; see also Filipović 1976: 269; Halpern and Halpern 1972: 17; Hammel 1968: 13; Lockwood 1975: 58; Todorova 1990: 38).<sup>19</sup> Therefore, according to Bringa *zajednica* might be defined as follows:

*Zajednica* would typically consist of a group of brothers, their parents, wives, and children. The expression used when describing this form of household organization is “to live in community”. (Bringa 1995: 42)

and *kuća* (house) as follows:

Those people who shared a household economy and the yield of the land, and who ate together. (Bringa 1995: 42)

[A] group of people whose food is cooked in common. (Lockwood 1975: 58)

After the Second World War there was a considerable decline in joint family households across the whole Balkan Peninsula (e.g. Hammel 1968: 14; Lockwood 1975: 58-59). Instead, the modern type of nuclear family as known elsewhere in Europe has been widely promoted by the state and spread in the entire region (Filipović 1976: 268; St. Erlich 1966). These processes have been understood primarily in terms of modernisation, migration to cities and the substitution of traditional (patriarchal) values for those of the socialist Yugoslav state (cf. Barić 1967; Halpern and Halpern 1972). Nonetheless, in the processes of everyday interactions rural communities continue with mutuality and cooperation based on networks of relatedness, which were formerly embedded in extended households. Moreover, these networks continue to be the primary sources of social protection and material and emotional assistance during various life crises or other decisive life events.

Hammel (1972: 336) argued that the continuity lies in the kinship processes. The idea of joint family (*zadruga*) is not a thing but a process operating according to a set of rules. According to Hammel, this is agnatic kinship ideology, as a form of relational logic, operating within certain constraints, and constituted by historical context and the developmental cycle of domestic units (*ibid.*: 370). Nonetheless, as Hammel argues

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<sup>19</sup> *Kuća* means house, household or hearth. *Zajednica* (*zajedno* - adverb) means community, communality, togetherness, or a group.

elsewhere (1968: 37), the variable dynamics of fission within a household, and the decay of the system as such in recent times, need to be carefully distinguished. Bringa (1995: 43) sees the change of composition of the joint household in a sped-up dynamics of the developmental cycle of the domestic unit and the timing of the division. Because of relatively easier access to economic capital and increased wage labour opportunities in villages, household dynamics changed. Younger couples in particular achieved economic independence more easily causing households to split up sooner (cf. Filipović 1976: 272; for similar processes in rural Turkey see Stirling 1963, and Tesli 1991). However, even after the ‘visible’ break up of the joint household and the division of estates, the continuity of these networks of relatedness, reciprocal labour and moral expectations between members of former joint households has persisted, although in reformulated ways (cf. Halpern and Halpern 1972: 30). As Hammel (1968: 19) pointed out

[f]ormal division did not mean the end of cooperation between the segments (...) [m]any formerly joint tasks simply slipped into the institution of reciprocal labour, in which agnates participated extensively because of their propinquity.

Therefore, as Todorova argues (1990: 42), complex structures and processes within family households should not be confined solely to the analysis of kinship processes, as there are other phenomena that need to be taken into consideration, such as property relations, working arrangements or residential patterns, in analysing family relations and the domestic domain at large.

### **3.2 Joint family household reassessed and contextualised**

The idea of the *zadruga* in the Bosnian context has posed several problems. This is due to a certain inaccuracy of the analytical term which is not supported by the local knowledge and is not used in the Bosnian countryside as villagers use *zajednica* or *kuća* instead; and an ambiguity of the household concept itself.<sup>20</sup> In the definitions of *zadruga* quoted above (Hammel 1968: 13-14; Mosely 1976), the distinctions between joint family, propinquity, property rights (inheritance) and production (subsistence farming) are rather unclear. Therefore, the way that villagers understand and conceptualise various processes of the human activity of ‘living together’, which have been traditionally

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<sup>20</sup> St.Erlich (1976), Filipović (1976) and Bringa (1995) also argue that another reason why *zadruga* never flourished in Muslim areas of central Bosnia was the size of the landholding.

described as a household or *zadruga*, need to be examined accurately. The sources of inaccuracy are threefold.

Firstly, the anthropological concept of the household itself is ambiguous and problematic. It often embraces logically distinct and empirically different processes, such as family and residential patterns respectively (Bender 1967: 493).<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the household as an analytical category might be and often is biased by folk conceptions of researchers, and the scholarly understanding is then an uneven mix of both (cf. Hammel 1984: 29-30; Yanagisako 1984: 331). There are basically two ways by which anthropologists have approached particular human activities and forms of social groupings traditionally encompassed into the category of household. On the one hand, the household has been conceived as an analytical category of a particular social institution operationalised according to several variables such as family, descent, inheritance or production. This enabled cross-cultural comparison between the households in space and time (cf. Goody 1976). Yet as a social institution, the household was understood in terms of its functions, and hence as sustaining the social structure (for an overview see Holy 1996: 51-59). However, the household was thus approached as a stable, reified, enduring and unified entity suppressing various social processes, often conflictual actions of individuals, and particular economies of meaning attached to the multifaceted processes of 'living together' (for a critical reconsideration see Carsten 2004; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Yanagisako 1984).<sup>22</sup> Indeed, such critique introduces the other ways that anthropologists have approached the household puzzle. This analytical shift – towards a greater tendency to unwrap and adopt the folk categories (Hammel 1984: 30), to conceive the household as a cultural construct (Yanagisako 1984: 332), to study relevant specific practices, dwellings, material objects of co-residing groups as culturally relevant (Bender 1967: 498) – is instructive. Here the household is not seen solely as a residential unit, co-residing kin unit, property-owning group and/or a unit of production. Nevertheless, the human activity of living together

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<sup>21</sup> By 'household' I mean conventional understanding of the household as an elementary co-residential social unit defined by shared production, reproduction, socialization and living in propinquity (cf. Goody 1958, 1983), or as 'an aggregate of people who reside together and in virtue of their spatial proximity carry out domestic activities' (Holy 1996: 52).

<sup>22</sup> Even Goody's (1958) idea of the developmental cycle is rather linear, causal and functionally oriented. As I shall illustrate later, it is more appropriate to analyse the social processes of the fission rather as recurrent actions performed and generated by individual actors through which a form of fission emerges. However, this social form is not necessarily irreversible, and we need to search for both recurrence of and deviance from such a form (for theoretical consideration of such an approach see cf. Barth 1966; Kapferer 1976).

is understood as stemming from an interplay between the local economy of meanings and social actions of individuals or other agents and entities, which all contribute to locally shared and meaningful frameworks of understandings of the ways of 'living together' (e.g. Yanagisako 1984).

Secondly, in recent years anthropologists have reconsidered and taken advantage of the analytical usefulness of the concept of the house itself (Bourdieu 1990; Carsten 1997; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Gudeman and Rivera 1990; Pine 1996). The idea of house societies was originally pioneered by Lévi-Strauss (1982), who highlighted that

[t]he house as a grouping endures through time, continuity being assured not simply through succession and replacement of its human resources but also through holding on to fixed or movable property and through the transmission of the names, titles and prerogatives which are integral to its existence and identity (...) in "house-based societies" [...] neither descent, property nor residence taken alone are criteria for the constitution of groups' (quoted in Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995: 7-8).

The analytical shift from the household towards an anthropology of the house has been driven by an idea of a particular holism, which would integrate various activities and processes associated with the idioms of 'living together'. These were studied by various disciplines, often fragmentarily as a matter of demography, inheritance and kinship, or modes of production (cf. Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995: 4-5). However, 'the house' is in many places taken for granted as a semantic grid through which people filter various everyday experiences, activities and processes of symbolisation associated with the actions and notions of 'living together'. In order to unwrap them, let me introduce the core local notions, meanings and practices to the house domain. Indeed, the domain of the Bosnian house (*kuća*) enables integration of the material forms with symbolic meanings and social processes, temporality and space, and relatedness and production in more flattened and accurate frameworks of understanding.

Thirdly, cultural models of the house need to be embedded into the context of political economy and vicissitudinous historical processes (e.g. Cole and Wolf 1974). As Gregory (2009: 135) pointed out, the processes of householding as a specific form of economic life, which emerged with an advanced level of agriculture are no longer very useful for understanding the economic processes in rural communities today. Nowadays the domain of house(holding) has been firmly embedded into the market. This has

happened in the West as well as in the Rest (e.g. Gudeman and Rivera 1990). The state, the community and the market have become the key modes of economic conduct nowadays. In the contemporary topologies of the globalised market-driven production and wage labour activities, the rural house(hold)s as a mode of economic production and as an actor of a certain mode of economic behaviour have been profoundly redefined. Rather than household, Gudeman and Rivera, following the notions and the folk economic models of rural Colombians seriously, employ the house as the core cultural model of local economy (1990: 183). As they eloquently put it

All material practices are organised through the house, and the lexicon for them comes from the vocabulary for the physical dwelling; the house as shelter is a metaphor for the house as economy. (Gudeman and Rivera 1990: 2)

Today, the house as the domestic sphere of the economy is still intermingled with the hegemonic market sphere, though the former is located on the periphery and the latter in the centre of the economic system (cf. Gudeman and Rivera 1990; Pine 1996). Put in this way,

[o]ne of the puzzling features of the countryside is precisely that of the house economy exists within a market context (...) The house and the corporation are connected within the same world but are unlike (...) markets have also boundaries and frontiers, and these marginal or liminal regions are today's home of the house economy and its many variations. (Gudeman and Rivera 1990: 140, 183)

This is certainly true to a great extent also in the Bosnian context. In the mountains of central Bosnia the *zadruga* was not used by any of the villagers. I was thoroughly cautious in the analysis of oral histories I collected and recorded from the elders, in particular how they address human activities related to the processes of living together. The most frequent description used by Muslims in the mountains is *kuća* (the house, or the hearth). *Kuća* is an encompassing term for the activities and processes of 'living together' (*zajedno*), as the wife of my landlord explained to me. The house (*kuća*), therefore, needs to be understood as the core cultural category in the local economy of meanings and social actions through which villagers understand and enact ways of 'living together'.

### 3.3 The *kuća* in the mountains of central Bosnia

Between 1920s -1960s there was constant number of 20-23 multigenerational houses in Brdo. The houses were spatially grouped around what is nowadays understood as the village centre. Until the early 1950s the economic activities of the house were oriented solely around subsistence farming, and the occasional selling of surplus. Villagers were working hard on their fields and herded the livestock, sheep, cows, oxen and horses. Although individual land property was recognised, the fields and pastures were rather open and shared, without fences and demarcated only by stone markers. Livestock was herded on the fields communally. The practice was to herd the livestock until the *Jurjevdan* (6th May) on the fields and then in the forest. Only after the hay making phase which was to a large extent, as other agricultural activities, managed cooperatively due to the lack of mechanisation, the animals were brought back from the forest to be herded on the fields again.



Picture 3.1

stone markers



fences

However, after the Second World War, the forest became an object of state exploitation and the forest industry became an important branch of the Yugoslav economy. Hence, herding in the forest was forcefully abolished by the government. This led to a considerable decrease in the size of livestock, and reconfiguration of agricultural activities at large. Hand-in-hand with the processes of agricultural change, the wage

labour opportunities had increased, and men increasingly took part in the forest industry.<sup>23</sup>

The processes of modernisation of the Yugoslav countryside redefined by and large agricultural practices and the house economy. The house lost its autarky, and this was replaced by a hybrid model of domestic economies consisting of dual economic behaviour, that embraces both subsistence farming and wage labour activities (see also Bringa 1995: 50). Indeed, in Brdo villagers have not abandoned the agro-pastoral modes of livelihood entirely. Instead, they adjusted an active engagement in the labour market and simultaneously they have continued with the work on their lands and stock breeding.

An increased number of opportunities to participate in the wage labour market, in which predominantly male villagers took part, accelerated the processes of household fission in the village. Due to easier access to economic capital and thus economic independence, young married couples in particular attempted to earn their own living. Hand-in-hand with the accelerated processes of household fission, villagers have increasingly reconsidered the meanings associated with individual and collective property. Since the 1960s, when the multigenerational houses started to split, the land has been partitioned. As a consequence fences have been erected, and communal pastures do not exist in the village today (Picture 3.1).<sup>24</sup> The newly built independent houses were still wooden. Since the mid 1970s, when the village became properly connected with the outer world due to the first road, these processes were intensified. The materiality and architecture of the house also changed, and the houses that have been built since the late 1970 onwards are made from bricks, which have become an ideal image of *kuća* (Picture 3.2). Moreover, the case study of socio-historical development in Brdo well illustrates social change in Bosnian rural areas at large.

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<sup>23</sup> Compared to many Bosnian villages I had an opportunity to visit, in Brdo I came across only a few cases from the Yugoslav period, when male villagers went to work outside of Bosnia, in one case to Croatia, one to Slovenia, and one to Germany. Most of the male villagers worked in the forest industry which was run in the municipal town, and another few worked in Sarajevo. During and after the war only two families left the village and moved to Finland and Sweden respectively. Only recently due to long unemployment several men have gone to work in Croatia (2), Slovenia (2) and Azerbaijan (3). And as I discuss throughout my thesis, particularly young generations of villagers are considerably withdrawing from the mountains.

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, as Gregory (1997: 88) pointed out the act of erecting fences ‘transforms the meadow from being a natural good into a household good and the household that expends the labour will assert the property right’.



Picture 3.2

Shifts in the architecture and materiality of the brick houses

Old wooden sheep sheds are still in use

### **3.3.1 The house as economy: Bosnian *kuća* embedded**

With the development of Yugoslav state socialism from the 1950s new labour opportunities arose for the villagers in the municipal town, where a big state-run sawmill was opened. The sawmill factory employed approximately 3000 workers from the surrounding villages, and this lasted until the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the war in the 1990s. Since the end of the war in 1995, the sawmill has already been temporarily closed several times. Today, the factory employs fewer than 200 workers. The story of the factory as I was countlessly told at various occasion and places, and the crumbling industrial complex itself stand as a local symbol with double meaning. The factory bears the memories of what once used to be a ‘Yugoslav dream’ and life in certainty. It also points to a ‘post-Yugoslav nightmare’ reminding us of the failed social experiment that brought uncertainty into people’s lifeworlds.

In local conversations people blamed the new Bosnian state for failing to secure the sawmill. Moreover, the state is also perceived as unable to protect workers’ rights, as well as being responsible for the disastrous post-Yugoslav/war privatisation of the state economy at large. This attitude of villagers towards the state was hyperbolised during the street riots and strikes in the municipal town which took place several times during my fieldwork (Picture 3.3). One of the placards carried during the riot held the words ‘We survived Srebrenica, will we survive this government?’. While I was living in the village and travelling throughout the mountains, the state’s failures and the loss of particular certainties was an important part of everyday conversation among villagers,

who are day-by-day preoccupied with economic uneasiness and settling uncertainties in the post-Yugoslav shattered and turbulent times.



Picture 3.3  
Workers on strike (March 2009)

Most of the male villagers from Brdo who had been employed in the sawmill or the forest industry lost their jobs in the past two decades. Only a few of them have been lucky enough to secure an unstable job, or to get a job elsewhere. Either they were successful enough to find an opportunity in one of the newly opened small private sawmills, or those who had enough money to bribe succeeded in getting more secure jobs in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo. Although after the war in the 1990s, in Brdo as well as in many other surroundings villages, small private sawmills have been opened, they have only limited employing capacity, usually no more than 8 male workers.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the sawmills in the mountains are semi-exposed constructions, and thus are generally not in work during the winter as the machines and the wood get frozen. For those villagers who are employed in the sawmills, it means receiving a minimal salary over several winter months. During my fieldwork there were three such sawmills in the village working regularly and two others that worked only occasionally. However, many of the labourers are employed illegally as they are registered as being unemployed in the municipality as a means for the employer to avoid paying health insurance to the state.

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<sup>25</sup> They usually work in two shifts, 6 days a week and the monthly salary varies between €100 - €250.

Today the house economy consists of the dual economic model as outlined above. However, economic hardship and increased unemployment in the villages often redirected the economy of the house towards subsistence farming again. Nonetheless, the scale and the limits of actual production vary between the individual houses. The processes of accelerated fission of the houses have partitioned land into small plots which in many cases significantly constrained the possibilities for both cultivation and herding of livestock. A few families in the village still own land of more than 100 *dunuma* in size, while others own only 10 *dunuma* or even less, which is hardly enough to produce basic crops, such as potatoes, beans, and onions.<sup>26</sup> The latter cannot obviously herd any livestock and instead they buy or barter dairy products (milk, cheese and *kajmak*) from other houses in the village.

The house is also embedded into the monetary economy and the market. The wage labour is consensually conceived in the village as a gendered matter. Women are generally related to the householding activities and men are associated with earning money. This model developed particularly during Yugoslav state socialism, when male villagers were dragged out of their villages to work in the factories and many household tasks were feminised (see Verdery 1996: 69-70, for a similar argument from a comparative perspective).<sup>27</sup> However, after the collapse of Yugoslavia and the 1990s war there was an increased rate of unemployment in the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in rural areas in particular. As a consequence male villagers have been involved in the house economy more intensely again. These processes reconfigured both gender and power relations within the house, and made the domestic division of labour and the mixed model of house economy more hybrid. Although it seems to be the man who controls the money and is engaged with the major economic undertakings of the house, I found another dynamic of ‘making money’ in the mountains.

Let me illustrate this argument with the case of Senahid who is employed in the sawmill in the municipal town but whose salary is usually delayed for several months. As a

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<sup>26</sup> *Dunum* is an area unit widely used in the mountains, derived from the Ottoman Turkish word/unit *donum*, that is, 100x10 meters/0.1ha.

<sup>27</sup> Verdery (1996: 65) argues that ‘socialism visibly reconfigured male and female household roles’. Moreover, while the socialist regimes were drawing men out of villages into factories and industry, women have become ‘[t]he bearers of ‘traditional’ livelihood, since they were the ones who stayed at home in conditions from which state policies had excluded economic ‘modernity’. In women’s centrality to life-cycle rituals and in their consumption styles (“traditional” clothing, food preparation, house décor, etc.) women reproduced this resistant localism more than did men’ (ibid.: 70).

matter of fact, however, he could neither receive any kind of state assistance as he is officially employed, nor could he work illegally elsewhere. Senahid lives with his wife, son, and mother. They have enough land to afford to have three cows and a flock of sheep. The animals are looked after by the two women, and the dairy products they make and sell to the villagers and the milkman provide regular income to the house. The weekly income secured from the dairy products made by his wife and mother, looks like (approximately):

Cheese	~20KM (1kg/~2KM) <sup>28</sup>
Milk to the milkman	~90KM (1l/~0.7KM)
Milk sold in the village	~20KM
<hr/>	
Total	~130KM
Monthly (130x4)	~520KM

Interestingly but not surprisingly, the female labour and entrepreneurial activities such as the dairy production provide almost the same amount as Senahid's irregular salary, that is about 500KM. Senahid was aware of it and often when villagers passed his house and asked about his family, he allegorically pointed out 'my wife is milking money', while showing that his wife Meliha is in the shed.

Nonetheless, villagers in Brdo conceive the economic undertaking as the activity of the house, whose members are unanimously contributing to the sustainability of the house (cf. Gudeman and Rivera 1990 for a similar argument in rural Colombia). As I shall discuss in the following chapter the man is taking care of the land, and hence also a responsibility over the quality of pastures and hay, whereas the woman is processing milk and makes dairy products. Put in this way, these activities are mutually implicated, and both men and women participate in the house economy jointly (Figure 3.1).

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<sup>28</sup> KM is an abbreviation of the Bosnian currency *Konvertibilna Marka* (€1 = 1.95KM).

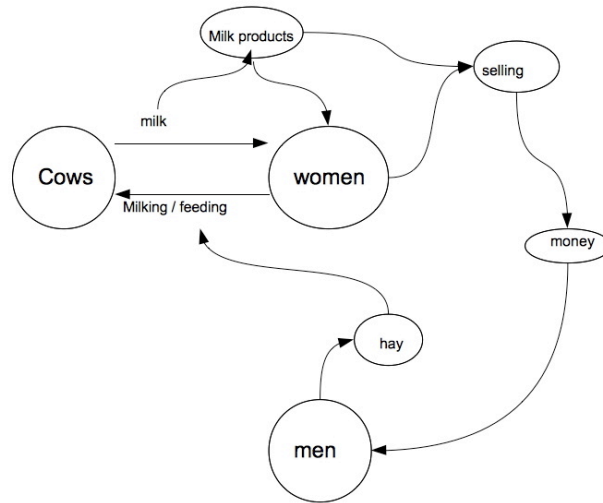


Figure 3.1

The gendered economic model of 'milked money'

However, there are also families in the village in which men are unemployed and whose only (ir)regular income consists of social benefits guaranteed, but often delayed, by the *kanton*.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, those unemployed villagers who own enough land try to improve the family budget by petty farming and dairy productions similarly as was illustrated by the Senahid's house. Other, though seasonal, economic activities of the house are selling calves, lambs, and picked forest fruits. A few houses in the village also get an irregular income paid by other villages for using their tractors or horses respectively.<sup>30</sup>

To conclude, these sociological-historical processes and economic activities of the *kuća* outlined above illustrate general trends of social change in villages in the mountains of central Bosnia. Yet they shed light on the embeddedness of the house as an economic domain into the market albeit situated on its periphery.

<sup>29</sup> Bosnia-Herzegovina is divided into two political entities, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Republika Srpska. The Federation is then subdivided into 10 cantons (this is the second level unit of decentralisation), and these are divided into the municipalities. *Brdo*, situated literally on the borders of *Sarajevo kanton* and *Ženičko-Dobojski kanton* belongs to the later one. This was conceived by the villagers bitterly. Every *kanton* has its own budget and welfare policy, and if the village belonged to the *Sarajevo kanton*, as villagers believed, they would be better off. The *Sarajevo kanton* supports quite generously petty farming, and also provides higher social benefits. Therefore, those bitter attitudes illustrate another example of the ambiguous perception of the state in the mountains.

<sup>30</sup> Cellarius (2003: 192-194) made similar observation in postsocialist rural Bulgaria. She observed there an increasing villagers' reliance on agricultural production and natural resources at large for both (i) consumption, (ii) selling for cash or bartering for other goods.

### **3.4 Fission and reproduction of the house in *Brdo*: An outline of recurrent processes and emergence of social forms**

In Brdo the endurance and recurrence of particular social processes and the forms associated with ‘living together’ need closer examination. It demonstrates their importance for the durability of the house as the core socio-cultural category in the course of time. Social activities, as well as socio-economic processes and kinship relations are materialised and inscribed into the land, likewise the houses (cf. Pine 2007). Both the land and the house are vehicles of historicity and family memories. The house (*kuća*) and the land cannot be separated as they are mutually implicated and form the domestic domain as it is conceived in the mountains of central Bosnia. The developmental processes within the domestic domain in the village uncover several emerging forms and recurring processes. Firstly, they cast light upon the modernisation of the village and changes in the domestic economy which I discussed in the previous section. Secondly, an analysis of the domain opens questions about the increased fission of joint families and communal estates. Thirdly, their analysis reveals a striking continuity of the marriage and inheritance patterns.

#### **3.4.1 Joint households and the dynamics of fission**

The accelerated processes of fission since the late 1960s in the village have profoundly changed the composition of the domestic unit and the village’s social, spatial and demographic profile.<sup>31</sup> From the stable number of 20-23 houses between the early 1920s and the late 1960s, the number of houses in the village tripled in the last 30 years, up to 70 houses today. Until the late 1980s the village spatial organisation was considered as one unit. However, the number of houses reached the point at which they caused problems during the annual feast of sacrifice (*kurban bajram*). During the feast every household exchanges sacrificed meat with others in the village and it had become impossible to exchange equally due to the number of houses involved in the process of exchange. Therefore, the villagers communally agreed to divide the village into two spatially recognised quarters (*mahale*) of similar size. The symbolic boundaries of *mahale*

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<sup>31</sup> In Brdo as well as in other more isolated villages older generations repeatedly emphasised that at the time people from the mountains gained relatively stable access to medical care. Therefore, it is not surprising that child mortality as well as reproductive patterns changed dramatically since then. Moreover, the abandonment of the ritual practice known as ‘milk kinship’ (*srodstvo po mleku*) also dates back to this period. Indeed, the most recent case of such practice that I encountered during my fieldwork was from the early 1970s (for an extensive account on milk kinship in Bosnia and the Balkans see Bringa 1995: 147-148; Filipović 1982; Hammel 1968; Parkes 2004).

are delimited by the networks of sharing the sacrificed meat. However, these are also the boundaries of mutual help and reciprocal labour in everyday activities, as well as of visiting patterns and emotional involvement (see chapters four and five).

There were 32 houses in the village Upper quarter (*Gornja mahala*) where I lived and the total number of houses in the entire village was about 74 (as a half dozen were in the process of construction).<sup>32</sup> The accelerated dynamics of fission in the village was, nonetheless, shaped by the two key forms of local social organisation, that is, kinship and residence. The spatial ordering of the newly built houses mirrors the dynamics of fission within particular agnatic groups. Those who used to live under one roof have often become next-door neighbours. Indeed, as Hammel pointed out

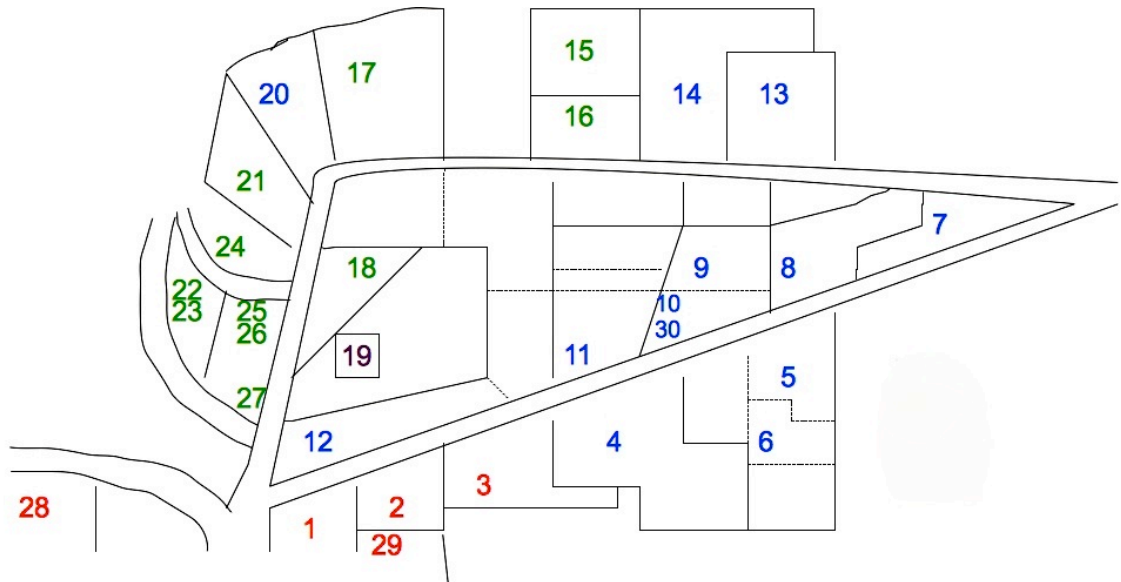
agnates also tended to have contiguous farmlands or house plots,  
so that the segments of a village were agnatic clusters. (1968: 19)

This argument again raises questions about the ambiguity of the household. In Brdo, kinship and residential patterns often, though not always, operate together. The visualisation of the Upper *mahala* (Map 3.1) illustrates those agnatic clusters, where the numbers (1-30) represent individual families living in 28 houses, and the colours differentiate between agnatic groups.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> 5 of 32 houses are physically located beyond the *mahala* as they were built recently as there was no more space in the quarter. Nonetheless, the houses are still considered in the symbolic geography of the village as being part of the Upper *mahala*.

<sup>33</sup> Those 5 separate houses are not included into the map (but into the census), because here, I illustrate spatial grounding of agnatic clusters, which is a necessary prerequisite for understanding how the village neighbourhoods (*komšiluk*), discussed in a following chapter, are formed.



Map 3.1

Kinship and residence: agnatic groups and the houses in the Upper *mahala*

The composition of the house today is stable (Figure 3.2). I found a prevailing tendency towards living as a nuclear family in a separate house. However, the number of joint (multigenerational) families living in a shared house in the *mahala* is not unimportant as it is about one third from the total number (35/12).

Structure of the houses		Houses occupied by more than one family (n=3)		Houses occupied by one family (n=29)	
total number of houses	total number of families (individuals n=127)	Nuclear families	Joint families	nuclear	joint
		32	35	5	1

Figure 3.2

Overview of the house units in the Upper *mahala*

Nonetheless, there is one considerable difference between the social organisation of those extended family houses described as *zajednica* and the *kuća* in the mountains today. In all cases, except for the family of Nijas I discussed at the beginning of the chapter, the joint families in Brdo have a vertical and not horizontal pattern of consanguineal grouping. Put in this way, siblings do not live jointly together (*zajedno*), that is, neither do they share the same hearth, nor do they share money, and property only rarely. There are three houses in the *mahala*, divided into halves, inhabited by three pairs of siblings

and their respective families, but none of the families would share resources. Moreover, several of the families have already started building new houses. All joint families living in the *kuća* have a vertical structure, that is, the family consists of elder parents, their son and his family. In cases when there are more brothers there is no preferential rule (e.g. primogeniture) as to who stays with the elder parents in the *kuća* today. The logic of decision-making is driven rather by the fact of who has access to economic capital and who would be, therefore, more capable of building a separate house to the first. However, in recent years there is an increasing tendency to buy a small plot of land in one of the Sarajevo suburbs and build a house there, which leads to continual withdrawing from the villages.

Continuity of the idiom ‘living together’, that is, of a co-residential joint family cannot be understood solely in terms of its functions. None of the families would rely solely on subsistence farming today, and thus on keeping resources and labour force ‘under one roof’. The processes of fission have been spatially constrained and the newly built houses of siblings are usually part of one neighbourhood, and hence they might still easily cooperate, which they also usually do. Furthermore, the spatial proximity of the newly built houses enables relatives to be involved in the intimate networks of relatedness even though they fissioned their estate (Figure 3.3). Thus, those extended families in the village who continue to co-reside in the *kuća* today, conceive the communality and living together (*zajedno*) primarily in terms of emotional belonging.

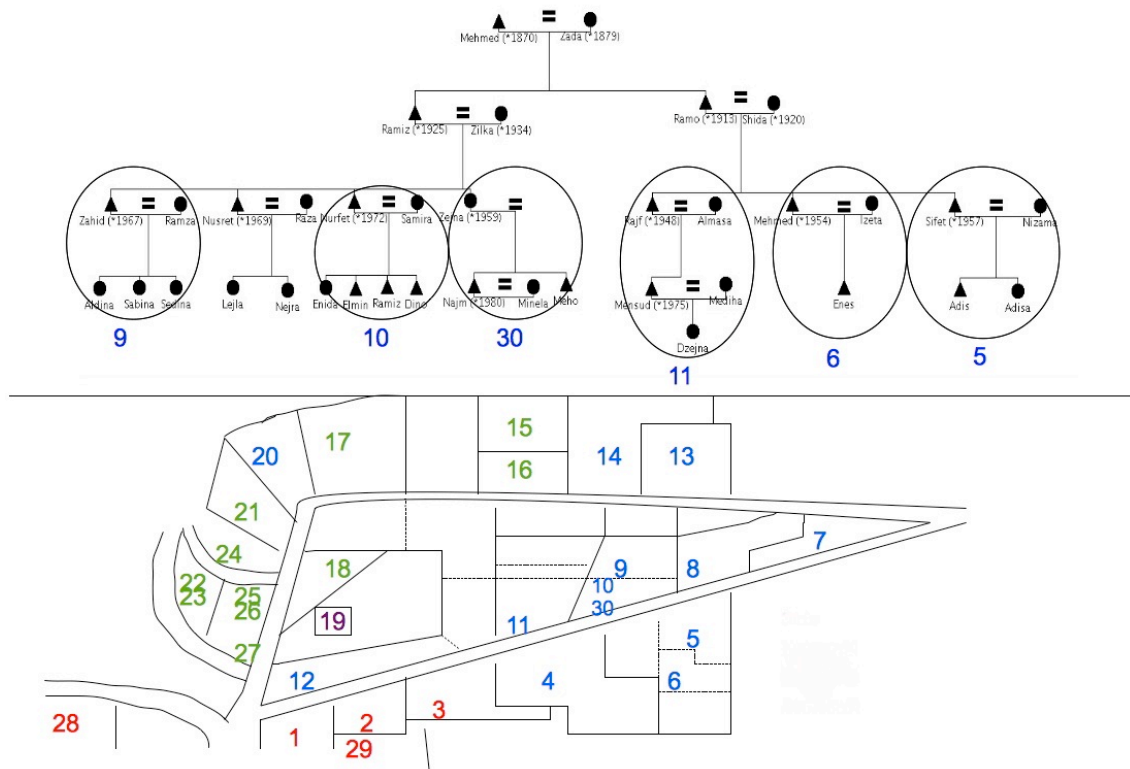


Figure 3.3  
A case study of spatio-agnatic clustering

The developmental processes of the *kuća* also reproduce agnatic groups in time by the practice of naming the house and the land (cf. Pine 1996, 2003). People in *Brdo*, as in other villages, refer to the house and the land similarly to the way they refer to other people. Hence, the naming refers to one's belonging to the *familija* (sometimes referred to as *vamilija*). The *familija* has been understood by anthropologists (Filipović 1982; Hammel 1968; Halpern and Halpern 1972) as a segment or subdivision within agnatic groups. Halpern and Halpern define the *familija* as a kind of social grouping which is in practice based on 'a geographic proximity combined with knowledge of relationships in the male line' and with a general sense of unity (1972: 22). Therefore, villagers' naming practice of the *kuća* reflects and reproduces the belonging and attachment to the house and the land, and hence to one's *familija* and agnatic-like groups in time. Let me here illustrate this argument ethnographically.

### 3.4.2 A biography of the house: Case study of the dynamics of the fission

Fadil was born in 1945 as the ninth child of eleven. However, his eight siblings died quite soon after birth. That is why he got the same name as his living father as a way to

protect him. Muslims in the Bosnian mountains do not usually give the names of living persons as the names bear a substance of memory and living. The name giving practice has usually been a way of sustaining ancestral memory and keeping ancestors alive. Only Fadil and his brother Bilal who was born as the eleventh child survived.

Fadil and Bilal grew up in the house with their parents and grandparents. The generations of his (grand)parents were still conducting self-subsistent peasantry. They worked on their land, raised crops and animals and sold a surplus whenever they needed get some money. Their father, Fadil, was conceived by other villagers as a respected *gazda* (well-off peasant) and a pious and moral person very well known in the surrounding mountainous region. He taught his sons how to run the homestead, when to keep and raise or when to sell a calf or lamb; when is the time to prepare the house for the upcoming winter, but also when, how and why to help other families in the village.

From the time of Fadil's childhood there was no mosque in the village until the early 1990's and the closest one was in the municipal town about eight miles by foot or on horse through the forest as the first road connecting the village with the main road was built in the early 1970s. Therefore, people used to organise all religious activities in their houses and the house played a pivotal role in forming, learning and transmitting muslimness. Fadil often recalled how during Ramadan people got together for collective *iftar*<sup>34</sup> and *teravija namaz*<sup>35</sup> in the house of his father as this was at the time one of the biggest in the village. However, the house has been even more important in mundane day-to-day activities related to Islam. This was highlighted in Fadil's narrative by often mentioned '*Kod kući se uvijek klanjalo i poštovala tradicija*' (We have always prayed at home and have obeyed the tradition). In this narrative Fadil emphasises the relationship between *kuća*, local traditions and Islam. Indeed, both Fadil's father and mother carefully taught their sons to be good Muslims. As a child Fadil was asked every evening by his father to recite a verse or *sura* from the *Quran* or perform a prayer. When Fadil was about 10 years old and able to walk a longer distance, he started to attend the annual Karići pilgrimage (called sometimes Bosnian *hajj*) with old Fadil and has done so ever

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<sup>34</sup> The evening meal when Muslims break the fast during Ramadan.

<sup>35</sup> Late evening prayers in the mosque during Ramadan.

since. In his father's house, Fadil learned an entire rhythm of activities and knowledge of peasant life and being a Muslim person in the Bosnian mountains.

After serving in the Yugoslav People's Army in the early 1960s Fadil started to work in a local branch of a state-run forest extraction industry. At the same time he married Ruvejda by elopement.<sup>36</sup> Fadil and Ruvejda have three children. The biographical trajectory of Fadil's brother Bilal is the same. Both Fadil and Bilal and their families lived together for sixteen years in their father's house and the money Fadil and Bilal earned they gave to old Fadil as he was still the head of the *kuća*, of the house.

In narrating his life, Fadil, as other villagers from Brdo, never used the word *zadruga* and referred only to '*moja kuća*' (my house), or '*mi živimo zajedno*' (we live together). The idiom of living together is conceived in the Bosnian mountains as a matter of eating together, and as an inclusive kinship metaphor. Fadil, his wife and children ate together with Bilal's family and their father as long as he was alive. Later on, when old Fadil died in 1979, Fadil and Bilal lived in the same house for a while, although already separately until they built the two new separate houses.<sup>37</sup> They also divided the land equally (fields, meadows, pastures) and other properties and animals they inherited. Fadil, as the older brother let Bilal choose what he wanted to inherit first (for a similar pattern of inheritance in Western Bosnia see Lockwood 1972: 62). Although the large pastures and meadows were divided by agreement between the brothers into two equal parts, there are often no fences, and those fields have been demarcated only by small stone markers. Nonetheless, some of the property has not been divided and is used jointly, that is for example a 'fruit drying oven' and water reservoir on one of their pastures. Moreover, both brothers help each other if necessary, and particularly during the haymaking season.

Fadil was 65 years old when I met him. Today, he is a well respected, tough and pious Muslim, living with his wife Ruvejda jointly with their son Mustafa and his wife Malka

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<sup>36</sup> The practice of elopement in rural Bosnia was also described by Bringa (1995: 123-130), and Lockwood (1974; 1975: 77). Today, the practice of elopement – *ukrala se*, or *ukrasti* – is less obvious than in the past and varies from village to village, and from family to family. Nonetheless, memories of elopements and subsequent reconciliation between families are a vital part of conversation and narratives during the winter months in particular.

<sup>37</sup> As Hammel (1968: 15) pointed out '[o]ne of the first signs of coming division was often separate dining, when one of the wives began to prepare a separate fire and table for her husband and children and herself', and that 'definite conclusion often only after the death of former members of the original unit' (ibid.: 20).

and their son and daughter in the house that the family built in 1980. Their two daughters got married to men from other villages in the region. Fadil's father, old Fadil, is remembered in the village only rarely today, and the land and relatedness within *komšiluk*, *mahala* and village are primarily interlinked with Fadil and Fadil's house; moreover, communal decisions are widely discussed with him, as well as the kinship and the land relations and disputes, due to his authority, knowledge and memory. Yet, he is one of the *mutevelija* (a person in charge in the mosque) and a representative of *Islamska zajednica* (Islamic union) in the village.

Fadil retired ten years ago, nonetheless he continues together with his family in keeping the land and husbandry alive as did his father, grandfather and other ancestors.<sup>38</sup> As he often said to me and to his grandson when we were working on a field '*ovo je mene moj babo ostavio*' (I've been given this by my father) expressing his belonging towards the land, the binding obligation, sentiments and memories entangled within such a relation. By keeping the land alive year-by-year Fadil keeps his ancestors and kinship memories alive. Yet, the process of cultivating and re-generating the land, that is, giving new life to the fields leads inevitably to life itself. During the haymaking period during which I helped Fadil and his son Mustafa, I found myself sitting at one particular moment with Fadil's six year old grandson Faruk when Fadil sat next to us; he took a few dried stalks of grass and held them for a while, then he said while showing and holding the stalks in his hands '*ovo je mlijeko, El-Hamdallah*' (that's milk, praise be to Allah). This subtle statement is powerfully evocative for its instructive, pedagogical and enlightening folds. By telling, showing and instructing me and his grandson, Fadil embraced in this single sentence the relationship between people, the *kuća*, the land, animals and life itself, as well as the morality of the relationship by putting emphasis on *El-Hamdallah*, praise be to Allah. Moreover, he made this rather inchoate relationship pedagogically explicit in order to show Faruk in the same way that Fadil himself was taught nearly sixty years ago. The land, now related to Fadil's *kuća* that was given to him by his father, continues to 'give life' (*zemlja dava život*) as people often say in the mountains, and so will in future to Faruk.

### **3.4.3 Inheritance and marriage patterns**

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<sup>38</sup> Today, Fadil's house owns and runs 80 *dunuma* of land, two cows, one calf, about a dozen of sheep, and honeybees.

While discussing the processes of local social organisation in a temporal perspective, I have already touched upon several emerging patterns and social forms. Namely, this is an interrelationship between local kinship ideology, marriages and inheritance practices. Firstly, in the mountains of central Bosnia, the local agnatic kinship ideology prohibits marriage between agnatic relatives within nine degrees of the relationship (see also Hammel 1968: 31). As was explained to me countless times by Muslims in the mountains ‘although it’s allowed even in the Qur’an, it’s not good’ (*ovo nevalja*). Secondly, common village marriage practice is non-agnatic village exogamy, that is, to marry a partner outside the village. However, the marriage practice is combined with the patrilocal or virilocal postmarital residence rule. As a consequence, these marriage rules pose different possibilities for men and women respectively. Thirdly, kinship and marriage are inextricably interrelated with particular gendered inheritance practices that violate the ideal of the partible inheritance idiom.

Indeed, the ideology of partible inheritance, which Pine defines as ‘the practice of giving equal shares to all sons and daughters’ (2003: 280) combined with the rules of virilocality, would mean in Brdo that if a woman married inside the village, she would inherit her part of the land and bring it into her new house as a dowry. However, as Pine shows (2003: 279), among *Gorale* in the Tatra mountains, the partible inheritance practice combined with village endogamy has had a patchwork effect on the land and property relations as such. The land has been divided into narrow strips in order to ‘meet the demands of kinship and community, they have to divide their houses and constantly re-inscribe the borders of their landscape’ (ibid.).<sup>39</sup> It has already been argued that Brdo was a relatively isolated mountain village until the 1970’s, and the practiced livelihood was to a great extent subsistence farming. The location of the village as a relatively inaccessible place in the mountains and hilly landscape meant limited distribution of, and access to resources such as farming land.<sup>40</sup> This used to be particularly apparent in the past when villagers relied by and large on the practice of subsistence farming. Relatively limited access to any new land combined with the ideology of *partible inheritance* patterns, or *formal bilateral rules of inheritance* (Hammel 1968:

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<sup>39</sup> Frances Pine describes various ways by which *Gorale* tried to counteract land fragmentation: through dowry, marriage strategies such as unions between cousins or between a brother and sister of one family to a sister and brother of another family, and/or enforced celibacy - bachelorhood - of some sons (2003: 284).

<sup>40</sup> For similar processes under the same ecological constraints in other European mountainous peasant regions cf. Viazzo 1990.

18) resulted in the locally specific marriage pattern and inheritance practice as counterbalancing mechanisms controlling the land distribution and minimizing its partition. These might be operationalised thus:

	<i>Official</i>	<i>Practical</i>
<b>Inheritance</b>	Partible inheritance	Exclusively male-agnatic partible inheritance/ Partible inheritance to sons
<b>Marriage</b>	Agnatic-group exogamy	Women's 'extra'-village exogamy

Fig. 3.4

Formalised processes of land distribution, inheritance and marriage procedures<sup>41</sup>

Through the use of oral histories I gained data about 250 marriages of the past four generations in the village in order to analyse this argument thoroughly. Only 5 of the total number were inside the village, and in all cases also non-agnatic. This proves the operationalised analytical model (250/245 - 98%).

<b>Marriage - total</b>	<b>Out of the village</b>	<b>Inside the village</b>	
		within <i>mahala</i>	between <i>mahale</i>
250	245	1	4

Figure 3.5

*Marriages in the village - overview*

The actual practice in Brdo is that women do not usually claim the land and anticipate only being paid the dowry expenses in return. This corresponds with another practice known as the *miraz*. Both Hammel (1968: 18-19) and Lockwood (1975: 64) argue, that any property passing to a daughter was known as *miraz* (from Turkish/Arabic *mīrāt* 'to divide'). Nonetheless, both authors argue that *miraz* was seldom demanded by women and it was usually given back to their brothers. In Brdo I came across two cases when women have claimed their inherited plots even several years after they married to distant villages. Both cases, being framed within the local discourses on morality, were interpreted by the villagers as immoral claims. This practice as found in *Brdo* also corresponds with the general argument that partible inheritance which is in practice

<sup>41</sup> Here, I adopted and modified Bourdieu's (1977: 34) analytical kinship distinction between the official and practical strategies.

exclusively male-agnatic oriented, ‘allows outmarriage and groups kinsmen’s houses together’ (Heady and Grandits 2003: 6).

#### **3.4.4 The land and the kuća as a process**

Inheritance and marriage processes structure and order social relations, and inform modes of belonging to the house and the land (cf. Carsten 2007: 17, Cole and Wolf 1974: 175). I have already argued that women participate in the actual processes of inheritance only rarely as they do not marry in the village, and they are paid the dowry expenses in return. Contrarily, male agnatic siblings and/or other male agnatic relatives are included in the inheritance processes, which reenact the local agnatic ideology. I have also shown in the case study, that Fadil relates himself to his father and ancestors primarily through the ways he works on the land, and thus due to the inherited property. That is why he lucidly put it ‘*ovo je mene moj babo ostavio*’ (I have been given this by my father).

In the past four decades the *kuća* as a building has been only rarely a part of the partible inheritance’s processes. This has been so mainly for three reasons. Firstly, whereas the land is relatively easily partible, the house is not. As Fadil’s case study illustrates, Fadil and his brother Bilal built two new houses after old Fadil’s death. Secondly, the old wooden houses were continuously replaced by the new brick houses in the past few decades. Let me illustrate these dynamic processes through the example of my landlord, Zahid’s family (Figure 3.6).

Until the early 1960s there was one joint family *kuća*, consisting of Zahid’s grandparents, father’s and uncle’s families. Mehmed, Zahid’s grandfather died in 1952. However, it was only in the early 1960s when the two brothers, Ramiz and Ramo, eventually split the *kuća* likewise the estates. However, from the late 1980s to the present their sons have split again several times. Today, Zahid, his brother, one sister and cousins live in five separate houses. Zahid still lives with his wife and daughters in the old *kuća* built by his father Ramiz. Zahid’s sister, whose husband died, returned to the village with her sons and lives in a new house, together with her brother Nurfet and his family. However, both Nurfet and Zahid have started to build new brick houses, which have not been finished yet due to their prolonged unemployment. Zahid’s brother, Nusret, moved after the war in the 1990s to one of the Sarajevo suburbs, where he built a new house.

Zahid's two other sisters (not included in the diagram) married out of the village, and visit Brdo only rarely. The *kuća* of Ramo, who died in the 1970s, underwent a similar process of fission and lasted to the late 1980s when Sifet and Mehmed demolished it, and built two new separate houses. Rajf had already moved to his own house several years earlier. Nonetheless, in all cases the *kuća* split after the death of the founder of the residential unit.<sup>42</sup>

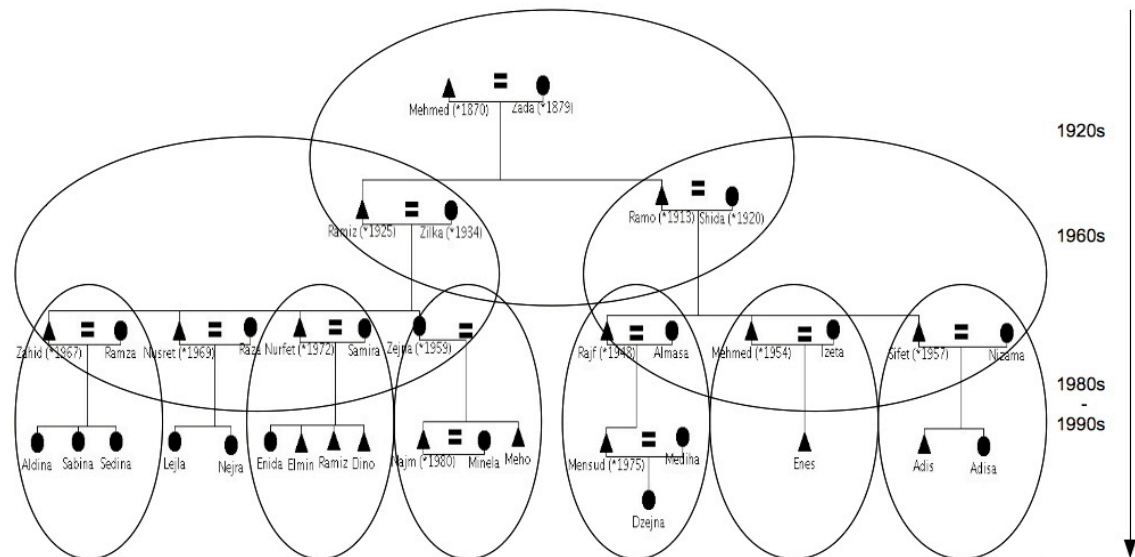


Figure 3.6

The developmental dynamics of Zahid's *kuća*

And thirdly, as this case study illustrates, the processes of socio-economic change of the countryside in the last half-century have accelerated the dynamics of fission within/of houses and led to the dissolution of the joint family houses. The fission usually followed only after the death of the *kuća*'s founder, as was illustrated in the Fadil's and Zahid's case studies. Today, however, newly built residential units and fissions of *kuća* often precede the total partition of the land and other estates (see also Bringa 1995: 42-47). The patrilocal postmarital rules of residence have been replaced by and large either by virilocal or neolocal forms of residence. This is mainly due to the fact that the fission of the *kuća* is no longer a consequence of the death of the head of the household. Rather, it is a matter of economic independence or definite withdrawal from the village.

<sup>42</sup> Lockwood argues similarly, that 'where the widowed *stara* [the old woman] remains, the *zadruga* usually remains intact, although it is often obvious that it will divide as soon as possible after she too passes away' (1975: 61).

### 3.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to set the scene and create more solid ground, while analysing the social processes in the village and the mountains, for the arguments that will follow. In this chapter I introduced and critically reassessed the literature concerning social organisation, the *zadruga* and the processes of the complex family households in the Bosnian context. As Michael Herzfeld recently pointed out (2007) in his prolegomena to a new study of global kinship, unlike kinship systems, kinship has become a global phenomenon for its powerful capacity to imagine, metaphorically, social organization beyond the face-to-face social settings. Nevertheless, as Herzfeld concludes, although the capacity to use such metaphorisation has always been present within anthropology, 'its lack of visibility is a direct consequence of a very unfortunate loss of vision, in which the relevance of older ethnographies to current concerns appears to have largely vanished' (Herzfeld 2007: 314). One of the 'older' ethnographies Herzfeld refers to is Hammel's (1968) classic analysis of patrilineal ideology and *zadruga* in the Balkans. In the context of the anthropology of Bosnia, anthropologists often abandoned in the past decades research on interrelations between local practices, belief systems, and social organisation within the face-to-face settings, in favor of the collective identity issues.

However, in the mountains of central Bosnia, the face-to-face interactions, and local networks of relatedness are the life force of the everyday social processes. By re-reading the classic ethnographies and discussing my own ethnographic findings from Brdo, I have introduced the *kuća* (house) as the core cultural category which informs various social process within the village social organisation. In Brdo, as well as in other mountain villages in the region, the house (*kuća*) is central in a way in which villagers conceive the surrounding world at large. Nonetheless, as I have argued at the beginning of the chapter, the local model of *kuća* needs to be understood as both forming social processes and actions and as embedded into the local economy of meanings. Therefore, in the following chapter I move away from social organisation to the organisation of meanings and examine how *kuća* is culturally constructed and experienced by Muslims in the mountains.

## 4      **About the house: Towards a general cosmology of life**

Sadeta is an Islamic healer from Sarajevo who provides a divinatory service to lay Bosnian Muslims. She often prays *istikhara* (an Islamic dream incubation practice) for her clients. Sadeta is often asked to pray *istikhara* by Muslim women who are considering their marriage-choice. One of the most frequent images contained in her dreams is the figure of a house. The house symbolism is often the decisive confirmation to her clients to get married. The use of *istikhara* dreaming to inform marriage choice decisions is a common practice in many corners of the Muslim world (cf. Edgar and Henig 2010). Similarly, among Muslim women in the mountains of central Bosnia *istikhara* is not an unknown practice and the figure of a house in their dreams has often preceded their marriage-concerned decisions. In their confirmatory dreams, Muslim women often dream about a house with a nice colourful garden and with many flowers around; or about a house with a small wild garden and with sheep and lambs in it. These often mentioned dream images let culturally shared images and idioms of how the house is conceived by Muslims in the mountains emerge in women's narratives. In their dreams, imagination, and everyday conversations the house is associated with the local idioms of well-being and life itself. In this chapter, however, I am neither concerned with the *istikhara* divinatory practice nor with Muslims' dreams *per se*. Instead, I analyse the house (*kuća*) as a culturally constructed form of 'living together', and the domain of relatedness at large. This chapter brings to the forefront an ethnographic exploration of rich figurative house symbolism that is widespread throughout the mountains of central Bosnia. Furthermore, I explore the scale on which the house composes, extends and distributes Muslim persons. Hence, in this chapter I argue that the house needs to be understood as a series of notions, ideas, experiences, relations and practices (re)assembling human and nonhuman actors around the house.

The multifaceted figure of the house is deeply rooted in Islamic cosmology, orthodoxy and imagination. The idiom of the Muslim house is intimately entwined with the people of the house and family life. In particular, the Arabic word *bayt* (house or dwelling place) is associated with processes of relatedness. There is a cultural continuity, at least among Muslim communities, throughout the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East of an understanding of the house as an entity interrelated with persons, the body, intimacy,

family and kin identity (e.g. El Guindy 2008; Delaney 1991; Dresch 1989). Furthermore, the house is figuratively portrayed in the language of piety. During various sermons Muslims remember *Ahl al-Bayt* (*Ehli Bejt* in Bosnian), that is, the household of the Prophet Muhammad. In the case of Muslim Bosnia, the house (*kuća*) is conceived as an encompassing framework for understanding and a scale of relatedness as well. Moreover, the house is the cornerstone of socialization and thus plays the key role in the process of shaping an individual's ways of being a Muslim, and yet it cultivates a particular social aesthetic associated with Muslim persons.

The house is a multiple entity. Muslims in Brdo, as well as in surrounding mountain villages, conceive of the house as both a metaphor of stability, certainty, life and durability, and as a metonymical extension of relatedness. Despite the linguistic difference between the house (*kuća*) and the land (*zemlja*), there is considerable conceptual and semantic continuity between them. If any Muslim in the village says my house (*moja kuća*) she recomposes her extended personhood as the *kuća* at the same moment embraces the land (consisting in this context of fields, meadows, trees or pastures), animals, kin relations, and naming (kinship identity and belonging).

In her analysis of *Gorale*, an ethnic group from highland Poland, Pine (1996, 2002, 2003, 2007) argues that the house is the core metaphor of kinship and belonging, and shows the complex associations of the house with a named kin-group, organization of labour and production, and patterns of mutual help. Similarly, Pina-Cabral writes about the peasant *casa* (house) in north-west Portugal, as 'a compound of land, buildings, animals, people, absent relatives, and even the dead of the household' (1986: 38). In their arguments, both Pine and Pina-Cabral contribute to the discussion about the centrality of the house, outlined in the previous chapter, in the social organization of many peasant societies in Eurasia (cf. Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Du Boullay 1974: 15-40; Layton 2000: 124-125; Ott 1981). Therefore, the ethnographic material discussed in this chapter attempts to bring the Bosnian *kuća* into the discussion and shows the cultural continuity that also spans from western to eastern Mediterranean rural areas.

#### 4.1 The *kuća* in the mountains

The house (*kuća*) in the mountains of central Bosnia is neatly embedded into the local cosmologies and its analysis reveals dynamics between relatedness, spatiality and temporality. Furthermore, the idiom of the house tightly links the public and the intimate, and entangles both internal and external spheres of the socio-symbolic order (cf. Bourdieu 1990: 281; Du Boulay 1974; Dubisch 1986). Nonetheless, as I shall illustrate throughout the following chapters, the spheres of public and private, internal and external, intimate and communal are always overlapping, contextual and negotiable in the vicissitudinous processes of everyday life in Muslim villages.

The core house-metaphor in the mountains of central Bosnia that people use in their lexicon is ‘opened’ and ‘closed’ doors/house respectively. The idea of opened and closed spaces as analogies to the public and private, likewise to gender idioms, have been widely recognised and discussed in the context of Mediterranean anthropology (cf. Bourdieu 1990; Du Bouley 1974; Dubisch 1986; Hirschon 1978).<sup>43</sup> In Brdo this metaphor is employed and enacted in two ways. Firstly, it captures relations and the processes of communal life and hospitality in the neighbourhood (*komšiluk*). Here, ‘opened doors’ refer to the kind of neighbourhood where people often come unanimously to visit or help each other. Secondly, ‘opened doors’ is the metaphor of commensality, relatedness, belonging and affective bonds. Those people who share food from one cauldron (*tepsija*) have the doors to the house opened. As my landlord’s wife Ika explained in the previous chapter, living together (*zajedno*) is a matter of eating together. Both the sharing of food and eating together are inclusive and pervasive social performances, which open the doors of the house as well as people’s hearts. Put in this way, sharing and eating are the key processes of inclusion into the house, and thus into people’s lifeworlds and intimate spheres of relatedness.<sup>44</sup>

In their definitions of the *kuća*, Bringa (1995: 42) and Lockwood (1975: 58) argue that sharing property and eating together are the key characteristics of the house in rural

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<sup>43</sup> Elaborated local notions and symbolism on purity and impurity associated with gender categories and more widely with the symbolic and conceptual order have also been analysed widely by anthropologists working with agro-pastoral mountain communities throughout Eurasia at large (cf. Blok 1981; Campbell 1964; Ott 1981; Parkes 1987).

<sup>44</sup> A similar argument was made by Pina-Cabral (1986: 41) based on his research among peasants in north-west Portugal, ‘[w]hile doing fieldwork I was repeatedly reminded that the ultimate determining factor for the existence of a household was commensality - “those who eat together” (*os que comem juntos*)’.

Bosnia. Indeed, the symbolic locus of the house in many societies and cultures is associated with the place of cooking and the activity of eating together (Carsten 2004: 37-41; Dubisch 1986: 201ff; Pina-Cabral 1986: 39). The activity of eating together is inevitably associated with the preparation and serving of food. In the Bosnian mountains cooking and eating reflect the local gender idioms as well as the socio-symbolic order of the house. Moreover, the *kuća* and its hearth, where the food is cooked and consumed, maintain the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of persons to the house.

Everyday life in the *kuća* is organised and assembled around the hearth. Both old and modern houses consist usually of two to four rooms (*sobe*), a storeroom, and a cellar which is also used as a storage (*podrum*) for vegetables. The most important place, in both the old and new houses, is a combined kitchen-cum-living room-cum-bedroom with the stove in the corner (see also Bringa 1995: 87). This is a place with its own particular rhythm of activities, such as cooking, eating together, socializing, and receiving guests. The other rooms are usually used as extra storage space, or at times as guest rooms. Although the symbolic boundaries between the private and public might overlap, the entrance threshold forms a materialised liminal space between the inside and the outside of the house (cf. Bourdieu 1990: 210-211). Anyone who enters the house must strictly take her or his shoes off as the interior space, the hearth of the house, symbolises purity which is thoroughly controlled and kept by the women of the house. As I experienced during my fieldwork, women can without any objection chase out of the house anyone who would not respect it. Similarly, Dubisch (1986: 195-203) argues that in rural Greece women are by and large the controllers of pollution within the house, and thus the guardians of symbolic order associated with the house.

The threshold itself is conceived as a potentially dangerous transitory space for its liminal ambiguity. Children in particular are constantly instructed by elders to avoid standing on it because '*ovo nevalja*' (that's bad manners). Such a symbolic classification and conception of the surrounding world as divided into opened and closed spaces with particular thresholds is imprinted also into the local patterns of material culture. Decorative embroidered cloth and the old local carpet-weaving patterns clearly express this figurative conceptualisation of the space by drawing upon local symbolic language (Picture 4.1). The traditional locally made carpets (*ćilime*), which can still be found in

almost every house, might be understood in a similar way: in the core there are house-related symbols (such as roses, pawns) enclosed with a transitory line, and thus separated from the polluting, jinn-dwelled outside.<sup>45</sup>



Picture 4.1  
Locally made *ċilim* and the house symbolism

The interior of the house is carefully cleaned, organised and decorated. The house purity is associated in local discourses with woman's everyday conduct and to what extent she is *vrijedna* (worthy), which is a matter of the individual's moral accountability (cf. Bringa: 87-91). Apart from the embroidered decoration and carpets discussed above, Muslims usually decorate the interior of the house with various Qu'ranic calligraphies, or wall posters of Mecca or the Istanbul Blue Mosque. Furthermore, there is a specific place in the hearth of every house for the Qur'an. This ought to be somewhere on the top and set apart if possible from the everydayness (Picture 4.2).

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<sup>45</sup> I am grateful to Samir Avdic from the Zemaljski Muzej in Sarajevo, who drew my attention to the relationship between symbols and material culture, and explained me a lot about Bosnian carpets. Also I thank Jamie Tehrani for his expert comments on my argument and the comparison he made with the Iranian and Turkic carpet-weaving traditions.



Picture 4.2

*A shelf of purity: the Qur'an wrapped in cloth in the left corner, the bowls with cheese, also associated with purity, in the right corner*

Particular arrangements of religious material objects in the hearth, such as the Qur'an, calligraphies, amulets, or suspended *tespih* (praying beads) on the wall or doorframe have centrifugal divine effects as they provide everyday protection to the house and to the people of the house. The relation between the house and the Qur'an is particularly protective. In Brdo it is believed that the night before *Jurjevdan* (6th May) every individual related to the house is highly susceptible to attack by *sihir* (sorcery, magic). Hence, the night before *Jurjevdan*, after the sunset prayer (*akšam namaz*) women walk around the house and the sheds three times with the Qur'an wrapped in cloth, and simultaneously recite a particular prayer (*dova*) which will protect all the living (non)human beings related to the *kuća* and the building itself from any attack of malevolent spirits, powers, and misfortune.

The rhythm of life in the house is intimately related to the daily activities of its members, with the seasonal conduct, and with the rhythm of Islam in the mountains. Every member of the house, thus, is related at times to particular sacred and/or profane processes and activities of the *kuća*. The house, contrarily, is associated with the rhythm of life of its dwellers, with their life-cycles, and more radically with life itself. Nonetheless, the *kuća* forms a different set of experiences, attachments and activities for men and women respectively. In order to explore these gendered and aged experiences of attachments to the house, and relatedness between the house and Muslim persons, I

shall analyse in the rest of the chapter three constitutive elements: firstly, the gender of the house; secondly, the processes of socialisation; thirdly, the *kuća*-land relationships.

#### **4.2 The gender of the house: inner experience**

In Brdo, men and women are committed and attached to the house and the land in different ways. Men reproduce the house and its memory by sustaining the land, and hence the ever-recurring narrative '*ovo je mene moj babo ostavio*' (I was given this [the land] by my father). Women, on the other hand procreate the house for the future by giving birth, maintain its continuity, and hence they often began their narratives of belonging as '*ja kad sam je došla u kuću*' (when I came to the house). So these are the two narratives, and the two modalities of attachment to the house. Such experiences of relatedness to the house, thus, poses a paradox. Women as in-married incomers are interlinked with the procreative processes of the house and control its interior and purity, while men are related to enduring processes of the house, however, through the control of the land. Here let me begin with the women's experiences of the house.

In the Bosnian mountains *kuća* and its hearth are related to women. The kitchen and the fireplace in particular, as Pina-Cabral pointed out, are in the cosmologies of many rural societies associated with 'the sacred core of the peasant household' (1986: 39). In Brdo the kitchen is the place of cooking, eating, and socialising. Hence, the processes of making and sharing food as well as relatedness have their spatial and symbolic grounding there.

The relations between gender, making food and the domestic space are intimately entwined with procreative symbolism. Several anthropologists already argued (Bringa 1995: 158; Delaney 1991; Pina-Cabral 1986: 41-45; Pine 1996; Loizos and Heady 1999; Paradellis 1999: 211-213), that there is a symbolic link between the process of bread making and the procreative process of giving life, during which women gain control over the procreative and reproductive power of the house. In Brdo every house makes its own bread, although there is the possibility of buying bread from the municipal town (Picture 4.3). Bread is served with most of the meals, and its constant consumption requires women to make the bread almost daily or every second day. The relation between bread-making and women's reproductive power is also associated with women's

life-cycle (for a similar argument in rural Greece see Paradellis 1999: 211-212). Although young girls are required to take part in various household chores, the bread-making is for them as well as for the males, the *terra prohibita*. Only around the age of her first menstruation, between 12 and 15 a girl is usually taught how to make bread. Likewise, in the multigenerational households bread-making is not the task for older women who usually process milk instead. Hence, the association between bread-making and menstruation is indexical for the implicit meanings about the ways reproduction, gender and spatial order are constructed and conceived in rural Bosnia (cf. Bringa 1995; Delaney 1991; Douglas 1966, 2003 [1970]).



Picture 4.3  
Freshly made bread

Milk and dairy products, as with bread-making, are part of the daily routine in the hearth. Milk needs to be processed immediately and this takes place in the kitchen as well.<sup>46</sup> It needs to be filtered, boiled, fermented and *kajmak* needs to be skimmed. Even families without cows prefer to buy or exchange milk from their neighbours and process milk themselves. Again, milking and the making of dairy products such as cheese and *kajmak* are female tasks. Whereas bread-making symbolises reproduction, people in the mountains associate milk and dairy products with notions about purity. The milk metaphors are part of the everyday language and are used by the villagers indexically with the qualities of cleanness, niceness, and purity (e.g. *čisto, bijelo, lijepo / ako kajmak*).

Villagers associate bread and dairy, both made by women in the hearth, with giving strength to the members of the *kuća*. Therefore, a woman's undertaking of as well as

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<sup>46</sup> As Carsten (1997) showed in her ethnography of the house among Malay fishermen, the hearth is the place where various substances are transformed.

capacities for transforming substances and giving strength determine how *vrijedna* (worthy) a person she is. This argument well illustrates the case of a family from Brdo, in which the daughter at the age of 24 was neither married, nor did she know how to cook, and notably how to make bread. During my fieldwork the neighbours and women in particular constantly commented on such ‘bad manners’ (*ovo nevalja*) and that ‘she is not worthy’ (*ona nije vrijedna*). This was interpreted as a matter of fact that the girl studied in Sarajevo, and thus detached herself from the moral standards and practices as they are conceived in the village.

The relation between the house, reproduction and women is embedded and strengthened in an everyday discourse on children. Women often say ‘*people ought to have children otherwise life would not be worth living*’, ‘*children are life*’, or ‘*the house without children is so sorrowfully silent*’. These strong links between the house and reproduction, and giving birth and the meaning of life itself, are intimately interlinked with transformative processes of recomposing women’s personhood. In the previous chapter I showed that there is a strong tendency towards exogamy in the village. The process of in-coming into the groom’s house is an emotionally, as well as socially important transformative moment for any woman in the mountains. Hence, women often begin their life histories by using the rhetoric figure ‘*jak kad sam je dosla u kuću*’ (when I came to the house). Indeed, it has been documented in many places with the virilocal residential practice that incoming brides are re-socialized in their new houses.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the transformative moments of women’s personhood associated with entering the groom’s house display a strong link between the body, the house and social order (cf. Dubisch 1986). In mountainous Bosnia a newly incoming bride needs to be supervised, organised and socialized by her mother-in-law (cf. Bringa 1995: 96). The bride is often scrutinized and supervised by other women from her new neighbourhood, and her everyday conduct in the (new) house is valued in local moral frameworks of worthiness (to be *vrijedna*). This period of surveillance usually lasts until she gives birth to her first child. This is the transformative moment when a bride (*mlada*) becomes a women (see also Bringa 1995: 100). Nevertheless, there are other transformative moments in a woman’s

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<sup>47</sup> For example, among Yakha people in Nepal, non-Yakha incoming brides ‘spend most of their time in households where the language of everyday family interaction - the language of the society they are trying to enter - is incomprehensible’ (Kohn 1994: 13). Humphrey (1978: 74ff.) shows how newly incoming brides in pastoral Mongolia had to learn and habitualise complex name-taboos when addressing male agnatic relatives.

life-cycle closely related to the processes of the *kuća*, and during which the woman may creatively recompose her personhood.

Women play a crucially important role in the process of *odgoj* (nurture, upbringing) of their children. I shall discuss the processes of socialization shortly. Here I would like to illustrate that the *odgoj* is interlinked with the construction of women's personhood. The ways a woman runs the house are conceived also as the ways she teaches and socialises her children, and daughters in particular. *Vrijednost* (worthiness), the local interpretative framework of women's moral accountability, is associated with daughters as well as with their mother, and hence with the house because the *kuća* and its members represent the moral unity in space and time. On one occasion, I witnessed a conflict between the wife of my landlord Ika, and her teenage daughter. Later, I asked Ika to explain what happened. First of all, she apologised for what had happened and then she said

'Ehh, she is shouting when she is in public. This is not good (*ovo nevalja*)! She has to know how to behave properly. What if she got married tomorrow and what then if she didn't know how to behave accordingly, my house would be dishonoured, she would be dishonoured. This is not good (*ovo nevalja*). When my husband wanted to marry me, he didn't know if I'd be worthy (*vrijedna*), but if I weren't, I would be dishonoured and my mother would be so ashamed, so dishonoured.'

Indeed, later on Ika was sick and her three daughters had to run the house for a few days. They had to milk and feed the cow, to process milk, make bread and prepare coffee whenever Zahid received any guests. At the time other women from the neighbourhood came to the house in order to help but they realised eventually that there was no reason as the daughters did everything. Later the female neighbours often noted

'She [Ika] is good (*vrijedna*). She leads them very well. They [the daughters] did everything, not like other girls from the village. They are *vrijedne*'.

These two moments bring us back to the relationship between a woman's life-cycle and agency in the process of creative composition of her personhood. The latter example illustrates the fact that although giving birth is a transformative moment, the ways a woman will socialise her children and cultivate their social aesthetics and awareness of

the local moral standards are as important as her own agency in everyday life in the village in the process of becoming a Muslim person.

On the other hand, I have already argued that the process of in-marrying to the groom's house is a transitory and constitutive moment for a woman. Ika's first narrative opens another set of questions and illuminates the complexity of becoming a wife, and how the expectations and moral standards are imposed. The process of becoming a person related to the groom's house is inevitably intertwined with forgetting and detachment from her natal house. Put in this way, a woman has to forget in order to creatively reassemble herself into the new modes and networks of relatedness. The importance of the processes of forgetting in the construction of self, person and relatedness has been widely recognised (cf. Carsten 1995, 1997, 2007; Vitebsky 2008).<sup>48</sup> It shows that lived experience of kinship and relatedness in which women in the Bosnian mountains are involved is a mutable process.

Being and living in her new house, a woman gradually becomes attached to the groom's *kuća*. In the everyday processes and activities of the house she constitutes herself and is constituted as a new person. Whenever I asked women in the village about their natal houses and kinship memories, they barely provided me with any account compared to their acquaintance and knowledge about their husbands' networks of relatedness (see also Bringa 1995). However, there were differences in such knowledge as well as in the emotional attachment to the natal house depending on age and life-cycle. For example Ika, the wife of my landlord, seldom spoke about her childhood or natal house apart from the above mentioned argument when she explained to me why she had a conflict with her daughter. Indeed, Ika loves her children, husband and the house where she has spent nineteen years. In everyday conversations Ika never referred to the past when she lived in her natal house. However, almost at the end of my fieldwork, her husband decided after eight years of being unemployed to go and work abroad, because the family was indebted and there was no other chance to improve family life. When Zahid was gone Ika became responsible for the house. Her personhood was severed as she had to adapt to being without her husband, and yet she had to accept complete responsibility for the house and the land (for the harvest in particular). Nonetheless, Ika has not lost her faith in Allah's fate, on the contrary. During Ramadan we had a long

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<sup>48</sup> In his account, Connerton differentiates between seven types of forgetting, the fourth one is 'forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity' (2008: 62-64).

conversation about Islam and particularly *mevlud* because Ika at the time taught her daughters how to recite *mevlud*. Moreover, she decided for the first time since she ‘has come to the house’ to take part in reciting *mevlud* during the 27th night of Ramadan in the village mosque. During one conversation she told me and her daughters how she used to take part during the 27th night in her natal village when she was a child. Then she brought out a very old book. The book was a Bosnian translation of *mevlud* she used to use as a child at *mekteb* (Quranic school for children), with her family surname written by herself on the front page of the book. When she saw it, she touched her surname almost engraved into the front page very timidly, and then she started crying. The moment and her emotions, the prolonged absence of her husband that had severed the moral unity of the house brought Ika back to her childhood, to the natal house, and also to Allah. However, the story of Ika also draws the gender of the house into the political and historical context.

During my fieldwork I often heard women whose husbands went to work abroad ask ‘what’s the Bosnian state like if a man who wants to get a slice of bread has to go and work abroad?’. What women in the narrative interestingly juxtaposed is a hampered relationship between the state and the house. Put in this way, the narrative allegorically expressed the impossibility of protecting the well-being of the house, associated here with bread, either by its members or by the state in the context of post-1989 turbulent changes.

The house, gender and emotions as inextricably interlinked with post-1989 processes have been widely analysed (see Ghodsee 2010; Kaneff 2002; Pine 2002; Svasek 2006; Burrawoy and Verdery 1999). As Verdery and other authors convincingly argue, socialism ‘visibly reconfigured male and female household roles’ (Verdery 1996: 65). What socialism had in common in various parts of the Eurasian countryside was a continuous process of drawing men from their villages and shifting the rural labour force into factories and industry, which had an impact on gender relations within the family and on transformation of the division of labour within rural households. In the post-1989 processes, people have witnessed the demise of entire industrial branches, closure of factories and massive increases in unemployment, and a decrease of the state welfare assistance by and large in various parts of former communist Eurasia (cf. Read and Thelen 2007). In the Bosnian mountains the difficulties have been exacerbated by the consequences of the war, which almost completely ruined the socio-economic

infrastructure of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Whereas in the socialist past men were dragged out from their local communities as labourers, in the 1990s they were thrown back as unemployed. Therefore, there is a rupture and immediate fragility in the ways both men and women have conceived and composed their personhoods in the post-Yugoslav troubled times (cf. Jansen 2007). As shown in the previous chapter, the traditional division of labour within the house in Brdo since the time of socialist Yugoslavia has been that women run the house and men keep the land and are responsible for the household income. However, after the politico-socio-economic changes that occurred in the 1990s, even the division of labour and the dual economic model of the house underwent considerable changes. Let me illustrate this argument briefly by the following case study from village life.

Of particular interest and daily discussion at the time of my fieldwork was the decision of a few married women from the village to work in one of a very few prosperous factories in the municipal town. This has never happened before and the decision was considered by other villagers to be bad manners (*ovo nevalja*). A few weeks later, on the way back to the village from the municipal town in Fadil's car, I passed the group of women on the road to the village. There was also old Rifa sitting in the car, Fadil's sister-in-law, to whom Fadil had been giving a lift to the local medical centre. When Rifa saw the women she was speechless for a while and then said

‘what’s this epoch like? Have you ever seen that the women have a job and their husbands sit unemployed in the house? Ohh my merciful Allah, please give them peace.’

This short ethnographic excerpt illustrates that for people in the village, the house does not stay apart from the wider processes of politics or socio-economic changes, on the contrary. Traditionally the house was conceived as a place of stability and certainty. Today, an uncertainty brought by turbulent changes has penetrated and shaken even the intimate spheres of the house, which was kept and protected by women. Such changes, therefore, profoundly reconfigure people's lived experiences of relatedness and of attachment to the *kuća* in rural Bosnia today.

### 4.3 Socialisation

One of the underlying threads of this chapter is to explore how the *kuća* intersects with Muslim persons in the mountains of central Bosnia. The triangle of themes I have outlined so far consists of the processes of the house, gender, and kinship in the wider context of post-Yugoslav changes. Let me take the triangle as a springboard to move the argument further and look at how the processes of becoming a person in a Muslim village are sociologically and historically interlinked with the house. The key cultural category in the processes of becoming a Muslim person associated with the house is *odgoj*.

The *odgoj* might be understood as a local series of notions, ideas and practices which anthropologists define as socialization, situated learning or pedagogy, all of which maintain continuity of social knowledge and practice (Bourdieu 1990; Lave and Wenger 1991; Premack 1984; Schwartz 1976). This might also be well illustrated by the following ethnographic vignette. One winter evening Zahid's sister Zejna came to visit him and his family and stayed eventually over dinner. It was immediately after dinner - this is the moment when all members of the house eat together from one cauldron (*tepsija*) - and one of Zahid's daughters jumped into her bed because she ate too much; at the time, Zahid's wife was gone, washing the dishes with the other two daughters. While lying in her bed the daughter just loudly said 'ohhh, I am so full'. Zejna, Zahid's sister and the daughter's aunt (*tetka*), grumbled 'what ohhh? *El-Hamdallah*, praise be to Allah, you have to say!'. Zahid was smoking, he did not say anything. The daughter repeated '*El-Hamdallah*' and did not say anything else. This ethnographic moment is powerfully evocative. It shows that the *kuća* is inevitably and tightly linked to the *odgoj* (nurture, upbringing), and hence with the processes of learning to be and act as a Muslim person. Zejna's grumbling, or Fadil's 'milk pedagogy', likewise the ways Ika taught her daughters to run the house, make bread and properly recite the verses of *mevlud* are just a few examples that cast light on the ways children are instructed in the flows of everyday sociality in the village. In the mountains the *odgoj* is associated with learning to be and act as a Muslim, as well as with gender and power relations within the *kuća*.

However, one of the most striking questions posed by anthropologists who have been conducting research in various postsocialist Eurasian corners is about the continuity, change and/or resurgence of local belief systems and cosmologies, which suffered from

the ideological and violent oppressions of the regimes in the previous decades (e.g. Hann 2006b). This argument also applies to Islam in Bosnia. It has been argued that during the socialist period in Yugoslavia the meanings associated with being a Muslim were mainly political and ethnoreligious (e.g. Friedman 1996; Gellner 1983: 70-72). Only in 1971 were Muslims allowed by the Yugoslav constitution (an act from 1963) to declare themselves as a Muslim nation in the census (Malcolm 1994: 199). This was also the case for Muslims in Bosnia who took the opportunity to describe and declare themselves as (Bosnian) Muslims who are ethnically different to the already recognised nationalities of Serbs and Croats respectively. As Gellner eloquently outlined this transition of Bosnian Muslims from faith to culture fused with ethnicity and eventually with nationality

Nowadays, to be a Bosnian Muslim you need not believe that there is no God but God and that Muhamad is his prophet, but you do need to have lost that faith. (Gellner 1983: 70)

Here Gellner is, elegantly as usual, using a hyperbole to describe Islam in Bosnia. His arguments attend to the intermingling of Islam with ethnoreligious nationalism, or what was later understood as Muslim politics (Eickelman and Piscatory 1996: 102-103). Nonetheless, it leads us inevitably to question the relationship between Islam and the Communist state as conceived and remembered in the Bosnian mountains.

Islam in the former socialist Yugoslavia was under state control as was the case in other communist countries. However, compared to places like Albania, the Caucasus or Central Asia, the Yugoslav regime did not carry out any systematic destruction either of the religious infrastructure or the sacred landscape to the extent that Hoxha or Stalin did (e.g. Dragadze 1993; Trix 1994). Nevertheless, even the Yugoslav state controlled and supervised the religious public sphere and the official Islamic authority through various state ideological committees and under a police surveillance.<sup>49</sup> As Bringa pointed out (1995: 199-200), in Bosnia there was ‘a pragmatic coexistence between Islam and the communist ideology of the state’, when Islamic scholars ‘encouraged Muslims to put their obligations to the state before their obligations as practicing Muslims’, yet ‘the leaders could also use the socialist state discourse to reinforce their

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<sup>49</sup> About local discussions and perceptions of secret police during communism in contemporary Bosnia see Gilbert 2006.

own power base'.<sup>50</sup> Under such historical circumstances, I find it analytically useful to adopt Dragadze's concept of *domestication of religion under communism*. The idea of domestication neatly captures the processes of transformation of Islam from 'outside home to its *interior*' (Dragadze 1993: 150; emphasis added), and thus it multiplies the relatedness between the public and the intimate. This shift often caused an increase in observance of domestic rituals where women, running the house, often played a pivotal role.<sup>51</sup> However, as Dragadze argues, the processes of domestication of religion simultaneously brought two rather contradictory processes, that is

'an increase in ritualistic observances and the disappearance of any knowledge underlying theology or moral teaching'. (Dragadze 1993: 153)

The idea of domestication of religion sheds light on Bringa's argument about the centrality of the house and women's key role in the processes of socialisation and becoming a Muslim person in socialist Yugoslavia from a different angle.<sup>52</sup> It intelligibly links the processes of the *kuća* and the continuity of local beliefs and cosmologies with *odgoj* (socialization), in a historically informed perspective. As argued throughout the thesis, being a Muslim person in mountainous Bosnia is neither a set of fixed qualities, nor merely a political identity. Indeed, the vigorous biographical lines of Fadil and Ika clearly show that child socialization is only a temporary moment in the process of becoming a Muslim person. Therefore, let me start with the first important moment in an individual's life-cycle, that is the moment of name giving.

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<sup>50</sup> Sorabji (1994), based on her fieldwork in Sarajevo, describes Bosnian Islam in the 1980s as an Islamic revival during which religious observance reentered the public sphere, and as characterised by an overall increase in observance of religious practice. However, in my opinion this argument mainly applies for urban areas. Although I could not carry out any fieldwork on Bosnian Islam in socialist times, I conducted many oral histories with elder Muslims in the mountains and I also collected various archive materials such as photos. For most of the villagers there was neither reemergence or revival, nor dramatic discontinuity of religious practice between and after the 1989 changes.

<sup>51</sup> Dragadze applies the concept to the Caucasus under Stalin's oppressive politics. Nonetheless, the argument might be supported by an analysis of women's roles in religious life in modern secularised Turkey as well. As Tapper and Tapper (1987) show, women have played an important role in the otherwise state-controlled religious orthodoxies. Because men are engaged more often in the spheres controlled by the state, the role of women in religious practice in private spheres has been empowered, and '[t]he privacy of women's *mevlud* services may be an important vehicle for religious sentiments that cannot be expressed more publicly by men' (Tapper and Tapper 1987: 83).

<sup>52</sup> A similar argument about women as 'guardians of the faith' was made by Tett (1994), based on her research in a rural Tajik village.

### **4.3.1 Names, persons and substance**

The *kuća*, the name and persons are inherently interrelated in the mountains of central Bosnia. The continuity of the land and endurance of the house gain the life force due to naming which gives them identity and relates both to persons. In their thick introduction to an anthropology of names and naming, Bodenhorn and vom Bruck (2006: 1-30) highlight the key processes, practices and ideas associated with names and naming. Among other themes, they discuss the politics of naming and various modalities of sociality and relatedness that emerge through various naming practices.

The politics of naming plays a significant role in many nationalist enterprises. The name includes or excludes its bearer from a group. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, personal names have been historically used as performative markers to draw differences between individuals of the three dominant ethno-religious groups, that is, Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs respectively. Personal names then became an important political agent in the post-Yugoslav everyday nationalisms as well as inter-group sociality and intimacy drawing and maintaining ‘us-them’ boundaries.

However, in Muslim villages in the mountains of central Bosnia the power of names and naming in the language of the everyday goes beyond the issues of inter-ethnic identities. The practice of name-giving constitutes different modes of embeddedness in the *kuća* – person relations for both men and women. Names are categorically distinctive in the local cosmological universe and the naming practice multiplies the already outlined gendered ways of attachment to the house. The village agnatic kinship ideology and strong emotional connections to the land and male ancestors (the ‘founders’ of the *kuća*) resulted in considerably elaborated knowledge of male names, and males’ name-giving practices.

As I have already argued, men reproduce the house and ancestral memory through the ways that they are related to the land, and thus to the enduring and regenerating processes of the house. In the local cosmologies of life, the name has often been conceived as a vehicle of life that establishes a relation between the dead and the living persons. Indeed, Fadil’s biography is one such example, albeit there are others as the following table (Figure 4.1) from one village neighbourhood illustrates.

dead person	living person	relationship
Zahid († 1943)	Zahid (* 1967)	dead ↔ living
Mehmed († 1950)	Mehmed (* 1954)	
Ramiz († 1997)	Ramiz (* 1998)	
Fadil († 1978)	Fadil (* 1945)	living ↔ living

Figure 4.1  
Name giving practice: ancestors and living persons

Giving a name was usually the way to sustain ancestral memory and keep the dead ancestors alive. The fact that Fadil got the name of his living father, was conceived rather as an unusual act of transmitting living substance that protected Fadil and kept the continuity of the house and the land, because his eight older siblings died. Today, Fadil's father is remembered particularly through the land, and hence Fadil's words '*ovo je mene moj babo ostavijo*' (I was given this [the land] by my father). Similarly, my landlord Zahid was given the same name as one of his agnatic relatives who was killed during the second World War in order to keep the memory of the person alive. In both cases other villagers often commented upon the qualities and characteristics of the persons and related them into living Fadil and Zahid respectively. Therefore, the name, living individual and the qualities of the person often work together, and the individual's conduct and performance are conceived rather as an actual enactment of personhood. These ideas about naming as a form of making relatedness between dead–living persons also corresponds with Bourdieu's observation (1977: 36) that

‘to give a new-born child the name of a great forefather is not simply to perform an act of filial piety, but also in a sense to predestine the child thus named to bring the eponymous ancestor “back to life”’.

The connections between an act of name-giving and transmitting a substance are understood in the mountains as Islamic tradition. Today, there are many popular books about the etymology of various Muslim names and which characteristics are associated with the particular names, and I found several similar books in Brdo as well. Although the decisions for giving a name are often driven by various reasons and expectations, Muslims in the mountains cared tremendously and were interested in discussing the meanings and qualities associated with personal names. In particular, pious Muslim families as well as the dervishes believed in the indexicality of the name and its

substance. For those families seriously concerned, they also consult meanings of personal names with Imams, sheikhs or Islamic healers. As Bowen pointed out, Gayo Muslims in highland Sumatra are similarly engaged with ‘the science of names’ as it is believed that ‘names have a direct relation to character and fortune’ (1993: 245). Therefore, the practice of name-giving in the Bosnian mountains needs to be associated with the ideas of how Muslims conceive interlinkage between the name, transmitting substance of life and personhood, and not solely as a cult of ancestors that is widely spread throughout the Balkans, and in the Orthodox communities in particular (e.g. Gaenă 2005).

The power of giving a name and giving life is strengthened and expressed in the *akika* ritual. The Islamic ritual *akika* (Ar. *aqīqa*) is conceived in the mountains of central Bosnia primarily as *adet* (custom). Muslims in the mountains perform the *akika* for both newly born boys and girls. The ritual usually takes place during the first year of the child’s life or even later, although the ideal timing is the 7th day after birth. Although the *akika* is performed with high variability in the mountains, and thus differs from family to family, a certain form of welcoming and introducing the newborn into the world is considered as recommended (*sunna*) practice. Ideally, the ritual of name giving consists of three phases, that is, baby’s bathing, hair-cutting, and sacrificing a ram (cf. Muftić 2004: 149-150). Like the feast of sacrifice (*kurban bajram*), the *akika* sacrifice ritual invites and assembles relatives and neighbours (*komšije*) together, and sacrificed meat is shared and eaten in the name of Allah who breathed life into the newborn child. Yet the ritual and sharing of sacrificed meat creates relations between the name-given person, the *kuća*, and her or his neighbourhood.<sup>53</sup>

Nonetheless, Muslims in the mountains put different emphasis on the ways they give names to the newborn boys and girls. As I have shown, even an act of name giving consequently multiplies attachments of persons to the house. The woman’s personhood is often entangled with the *kuća* rather than with the name-person qualities. For example Zahid’s wife Ika was given the name Ramza. However, the majority of the villagers in

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<sup>53</sup> Another form of relatedness in case of new born babies that has been widely analysed and described in the Balkan context is godparenthood (*kumstvo*). It has been described historically (see Hangi 1906 in the case of Bosnian Muslims) and anthropologically and comparatively among various Slavic groups in the Balkans (Filipović 1982; Hammel 1968; Parkes 2004). However, Muslims I worked with did not ascribe any serious importance to this form of relatedness, and if so godparents were chosen from one’s own extended family networks.

Brdo did not even know that Ika is in fact her nickname, and as she repeatedly told me ‘sometimes I even forget that I have another name’.<sup>54</sup> Although the name-giving practice is an important moment in the process of becoming a Muslim person, it has different gender dynamics that produce and multiply the ways of belonging and attachment to the *kuća*.

#### 4.3.2 Pedagogies of muslimness

As Bringa argues, in rural Bosnia boys and girls were socialized differently and she provides a detailed account of girls’ socialization within the house (1995: 105ff). Whereas girls are continuously taught according to particular aesthetic standards in order to be *vrijedna* (worthy) in the house, boys are taught since early childhood about the land, as well as how to properly interact with people within *komšilik*, *mahala* and the village (Picture 4.4). Therefore, the hearth and the land so intimately interlinked with the idiom of the *kuća*, form consequently two different ‘training grounds’ (Lindholm 1996) in the processes of becoming a Muslim person in the mountains of Bosnia. However, rather than a coherent and systematised body of knowledge, the pedagogical impulses take their shape and enactments in the flow of social interactions during which the local standards of social aesthetic and rules, morality and culture are transmitted, developed, and cultivated (cf. Carrithers 1992: 63-65).



Picture 4.4  
Situated learning in practice

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<sup>54</sup> And it was not only Ika who has been recognized in the village primarily according to her nickname. While collecting life-histories and genealogies in the village I encountered this discrepancy between a woman’s name and her nickname more often.

Living in the house is from early childhood an experiential form of learning to be a member of the *kuća* as well as a Muslim. Everyday life in the house shapes, cultivates and develops one's moral and aesthetic standards to the local social forms. Such 'what-goes-without-saying' moments (Bloch 1998: 22-38) as who is served the first *filđžan* of coffee, the appropriate sitting order during the dinner or the coffee visits, who leaves the house last after a visit, are only a few illustrations of experienced learning to the local social forms. Children are also instructed in a more straightforward way. They are for example repeatedly told that they should not stand on the threshold for its negative effects, or why they are not allowed to be outside of the house during the *akšam* (sunset) time as this is the critical period to be attacked by malevolent *džīns* (spirits).

Different gender dynamics in the processes of socialization are apparent from the children's movements and games in the village. Except for a few games, boys and girls play together after the age of 6-7 only rarely. This is also the age when children begin with more formal education at schools. Apart from the *mekteb* (Quar'anic school in the mosque) which existed even during the socialist period, although under the state control, in the post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina regular religious lessons were introduced into schools.<sup>55</sup> Here, the gender differences are internalised and habitualised by children in a more systematic way. In particular the training at the *mekteb* requires performance of a social aesthetic where gender seclusion is expected, and boys and girls have to interact at the *mekteb* accordingly.

In the village girls usually play in *avlija* or *baščā* (yard, garden), close to the house, or around any house in their neighbourhood with other girl friends. Thus, they can be controlled almost at every moment by mothers or other elder females. Whenever girls had some dispute over breaking the rules and disagreed too loudly, one of the girls' mothers immediately calmed them down and they were told that such behaviour in public is bad manners (*ovo nevalja*). In the course of maturation there are fewer and fewer opportunities to play and more responsibilities in which girls are involved in the everyday processes of the house. Although girls in the mountains attend secondary

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<sup>55</sup> This is the case for all three major religions in Bosnia, that is, Catholicism, Islam and Orthodox. Although it is officially argued that religious education is only 'optional' for children, the social pressure makes it in fact a compulsory subject.

school today and some even gain a university education,<sup>56</sup> they are always expected to help in the house as the process of maturation is also the process of becoming a *vrijedna* (worthy) person.



Picture 4.5  
The gender of the house embodied: a Muslim peasant family in the 1950s

Unlike girls, boys have seemingly more freedom, and freedom of movement in particular. They can play further away, although they are always under the supervision of the villagers. This apparent freedom of movement, however, is also an example of the situated learning pedagogy. Boys slowly, albeit continuously, gain an awareness and apprenticeship to interweave the socio-spatial *topoi* of the village, and a practical mastery in the local ways of navigation of the landscape. When boys return home, they are often asked where they went and whom they met, and corrected if they did not know precisely and/or cannot locate particular individuals in the local network of relations. These questions are usually asked by other males from the *kuća* who also correct them. Furthermore, boys also accompany other older men into the fields or the forest, and assist as much as they are allowed in working on the land or with the wood. At the age of

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<sup>56</sup> This process began largely in the postwar years between the 1950s and 1970s (e.g. Filipović 1974), though it was delayed in the mountainous areas because of the lack of roads. Most of the mountain villages in central Bosnia have a school for children from the age of 6 - 11, older children need to attend schools in municipalities.

11 - 12 almost every boy in the village knows the land well and can locate who is who and what is whose in the village.

Boys and girls are taught from early childhood that they embody the house (Picture 4.5). The moral unity of the *kuća* assembles and composes Muslim persons, and both boys and girls are incorporated into these processes as well. The house and becoming a Muslim always exist in conjunction, and this is inevitably associated with the house pedagogy of muslimness. In the previous centuries, many Muslim villages in the mountains of central Bosnia were without mosques, and hence without residential religious instructors (*hodža*). Therefore, Islam was embedded into the local cosmologies and embodied in practices and customs rather than forming any doctrine (cf. Fine 2002). The local Islamic pedagogies were often inchoate, sometimes with considerable differences between the houses and villages.

There was no mosque in Brdo until the early 1990s and the vast majority of Islamic rituals as well as Muslim pedagogy were inevitably related to the *kuća*. Yet there is no permanently ascribed *hodža* because Brdo does not have enough residents to constitute an administratively recognised *džemat*.<sup>57</sup> Only during Ramadan is there a temporarily settled *hodža* who stays in the village for a month and usually goes from house to house. In the past as well as in the present during Ramadan *hodža* has taught children more systematically about the elements of Islamic orthodoxy. Therefore, the main instructors have been parents, grandparents and other elder villagers with a predominant focus on orthopraxy and customary beliefs. It is not surprising then that in one village there are houses where parents paid close attention to teaching their children about a form of doctrine (orthodoxy), while there are other houses which focus solely on practices and customs.

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<sup>57</sup> *Džemat* is a congregation of Muslims, here understood as an administratively recognised religious unit with the right to have an Imam who receives his salary from *Islamska Zajednica* (Islamic Union). About 150 households are considered as the minimum size of such a unit.



Picture 4.6  
Ramadan in the village mosque: *mekteb*

A considerable variability of the house pedagogies in Brdo is also due to agnatic and village exogamy. It has been already argued that women play a crucial role in socialising children, and various modes of house-pedagogies circulate in the region as the in-marrying women bring different notions and ideas on being a Muslim into the house. Today, when the dynamic of fission within households is accelerated, brides often receive less supervision from other female in-laws as they often reside in a neolocality, and hence have more freedom in raising their children. As the short excerpt from Ika's biography illustrates, she attended *mekteb* as a child in her natal village. There, she also received a formal religious training (Picture 4.6). Today, being married and living in Brdo she instructs her daughters on how to recite *mevlud*, how to pray and being a good Muslim. Therefore, the house pedagogies of muslimness are mutable, or they might last in time. The accelerated processes of fission of the domestic unit were as important as the significant socio-political changes and upheavals in the past two decades in Bosnia. As a matter of fact, the house pedagogies of muslimness were often turned upside-down in the mountains. Similarly, in his breathtaking insights into the end of the colonial era in the Middle East, Michael Gilsenan provides an abundant number of examples of when the religious authority, learning, and family were questioned, redefined and resulted often in 'a reversal hierarchy that in other circumstances would be unimaginable' (Gilsenan 1982: 252). Indeed, both the end of colonialism in the Middle East and the dissolution of Yugoslavia mark a particular *fin de siècle*, and exemplify ruptures of social order at large. The moments of social breakdown are moments of

shattered possibilities and broken moral certainties at various scales. Viewed through the ethnographic lens from the micro-level of a Muslim mountain village in central Bosnia where historical-political events intersect with individual lifeworlds one can discover countless pathways, experiences and ambiguities of how people cope, negotiate and accommodate those breaches in their life-projects.

A biographical line about Selim is instructive in many ways because it sheds light, as I believe, on wider processes in the mountains. Selim is in his early thirties, a pious Muslim and also a member of a dervish order. Selim's childhood was split into both the socialist and the war periods. During the socialist times in the late 1980s he did not attend *mekteb*. The ritual activities associated with the Islamic practice he had encountered as a child, such as ram sacrifice (*kurban bajram*) or Ramadan, were located primarily in the sphere of the house. In the village where he lives there was no mosque at the time. The nearest one was in the municipal town, however, it was not an easy task to get there regularly, and then back to the village. Moreover, as Selim and other Muslims in the mountains argued, the attendance was monitored by the state police and children were asked in the school who attended. Those, who had attended, were ostracised and disadvantaged by some of more ideologically engaged teachers.<sup>58</sup>

However, in the early 1990s before the war broke out, Selim attended a few meetings of Muslim youths organised in the region, and he has been deeply touched by Islam ever since. Hence, Selim asked his mother to teach him everything she knew about Islam and how to pray in particular. During the war Selim met a charismatic dervish, who later became a sheikh. This was a decisive encounter. The sheikh enchanted Selim entirely, and later became his spiritual master and led him into the unknown depths and breadths of Islam. Furthermore, the sheikh discovered Selim's talent for calligraphy, and enhanced Selim's skills (Picture 4.7).

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<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, Selim and other Muslims who discussed and shared similar experiences with me put emphasis in their narratives on 'the Communists' who did so, rather than using solely ethno-national categorisation.



Picture 4.7

Selim is explaining the principles of proportionality in calligraphic practice from an old manual he was given by the sheikh

Selim's calligraphy symbolising the Rifa'i dervish order and its founder sheikh Ahmed ar-Rifa'i

After the war Selim decided to continue with his studies at the Islamic faculty in Sarajevo. He spent a few years there, though without succeeding to get any diploma, because he couldn't bear living in the capital. While staying in Sarajevo, he continued to be engaged in village affairs, and also helped with building a mosque where he was occasionally appointed as *hodža*. In narrating his life Selim conceives the immediate post-war time as extremely liberating for Islam in Bosnia. He describes the changing period in a very lively manner and with compassion; yet as the time of hunger and need for spiritual regeneration of the whole society. The post-socialist and post-war times stimulated peoples' interest and participation in public Islamic events in Selim's village. The newly built village mosque attracted them during the times of Ramadan and *kurban bajram*. However, as Selim described, many men did not know how to pray. At the time, it was Selim and his friends who taught their fathers from the village to pray accordingly. Put in this way, the dynamics and practice of pedagogy were reversed and the sacred authority within the *kuća* was questioned. Moreover, the pedagogies of muslimness multiplied, and shifted from predominantly domesticated and practice-oriented towards more diverse forms of expressions and learning. Although the pedagogies of muslimness have been often considerably reassessed in the past two decades particularly by implementing religious education into the school curriculums, the examples of Fadil's

‘milk pedagogy’, Zejna’s rumbling, Ika’s tears over the book of *mevlud*’s poems and Selim’s life-history narrative illustrate that the *kuća* continues to play a very important role in the processes of socialisation, and hence in becoming a Muslim person in the mountains.

#### **4.4 The Land(scape) and the making of relatedness**

The land is an important entity in the ways villagers conceive, construct, and interweave the house and the village *topos* at large. Close attachment to the land has been widely described among various peasant and agro-pastoral communities throughout Eurasia (e.g. Anderson 1998; Cambell 1964; Cole and Wolf 1974; Du Boulay 1974; Heady 1999; Ott 1981; Pina-Cabral 1986; Vitebsky 2005). The land is an externalisation and materialisation of various social processes (cf. Hirsch and O’Hanlon 1995; Ingold 1990). The land is a surface onto which synthetic temporal images of past-present-future processes of relatedness as well as political processes have been inscribed. The latter was widely documented in rural areas across postsocialist Eurasia (e.g. Hann 2003, 2006a; Humphrey 1998; Pine 2003, 2007; Verdery 2003). However, unlike in other areas of formerly Communist countryside the land and property at large were not entirely collectivised by the socialist Yugoslav state. Although there was an attempt to expropriate the private land that exceeded 25-30 hectares immediately after the Second World War and introduce an agrarian reform, this practice was eventually abandoned; in 1953, after another reform, the size of private ownership was reduced to 10 hectares (Bringa 1995: 51; Davis 1977: 64; Leutloff-Grandits 2006: 77). Nonetheless, in the case of Croatian countryside as well as in the case of rural Bosnia, the majority of the rural population never owned such an amount of land anyway, and this was also the case for the mountain regions in central Bosnia. Here the land has been historically appropriated through kinship and inheritance, and this practice continues to shape property relations in Brdo as well.

##### **4.4.1 The genealogy of the land**

In the mountains of Bosnia the house and the land are central in the local interpretations of the processes of relatedness. None of them can be detached from each other as the house and the land are intimately interlinked. Both the house and the

land are interrelated with the dead ancestors and the living persons through the (agnatic) naming practice. People in the mountains refer to the house and the land similarly to the way they address other persons. Hence, the land forms a triple-vectored mode of belonging, and navigates people socially, spatially and temporally.

In Brdo people know the land as well as they know the house, the networks of relatedness or their consociates. When I showed a picture taken during the earlier months of my fieldwork, where there is a field divided into four equal fenced plots by villagers, I was told a local perspective about the land–*kuća* relationships (Figure 4.2). My friends described the field as divided between four brothers living in a neighbouring village; however, as my friends immediately added, while ‘reading’ the land on the picture, the field used to be one large piece of land in the past. Then, it was explained to me that the field existed as one large parcel as long as the brothers lived together (*zajedno*) in one house (*kuća*).

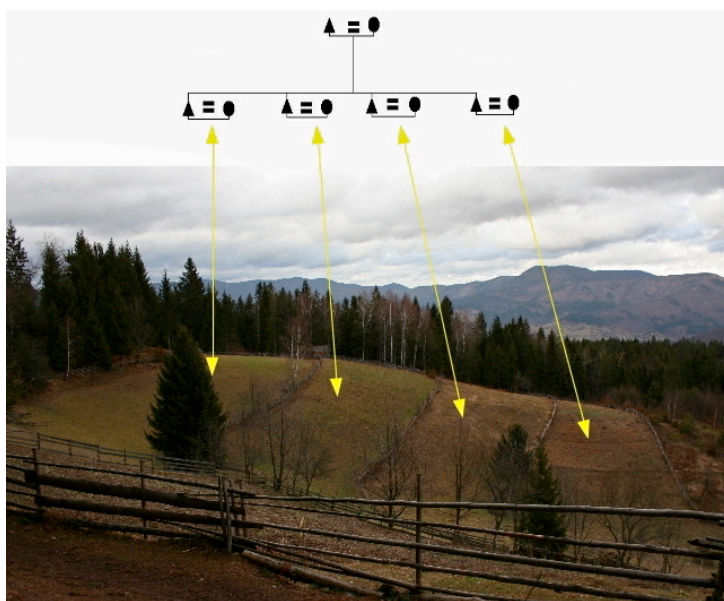


Figure 4.2  
*A genealogy of the land*

Viewed from this perspective, villagers did not cut the house-land connections. Contrarily, the house, inscribed into the land, extends its relatedness by and large. Put in this way, the house reassembles the *kuća*–land–persons relations. Moreover, the villagers’ perspective entangles together a genealogy of the land with social processes of the *kuća*, and as such, it opens a flattened perspective to what Carsten called the lived experience of relatedness (2000, 2004, 2007). Here the concept of relatedness is understood as the multifaceted nature of the ways intimate relations between Muslim persons are

conceived, multiplied and filtered in the processes of everyday life, such as ‘the house, procreation, personhood, feeding, naming, gender or ideas of bodily substance’ (Carsten 2007: 4).

#### **4.4.2 The polytropic character of the land and its value(s)**

As argued above, the house is conceived as both a metaphor of stability, certainty, life and continuity, and as a metonymical extension of relatedness. Furthermore, it has already been said that there is a considerable conceptual and semantic continuity between the house (*kuća*) and the land (*zemlja*). Here, I employ the word ‘land’ (*zemlja*) as an encompassing category used by villagers for pastures, fields, meadows and trees, all of which bear a particular biography and agency in the fabric of everyday life in the mountains. The social character of the land (cf. Bender 2001, 2002; Hirsch and O’Hanlon 1995; Ingold 1990) therefore extends to both the house and persons and vice versa. Put in this way, the land in the Bosnian mountains bears a polytropic and polysemantic character and faculty which generate particular cultural meanings, attachments and social actions. Let me recall the biographies of the house again in order to make this argument clearer. Here, I am concerned with the three generalised narratives associated with the land that I was repeatedly told in the mountains:

1. ‘The land gives life, praise be to Allah’ (*zemlja dava život, Elhamdulillah*)
2. ‘That’s milk, praise be to Allah’ (*ovo je mlijeko, Elhamdulillah*)
3. ‘I was given this [the land] by my father’ (*ovo je mene moj babo ostavijo*)

These three subtle and figuratively rich statements elegantly outline the ways the lived experiences of relatedness between persons and the land are conceived in the mountains, and also attend ethnographically to the link between the land and Muslim cosmologies of life.

In the Bosnian mountains particular regimes of value are associated with the land. Firstly, the land gives life. Both the *kuća* and the land bear particular *vis vitae* or life energy which sustains persons, the land and the house in time (cf. Gudeman 2010). The second proposition narrows this idiom and flattens hay and milk, the former associated with the land and the latter with the *kuća*, into one relational scale. The strength of the land is conceived then as a divine gift from Allah. Indeed, a similar figurative lexicon is

widely found among subsistence farming communities worldwide. As for example Gudeman and Rivera pointed out, based on their research in rural Colombia,

‘the expression “the earth that *gives*” is part of an internal conversation by which the connection between soil and humans is modeled in relation to social relationships and transactions with the divinity’ (Gudeman and Rivera 1990: 31, italics added)

Secondly, the land bears biographical qualities as it passes from fathers to sons, or from the dead ancestors to the living persons attached to the *kuća*. Villagers’ associations with the land, which passes through the practice of inheritance and thus remakes relatedness, are conceived by Muslims in the mountains as a relationship that binds. The land was ‘given by [one’s] father’ in order to be kept (Gregory 1997: 79). Although the acts of giving bear tremendous capacity to assemble persons in space and time (cf. Bourdieu 1990; Mauss 1954; Strathern 1988), Muslims put emphasis on keeping the given land. By working, cultivating and sustaining the land, Muslims care for the divine gift from Allah. Furthermore, they cultivate and sustain those multiplied relationships between the dead ancestors and living persons.

In Brdo the value of the land operates within the regime of incommensurability. Here the regime of value is understood as a process of symbolic equations (cf. Appadurai 1986; Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992). As discussed above, the scarce access to any free land in Brdo resulted in particular inheritance and marriage practices in order to minimise partition of the land. These practices also shaped villagers’ perceptions and meanings by which they value the land. Every plot of land is related to a house and bears thus its own identity and qualities. The land has rarely been sold or exchanged in the village. Even today those families who do not use some of their meadows or pastures, usually let other villagers use the land and take a portion of hay, money, or *kurban* (sacrificed lamb or ram) in return as a form of *halal* (accorded) exchange. Similarly, the families that migrated to the larger cities do not sell their land or any other property. Instead, there is always a relative in the village who is asked to take over responsibility. Abandoned land is conceived as problematic (*nevalja*) as would be someone’s attempt to sell the land. It is the inalienable character of the land which perpetuates the ways it is valued. This argument is well illustrated by the following set of case studies from the mountains.

*The land and the politics of value*

During my fieldwork I came across several attempts to exchange a plot of land between villagers. Some of them have lasted for many years, however, without any anticipated outcome. In all cases the motivation to exchange the land was associated with the well-being of the house whose members pursued such an exchange. However, it became clear in the course of my fieldwork that the value of the land is hardly substitutable and almost incommensurable.

The village Brdo is nestled in a hilly landscape. The houses are clustered agnatically, and due to the landscape's constraints. One such cluster (A) located in the hillsides, cooperatively built two decades ago a septic system that is situated underneath in a small valley. The owner of the land in the valley, Begica (A<sub>1</sub>), also lives in the cluster. Therefore, he agreed with the use of this tiny valley as his house benefits from the system as well. In return he did not pay any construction costs and the cluster of neighbours paid on his behalf instead. Moreover, the valley can be still used as a pasture for his sheep. However, a similar scenario did not happen in a neighbouring cluster (B). There, the only valley where a drainage system could be down-lead is owned by old Hasan from another cluster (C). Hasan (C<sub>1</sub>) is conceived in the village as a descendant of a real *gazda* family (well-off peasant), and controls an extensive portion of the land in the village today. A great part of the land owned by Hasan is used by other villagers who either pay or give him a deal (usually hay). Whenever Hasan passed Fadil's house, while herding a flock of sheep, Fadil loudly shouted 'Hasan, yoo-hoo Hasan, let's go to bargain' (*Hasane, ooo Hasane, hajma pazariť*). Hasan usually waved his hand and followed the flock. Fadil (B<sub>1</sub>) is also a descendant of a *gazda* family and also owns a large portion of the land. Therefore, he tried to offer Hasan various fields of almost incommensurable quality and size on behalf of the cluster (B). Later, Fadil even tried to let Hasan choose whichever piece of the land he desired. If Hasan accepted any, one would calculate, he would be definitely better off. Nonetheless, Hasan stayed unshakable.

Whenever I asked for an explanation as to why Hasan did not want to exchange the land if he would be better off, there was a prolonged silence, and then villagers concluded our dialog '*ovo je njegova zemlja*' (that's his land). In the first scenario operationalised here as (A) $\leftrightarrow$ (A<sub>1</sub>), we can observe that although Begica provided his land, he did not detach himself from the land. Moreover, Begica's house benefits from

the septic system as well. If Hasan employed only calculative reasoning in making a decision and exchanged the land with Fadil, then he would be better off. However, to Hasan the value of the land is hardly commensurable. In order to exchange, as the second scenario indicates, here operationalised as  $(B_1) \Leftrightarrow (C_1)$ , Hasan would have to withdraw and alienate himself from the inherited land which ought to be kept and not exchanged. Even to Fadil the decision to exchange the land was not conceived unproblematically and was discussed within the *kuća*, likewise with the neighbours, on whose behalf he tried to negotiate as well. Fadil's decision and the will to exchange were considered carefully and framed in the hierarchy of values with respect to the well-being of the house and even of the neighbourhood (*komšiluk*). Hence, such a decision was understood as acceptable and as an act that is not severing Fadil's guardianship of the inherited land.

The second example of this particular regime of incommensurable value ascribed to the given land illustrates the case study when Zahid attempted to exchange a plot of land with Suno from a neighbouring village. Suno inherited the plot, located in the lower part of Brdo because his mother was originally from the village, and in her natal family there were no male living heirs who would take over the land. The new houses which have arisen in Brdo in the last decade were built in this lower part. A few years ago Zahid decided to build a new house in this locality as well. He owns a piece of land there, however, compared with Suno's neighbouring plot, Zahid's land was more hilly and thus less suitable for building a house. Therefore, Zahid made an effort to exchange the land with Suno who uses his plot for hay only. During the process of negotiation, Zahid offered to exchange his plot plus a sum of money, yet he used arguments about a distant relatedness of both Suno's and Zahid's mothers. Nevertheless, Zahid did not succeed to convince Suno to exchange the land. Suno's attachment to the land, and his reasoning about the value of the land is very like Hasan's. It operates under the regime of incommensurability.

Both case studies illustrate that villagers continue to relate themselves to the land as a serious matter of concern. Put in this way, the land needs to be considered within a specific regime of value as well as a specific mode of relatedness wherein the land, the house and persons cannot be easily separated and dissociated. Furthermore, it shows a peculiarity of 'Bosnian postsocialism'. Indeed, one of the cornerstones of the

anthropology of postsocialism has been the restoration of property relations after the collapse of the state socialist governmentalities, and more broadly the idea of property relations as such (Hann 1998, 2003; Verdery 2003; Verdery and Humphrey 2004). However, as I argued above property at large was not expropriated by the socialist Yugoslav state in the mountains of central Bosnia and this makes 'Bosnian postsocialism' peculiar.

The post-1989 changes in the former Yugoslavia need to be understood as a 'conflict-driven transformation' (Leutloff-Grandits 2006: 2). The violent path that was taken in the early 1990s shattered property relations in many places of former Yugoslavia, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia in particular. This was not the case, however, for Muslim villages I studied in the mountains. Here the land and its modes of appropriation continue to be appropriated through relatedness and inheritance rather than through (command or neoliberal) economy, or as a takeover of private property as a consequence of massive war displacement (Leutloff-Grandits 2006; Žmegać 2007). Moreover, as argued at the beginning of the chapter, I am concerned with cultural constructions of the house and the land and how these are associated with personhood and relatedness. Hence the adoption of a perspective on the land as the supreme good outlined by Gregory (1997) seems to be more appropriate here. In agrarian economies the land is valued as the supreme good (Gregory 1997: 74; Gudeman and Rivera 1990). What makes any object a good of supreme value, Gregory argues, is its association with culturally specific notions of scarcity. Indeed, as I have illustrated the inheritance and marriage practices in the Bosnian mountains are entwined with the notions of the scarce land and an aura of scarcity is inalienable from the ways the land is conceived and valued. Furthermore, any goods of supreme quality must be kept and not given, exchanged or sold. Thus, the relationship between the land as a good of supreme quality and a person needs to be conceived of as a guardianship (Gregory 1997: 79). Hence we might conclude that the narrative 'I was given this [the land] by my father' (*ovo je mene moj babo ostavijo*) is first and foremost a perspective as told by the guardians of land. Put in this way, if women reproduce and care for the house by and large, then men protect the land, and keep the ancestors, living persons and moral unity of the house-land embeddedness as well.

#### 4.4.3 Extended relatedness: Of biography and agency of trees

The houses, the land and and persons are also interrelated through other entities. In the Bosnian mountains trees that dwell in the landscape are important actors in the processes of making relatedness. In Brdo trees extend the ways the *kuca*–land–persons are assembled and conceived. Moreover, trees amplify the argument I made about the land, that is, trees navigate people socially, spatially and temporally. Here I explore processes in which trees are significant actors in social life in the mountains. In doing so I draw upon examples of temporal reckoning and land disputes as these illustrate the agency of trees and its effect on the processes of making persons and relatedness.

Trees and tree symbolism play an important role in many cultures (Rival 1998). Moreover, the bedrock of anthropology – kinship and genealogical method – have been inextricably related to and derived from the tree-like metaphors (Bamford and Leach 2009; Barnard and Good 1984; Ingold 2007; Rivers 1900) and symbols (Turner 1967). As Bouquet (1996: 44-47) convincingly argues, genealogical diagrams in the process of developing anthropological theory altered tree diagrams as a graphic tool to record and a visual device to abstract and aesthetically represent human relatedness. Ellen (2006: 143) even argues that trees might contribute to generating relational and classificatory knowledge.<sup>59</sup> In her ‘tree survey’, Rival (1998) extensively and persuasively draws upon the argument that trees are good to think with, and her argument about the social life of trees might be subsumed into several operationalised propositions. Firstly, trees are symbols of social processes and collective identity. Secondly, trees are important agents in reckoning various modes of temporality and life-cycles. Thirdly, in the process of symbolization trees are related to fertility, origin and life itself. Jones and Cloke (2002: 48-49) move this argument even further by integrating *Actor-network-theory* (Latour 2005) with an ethnographically informed study of tree cultures. By analysing non-human agency of various actors they shift anthropological understanding of trees from a representational form towards a more flattened, relational character of hybrid non-human networks cutting across the nature - society divide (cf. Descola and Pálssons 1996). In so doing, they also make an analytical shift on a temporal scale away from solely social time towards multilayered time scales. As they argue, the agency of trees might ‘appear momentary in relation to social time’ as well as being a matter of ‘ecological time’, which spans over many generations (Jones and Cloke 2002: 69). Put in

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<sup>59</sup> As Ellen (ibid.) puts it: “‘tree’ must have been from a very early time a major metaphoric vehicle for the classification of other kinds of more abstract relations, as evident in kinship discourse’.

this way, trees as well as the house have a capacity to embody a particular kind of (dis)continuity of relatedness and this applies to human cultures at large.<sup>60</sup>

*Social life of trees in Brdo*

‘What an incredible 40 years, the tree is 60 years old at least; it was planted by my grandfather *rahmetli* [deceased, may Allah bless him] when I was yet a little boy’

‘Once, there were some unknown people, just passing by throughout the village so I invited them for a coffee. They liked it here in Brdo, and my homestead and *bašča* in particular. We walked around then; I showed them the fields and pastures. What they had seen was that most of the fruit trees were wild here – not very well grafted – and then one of them told me “your ancestor bequeathed to you enough good land, however, they had not been clever enough because they did not graft the trees”’

So here are two examples of tree narratives as told in Brdo. Trees captivate the everyday attention of villagers as they capture and bear biographies of the house and the land. Moreover, trees are used metonymically in the local lexicon to generate and transmit knowledge about relatedness between persons. I also encountered similar ‘tree narratives’ in other villages in the mountains. For example one villager told me a biography of every tree in his garden (*bašča*) and explained to me that the pear tree in the very corner of his garden is sixty years old, or that the other one is even older, and was planted by his grandfather *rahmetli*. Then, he pointed to an apple tree elsewhere and said ‘it is thirty years old, but it began to yield apples only at the outbreak of the war in 1993’.<sup>61</sup>

Unlike the forest which provides immediate firewood, trees in the fields and gardens operate under a similar regime of value and temporality as the land. Trees are conceived as being given in order to be kept, and hence cannot be separated from the relations between the land and the house. Furthermore, trees link the dead ancestors with the living persons. Thus, the old pear tree in the villager’s garden which does not yield any pears, likewise an old cherry tree in another garden which was hit by

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<sup>60</sup> Indeed, as Ellen pointed out it might be tentatively suggested that wood / tree polysemy emerges only where houses are more than temporary shelters and their construction a significant cultural activity. (2006: 144)

<sup>61</sup> There is a tree in the village, which was used as a national commemorative device. It was argued in Yugoslav times, that Josip Broz Tito took rest in its shadow during the Second World War.

lightening a few years ago, and hence without cherries in summer, are still a fecund source of remembering in the everyday life of the respective house. What makes trees a serious matter of concern in the mountains is their capacity to converge multiple temporal layouts, and condense pan-generational time and memories of the house, and hence to embody a continuity of life itself.

Of particular importance is knowing biographies of fruit trees in the fields and meadows. Here trees act as enduring markers connecting the house and the land as well as navigators in the surrounding landscape at large. Moreover, fruit trees in the fields are an example of spatially-distributed knowledge of relatedness and ownership which extends beyond the *kuća*. Fruit trees are imprints of memories of relatedness into the land, witnessing about the relations of the past times. Hence, trees multiply and shape actual relations between the houses and persons. The land and trees are thus entangled within multilayered temporalities. The past processes of fission of the house are materialised in the landscape through fences as well as fruit trees. What used to be a single field of one house in the past has been subsequently re-patchworked into multiple segments. Today this memory of relatedness is embodied in ‘fenced trees’ within fenced fields, each owned by different persons who once were one person in the past. Therefore, trees are, at times, decisive actors in various land disputes. Anthropologists have paid a great deal of attention to variations in legal systems and dispute deferment (Caplan 1995; Gluckman 1965; Lyon 2004; Pospisil 1974;). However, I am not concerned with an analysis of disputes from a legal perspective. Here, an analysis of disputes is used as it ‘offer[s] participants and observers a means of assessing relationships and qualities which may be unrelated to particular disputes’ (Lyon 2004: 167). Here I explore the agency of trees in the processes of making relatedness of persons—the *kuća*—the land. During my fieldwork, several disputes repeatedly occurred in the late spring when male villagers were repairing the fences around the fields. A dispute between villagers usually arose over the land boundaries, and particularly over where it would be appropriate to erect a fence. In such cases a tree, for example ‘an old cherry tree’, becomes a decisive actor in the processes of dispute, negotiation and conflict deferment. Trees organise the space and are thus used in the fields to determine whether a fence ought to be erected ‘in front of’ or ‘behind’. I followed a half dozen similar disputes, and in all the cases, the older villagers and old trees become the arbiters of particular land disputes, despite the fact that geodetic surveys and maps have been made

by the municipality. Nonetheless, villagers' knowledge and memories, likewise biographies and the physicality of trees, which are drawing the lines of relatedness into the land, have become the decisive actors in those disputes. Therefore, neither can trees be detached from the analysis of this complex entanglement of the house, the land and persons, nor from our understanding of the lived experiences of relatedness in the Bosnian mountains.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The muslim house is the domain of relatedness in rural Bosnia. It intersects with two other core cultural domains in local cosmologies, that is space and time respectively. For Muslims in the mountains of central Bosnia the house (*kuća*) is a culturally constructed form of 'living together'. It is a relational scale which embraces individuals, the land, animals, and kin relations together as well as various social processes such as family life, marriage and inheritance. Moreover, it is a space in which various substances are transformed into life energies; where individuals become Muslim persons. Hence, the house is a dynamic entity and as such it is part of the process of living (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995: 37; Gudeman and Rivera 1990).

In this and previous chapters I attended ethnographically to the processes of 'living together' in Brdo, and to what might be understood as a living experience of relatedness in particular (Carsten 2000, 2004). Put in this way, the house poses multiple experiences and relations and therefore needs to be understood through the biographies of individual lifeworlds of Bosnian Muslims that are always historically and politically contextualised. In doing so, I showed that there are different ways men and women are related to the house. In the Bosnian mountains women are associated with reproduction and procreation of the house by caring for the hearth in particular. Men are mainly caring for the land that cannot be, however, detached from the house and vice versa.

Based on her research on the procreative cosmologies and embodied metaphors among Muslim peasants in rural Turkey, Delaney (1991) argues that there is intrinsically an encompassing hierarchy within the relation between women and men. She shows how Islamic cosmology prioritises the seed and the control of the land in which it is sown as

a form of symbolic expression of a male-biased procreation doctrine.<sup>62</sup> However, neither did I find such a strong hierarchical and diverging relationship in local cosmologies, nor in the lexicon of villagers. Muslims in Brdo conceive that both the house and the land have capacities of giving life, and this is framed within the divine powers of Allah's will. Yet both men and women are jointly engaged in the socialisation of their children, work together on the land, and share the products of their work. It is the sharing, commensality, and engagement of Muslim persons rather than hierarchies which create the moral unity of the *kuća* and lead towards conceiving the house as a micro-cosmology of life.

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<sup>62</sup> See also Pierce 1964; for a similar argument about symbolic 'hidden constants' see Bourdieu 2001.

## 5 Beyond the house: *komšilik* reassessed

‘When someone dies in our *mahala* (quarter) then the whole *komšilik* (neighbourhood) tries to help you and look after your family; people come to your *kuća* (house) and ask you what needs to be done, they give you support; there isn’t anything like that in the lower *mahala*. It is our *adet* (custom) that the body of the dead person stays in the house the night before the *dženaza* (funeral) and living persons sit next to the body through the night. I can tell you exactly who came to the house when my mother died: everyone from my *komšilik*. Yesterday, the family from the lower *mahala* couldn’t find anybody who would stay with the deceased body through the night. Can you imagine what the people from the *mahala* are like? Yesterday, there was nobody who would look after the deceased body’. (a male villager)

This and the following chapter go beyond the doorstep of the house (*kuća*) and explore the immediate and proximate social and moral environment in the village. Both chapters re-examine the ways the village *topos* constructs and is constructed by distinct communal rhythms, social interactions and ritual relations that largely extend beyond the sphere of the house. These interweave symbolic and moral geographies, and draw boundaries of inclusion or exclusion within the extra-house spheres of intimacy and cooperation in Muslim mountain villages. The key encapsulating categories in the local lexicons of sociality that spans ‘beyond the house’ are *komšilik* and *mahala* respectively. Historically, the word *komšilik* originates from Turkish and might be defined as a series of notions, ideas and practices associated with living in a neighbourhood. *Mahala* is of Arabic origin and might be defined as a quarter or a hamlet that is a part of either a rural or an urban residential setting.

The rich introductory narrative, as told by Safet, a male villager, here, touches upon several tropes that are key to understanding the spheres of belonging, intimacy and relations that emerge in Muslims’ lifeworlds in the mountains. In the narrative Safet makes clear to whom he and his family, as well as the body of his dead mother belong; that is, first and foremost his *komšilik* as a part of the *mahala* he lives in. Furthermore, the narrative nugget also reveals that Safet’s moral imagination of belonging and intimacy has a spatial dimension. Hence, the symbolic and moral geographies of the village consist of multiple symbolic boundaries that are constantly re-made by the day-to-day processes (cf. Barth 1966, 1969; Kapferer 1976). The boundaries construct, and are

constructed by the flow of everyday sociality, thereby assembling persons and space in a particular way. Indeed, this is the capacity of boundaries by and large, that is, to include and/or exclude actors, entities and persons from respective networks, social forms and spheres (cf. Donnan and Wilson 1999; Douglas 2003 [1972]; Cohen 1985; Strathern 2004 [1991]).

Particular moments in the flow of everyday life, such as the sharing of emotions, countless coffee-visits and unanimous help, borrowing working tools, or organizing and inviting people from one *komšiluk* to collective *iftar*<sup>63</sup> during the holy month Ramadan, characterize the intersubjective and intimate modes of sociality and daily rhythms within *komšiluk* in a Muslim mountain village in central Bosnia. On the other hand, engagements within the *mahala*'s fabric are oriented primarily towards an exchange of help and cooperative labour, and any mutual help goes only rarely beyond the recognised boundaries of the respective *mahala*. Moreover, the annual Islamic ritual of sacrifice *kurban bajram*, during which sacrificed meat is exchanged and shared by all people of the *komšiluk* and *mahala*, cements and re-enacts their respective boundaries, and regenerates the networks of relatedness and belonging. Nonetheless, there are certain instances and events, when the importance of those spatio-symbolic boundaries weakens. This usually occurs during any collective communal cooperative work (*akcija*), and also during several religious feasts like Ramadan, and rituals such as collective funerals (*dženaza*) and *tevhid*, that is, caring for the souls of the dead persons (cf. Bringa 1995: 184-196; Sorabji 2008).<sup>64</sup>

*Komšiluk* has recently attracted much analytical attention in the anthropology of Bosnia. It has been argued that the category of neighbourliness has historically played an important role in the processes of structuring inter-communal and ethnoreligious relations, and in the social fabric of Bosnian society by and large. However, as Sorabji pointed out (2008) these arguments lack any fine-grained examination of the actual enactments and experiences of *komšiluk*. Moreover, as I argue throughout this chapter, some of the authors overestimated the ethnic-oriented and group-like analytical perspectives while analysing *komšiluk* and seized on it as a cause of ethnic hatred (see also

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<sup>63</sup> The evening meal when Muslims break the fast during Ramadan.

<sup>64</sup> Organisation of village *mevlud* was in Brdo less common practice than in other villages as well as in other parts of Bosnia (cf. Bringa 1995; Sorabji 1994) and hence I have chosen to omit *mevlud* from this list.

Sorabji 2008). Therefore, I examine to what extent it is defensible to use local categories only metaphorically – such as the idea of neighbourliness as scaled up to inter-ethnic, group-like relations at various supra-regional levels – without any appropriate ethnographic content or precision.

On the other hand, although Sorabji (2008) convincingly illuminates the neighborhood relations in the suburbs of the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, in a longitudinal perspective, her conclusion could be applied to the rural and mountainous areas of central Bosnia only partially. As was shown by several authors, the urban-rural scale has been a pervasive force of inner differentiation and dynamics in socialist, war and post-war/post-socialist Yugoslav lands (cf. Bougarel, Helms, and Duijzings 2007; Halpern and Halpern 1972; Halpern and Kideckel 1983; Jansen 2005b, Šimić 1983). Based on his research in Serbia, Jansen shows that the urban-rural distinction sheds light on the ongoing local-level transformations and changes and ‘constitutes the most widely shared non-nationalist framework for understanding events in the region’ (Jansen 2005b: 154). Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to unwrap the nature of local-level social relations in changing rural neighborhood settings.

Furthermore, in the following chapter I introduce the *mahala* into the Bosnian context as a serious matter of concern. I analyse the meanings associated with the spatial category of *mahala* in village social and symbolic fabrics and how it intersects with the moral imagination associated with *komšilik*. In so doing, I draw upon the *mahala* debate that has arisen recently in the anthropology of post-socialist Central Asia. In both cases, the comparative edge of anthropological analysis is employed in order to explore a cultural continuity of the meanings, idioms and practices associated with the category of *mahala* and *komšilik* in (Muslim) western Eurasia (cf. Hann 2006a, 2007; Parkes 2004) and in the post-Ottoman territories in particular.

### **5.1 *Komšilik* disputed**

In his classic study, Lockwood defines village social organisation in Bosnia as organised according to two principles, kinship and residence (1975: 57). Neighbourhood is inevitably related to residence, and hence to socio-spatial relations. In the mountain region where Lockwood conducted his research the scale of social groupings went from

the individual household, small groups of neighbouring households whose co-members were called *komšija*, to the three different *mahale* (quarters) and to the village as a community (Lockwood 1975: 65).<sup>65</sup> As Lockwood clearly demonstrates, it was one's particular neighbourhood that mattered most in day-to-day interactions, in the processes of exchange of cooperative work and mutual help, and in visiting patterns. Although Lockwood found that close neighbours are very often close agnatic kin<sup>66</sup> he concludes that the *core* organising principle of neighbourhood networks is *residence* (1975: 65, italics added). Kin networks, on the other hand, might be conceived as a cross-cutting vector of relations outside a neighbourhood, *mahala* and a village.<sup>67</sup>

The village *Dolina*, eloquently portrayed by Bringa (1995), exhibits similar socio-spatial interactional patterns to those outlined by Lockwood. The two spatial-referential categories in the village were *mahala* and *komšiluk* and as Bringa explicitly states, *komšiluk*

‘was defined from the point of view of the individual household as those houses which immediately surrounded it, and with which it had relationships of mutual obligations, exchange, and support, reflected in the visiting patterns between them.’ (1995: 55)

However, where Lockwood draws the differential line between residence and kin, Bringa adds another differing vector of relationality. She questions whether there is any exclusively ethnoreligious interactional or spatial pattern associated with *komšiluk*, or, in other words, how the relations and interactions based on proximity are driven within an ethno religiously mixed social environment. Interestingly though not surprisingly, Bringa concludes that the neighbours in *Dolina* shared the circles of visiting patterns if they were next-door neighbors. Therefore, one's ethnoreligious identity was not the primary driving force in people's moral imagination and reasoning about *komšiluk* and interactions within the respective neighbourhood (Bringa 1995: 65-66, 68).

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<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, there is surprisingly no explicit reference to *komšiluk* as such in Lockwood's ethnographic account.

<sup>66</sup> As discussed in chapter three, this is often a consequence of the inheritance patterns which lead to agnatic clustering.

<sup>67</sup> During the war over half a million Bosnians were displaced to countries in the EU and elsewhere. Hence, Al-Ali studied a new cutting vector in post-war Bosnia, that is, the processes of transnational networking and the bonds formed by sending remittances back to Bosnia from abroad. (Al-Ali 2002: 83-84).

Nonetheless, there were other spheres of interactions and participation, such as ritual or religious gatherings. These were based on other forms of sociality and belonging, that depend on various contexts in which differences rather than similarities might be expressed (for a similar argument in Macedonia see Bielenin-Lencowzka 2009). Hence, as it becomes clear from Bringa's account, *komšiluk* has been primarily conceived as an ethnically indifferent regime of morality and social exchange, binding people of close proximity, and expressing a rather non-ethnic form of belonging and relatedness. Thus, it is a matter of further investigation as to whether *komšiluk* continues to be an ethnically indifferent regime of morality in an ethnoreligiously mixed social setting, or whether it has been reshaped by an alterity of meanings in the post-war turbulent times.

However, a very different argument appeared recently. In his papers, Hayden (2002, 2007) claims that

‘the institution of *komšiluk* (from Turkish) established clear obligations of reciprocity between people of different ‘nations’ living in close proximity but also prohibited intermarriage between members of these religiously defined groups’ (2002: 206).

Elsewhere Hayden develops the argument further

‘[i]n many places in rural Bosnia these communities lived intermixed but not intermingled. The Ottoman-period institution of *komšiluk* (from Turkish) structured interaction between these peoples as members of groups on the basis of respect and strict reciprocity but also on separation: intermarriage was in principle prohibited and in practice almost unknown in rural Bosnia (...) the social boundaries between members of these groups, even when living as neighbors, were strong.’ (2007: 111)

In his interpretation Hayden borrows from Xavier Bougarel's argument that

‘this relationship based on proximity was antithetical to one based on intimacy: marriage. While the idea of ‘citizen’ is abstract, he says, ‘neighbor’ (*komšija*) was always concrete. Essentially, then, the practices of *komšiluk* regulated relations between individuals as representatives of groups that chance to live in close proximity while the groups themselves remained in structural opposition, unmixable.’ (Hayden 2002: 206)

However, such a metaphorical usage of group-bounded relations as structured by the *komšiluk*'s logic and practices is at least highly problematic. As has been shown by Lockwood (1975), Bringa (1995) and Sorabji (2008) with convincing ethnographic precision, *komšiluk* has been conceived in Bosnia exclusively as a spatial, non-ethnic category of social relations. Moreover, in his argument about the non-kin but residential character of *komšiluk*, Lockwood explicitly writes that

‘[o]ne unexpected feature of these neighborhood groupings is that they display a tendency toward exogamy. It is said that close neighbors should never marry.’ (Lockwood 1975: 65)

This contrasts greatly with Bougarel's and Hayden's interpretation of the *komšiluk* as a mechanism which structured and/or completely prohibited intermarriages within a neighbourhood in rural Bosnia. Indeed, let me repeat one of the arguments I made in chapter three where the marriage practices are discussed in-depth. In *Brdo* the number of intra-village marriages was also extremely low, and at the *komšiluk* level was even non-existent by virtue of the fact that such a union is conceived as ‘not good’ (*nevalja*) for several reasons which shall be explained shortly. Therefore, Hayden's cause-effect correlation between the low numbers of inter-ethnic marriages and ethnicisation of *komšiluk* seem to be somehow misleading and impaired, and yet mixing different scales of social relations. Let me develop this critical argument even further.

Firstly, in her thought-provoking argument, Sorabji (2008: 97) points out that there is a prevailing tendency in contemporary post-Yugoslav research to view *komšiluk* through what Brubaker (2002) calls ‘ethnic coding bias’, that is, privileging group identity over the vicissitudinous flows of the everyday. Moreover, at an epistemological level such aptness is embedded in the logic of ‘groupism’, another term coined by Brubaker. ‘Groupism’ describes a tendency to ascribe agency to such entities as ethnic groups, which are taken for granted and considered as basic constituents of social life (Brubaker 2002: 164).<sup>68</sup> Indeed, Hayden's and Bougarel's point of departure is an ethnically mixed social terrain figuratively conceptualised as a neighbourhood-like space. The scale on which both authors primarily operate is rather of large communes, or ethnoreligious

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<sup>68</sup> Brubaker defines ‘groupism’ thus: ‘the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogenous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis’ (2002: 164).

groups, and hence essentialised entities (see the quotation above from Hayden 2007: 111). As Bowman (2002) argues, such an interpretative framework might even ‘provide intellectual rationalisation for ethnic cleansing and the separation of populations’ (ibid.: 220). However, *komsšiluk* as a vigorous social process, on the contrary, bears localised, proximate, face-to-face knowledge and practices, and thus a very different scale of relations and interactions. Therefore, such scholarly ‘ethnic coding bias’, here represented by Bougarel and Hayden, is unevenly mixing the two very different scales where the relations between the two are rather superficial and impaired.

Secondly, the group-identity oriented arguments need to be counterbalanced by the grassroots ethnographies of cultural knowledges and practices, and imagination. As is carefully shown throughout this thesis, the lifeworlds of Muslims in the mountains of central Bosnia are localised in particular cultural domains and social processes. Hence, being a Muslim does not necessarily and solely mean one’s self-identification with a politically defined *nacija* (nation or ethnoreligious group). In the mountains of central Bosnia, Muslims largely draw upon various cultural idioms in their everyday practice, and some of them have been cultivated and transmitted for several centuries. These are employed in their day-to-day interactions and interpretations of the social worlds they are involved in. This, what Alfred Schutz (1967: 13-14) understood as a socially derived knowledge, forms a cultural language of the everyday and a framework of relevance to the lifeworlds of Muslims. Put in this way, many Muslims in the Bosnian mountains, historically, conceive any marriage between female Muslims and male non-Muslims as hardly acceptable (as it would be elsewhere in the Muslim world).<sup>69</sup> Such moral imagination, then, is underpinned first and foremost by an implicit Islamic orthodoxy rather than ethnic hatred. Surely, in post-war Bosnia the interpretative contexts, and political rhetoric in particular, have often shifted towards ethnoreligious reasoning. Nevertheless, cultural intimacy and/or distance are not always the sole product of top-down nationalist politics. Indeed, in Brdo the practice of exogamy among Muslims within *komsšiluk* and the village has been, in the past century at least, considerably influenced by inheritance patterns as a means to minimise partition of the land, on which people in the mountains heavily relied.

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<sup>69</sup> The same argument could also be made about Christian / Orthodox mixed marriages. The fact that the rate of inter-faith marriages was low in rural areas even during Yugoslavia does not reveal anything about inter-ethnic avoidance. Nevertheless, this shows that the secular ideology of the state did not fully overwhelm local beliefs and cosmologies (e.g. Bringa 1995; Fine 2002).

Furthermore, the category of *komšiluk* is not exceptionally Bosnian and cultural continuities might be found within the post-Ottoman landscapes by and large. In his classic study on a Serbian village, Halpern (1958) defines *komšiluk* thus

‘the *komšiluk*, or neighbourhood forms a definable geographic unit as is shown by the clusters of houses. Although members of a villager’s own clan group are usually treated more intimately, the *komšija*, or neighbour, is very highly regarded in Orašac. As one villager defined it: “If you are in trouble or need anything you go to your *komšija*” (...) For the social life of both men and women is definitely centered in the *komšiluk*. As the villagers themselves say, *komšija bliži od kušulje* - a neighbour is closer than one’s shirt’. (Halpern 1958: 157-160)

In his classic account of a Turkish village, Paul Stirling (1965: 149) clearly differentiates between *komşuluk* (neighbourliness), and *akrabalık* (kinship), in other words, between kinship and residence. Stirling describes similar pattern within *komşuluk* in Turkish villages as Lockwood and Bringa in Bosnia, that is, often unclear boundaries within a neighbourhood caused by inheritance patterns and agnatic clustering (cf. Stirling 1963). He shows how a neighborhood (*komşuluk*) had been considerably important for married women who were in-marrying into the neighbourhood, by virtue of the fact that there was no room for women to be included into *akrabalık* (cf. Stirling 1965: 173-174; also Delaney 1991: 151-153). Similarly, Delaney’s exploration into Turkish cosmologies convincingly depicts how *komşuluk* was primarily maintained by reciprocity and exchanges between women, and argues that ‘close neighbors are enclosed in an open world by proximity’ (1991: 188). The same argument, that goes beyond the solely functional explanation of *komšiluk*, was made by Bringa. She argues that ‘the importance of friendship and mutual help between close neighbors was particularly valuable to women who could find personal support and understanding that they would not find among members of their husband’s family’ (1995: 92).

Hence, in what follows I explore modes of mutuality, intersubjectivity, and moral imagination that are entwined with *komšiluk*. I argue that the local cultural and social idioms associated with a neighbourhood need to be conceived by and large as a culturally constituted relational logic and a regime of morality underpinning various interactions in an immediate extra-household space of physical proximity. The moral imagination about the immediate next-door relations goes far beyond consideration that social relations within *komšiluk* are just functional ones, and affect-less or lacking

intimacy (as Bougarel and Hayden argue). On the contrary, relatedness and intersubjectivity are always both effective and affective, intimate and intentional because of the intersubjective character of any social interaction (Schutz 1967).

## 5.2 *Komšilik* in the Bosnian mountains

In Brdo, *komšilik*, like the house (*kuća*), multiply the spheres of intimacy in Muslims' lifeworlds. This is expressed in the interview excerpt which introduced the chapter. When asked for a definition, villagers' obvious answer was straightforward: 'it's our neighborhood'. Another definition was offered during one Ramadan collective evening meal, 'real *iftar*, that's when people get together, they eat a lot, drink a lot of coffee, it's a joy, that's real *komšilik*'. And also villagers associated the idea of neighbourhood with the memories of mutual help and reciprocity 'during the hay making season people regularly helped each other, it is real *komšilik*'.

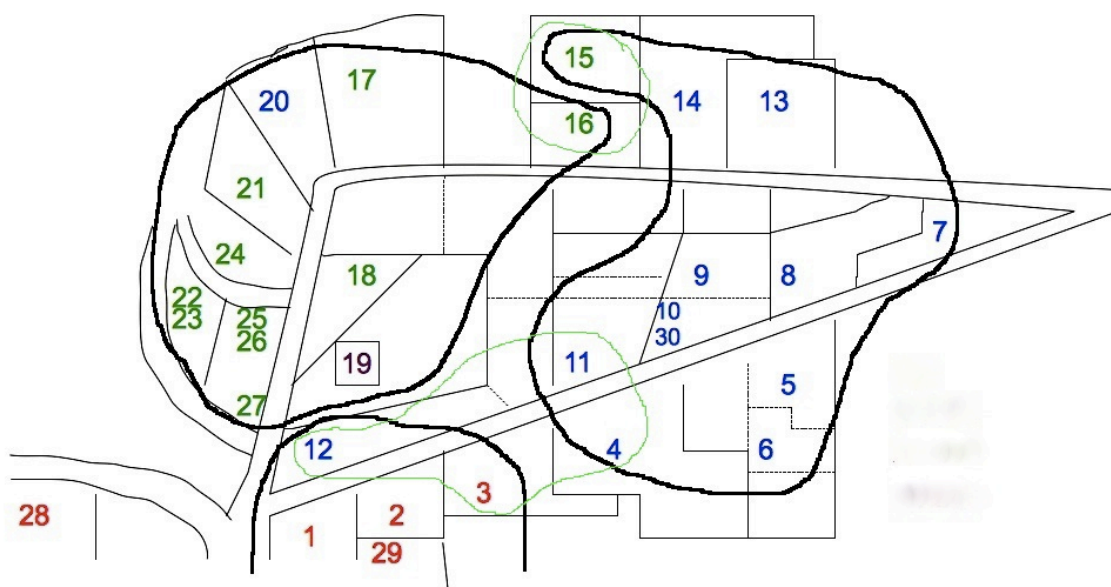
So here are several eloquent *komšilik* narratives. All of them share common lines of reasoning and imagination as to how the neighbourhood is conceived in the mountains of central Bosnia. These are mutuality, togetherness and a play of particular pronominalism (Fernandez 2010) as a persuasive force in social interactions between neighbours.<sup>70</sup> This was expressed in the emphasis that villagers constantly put on the use of the plural pronoun (*naš komšilik* - our neighbourhood) when addressing *komšilik* matters in everyday conversations. Here the pragmatic of social interaction, that involves shifting from 'I' towards 'we' pronouns, expresses an intersubjective we-relationship of the people with mutually shared lifeworlds within *komšilik* (cf. Carrithers 2008; Schutz 1967).

In Brdo the village fabric is portioned into several *komšiluks*. Nonetheless, it does not constitute an administrative unit. While conducting fieldwork I lived in one such *komšilik*, and after several months my co-neighbours had started to call me *komšija* (neighbor) on various occasions. It happened immediately after the annual *kurban bajram*, that is often understood as a feast of the neighbourhood (cf. Sorabji 2008: 103), during which I received sacrificed meat from my co-neighbours. As is illustrated in the following

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<sup>70</sup> Pronominalism is here understood as a form of social interaction in which 'shifting meaning is involved' (Fernandez 2010: 64), such as shifting between 'I' and 'we' or 'them', and hence personal pronouns are 'made use of by persons in their interactions' (ibid.).

chapter, an exchange of sacrificed meat during the ritual re-enacts the symbolic boundaries of *komšiluks* and respective *mahala*. Moreover, giving, sharing and eating the ritually sacrificed meat (*kurban*) regenerate the ways persons are related, yet cultivate experiences of togetherness between neighbours and *kuće* (houses) within a neighbourhood. The *komšiluk* consisted of twelve *kuća*, though not every house participated in communal social life within *komšiluk* to the same extent. Although there is fluidity and the peripheral spheres of *komšiluk* might overlap, the symbolic locus and boundaries of respective neighbourhoods are conceived highly consensually by their co-residents. Boundedness of neighbourhood emerges from the flow of mundane proximity-based relations, and face-to-face interactions which are the building blocks of the neighbourhood in the village.<sup>71</sup> I have already explained in great detail that the majority of the next-door neighbours are often close patrilineal kin clustered agnatically (Map 5.1). Nonetheless, it is the residence and proximity as the primary modus operandi through which *komšiluk* operates and is conceived in mountainous areas of central Bosnia.



Map 5.1

The consensually conceived boundaries (black bubbles) of *komšiluk* with their spheres of possible overlaps (green). The coloured numbers are individual *kuće* (houses), and express agnatic clustering.

*Komšiluk* consists of bonds, relations and imagination that are cultivated in everyday interactions and cemented by the confidence that one can absolutely rely on her or his

<sup>71</sup> In the pre-war, ethnically mixed village studied by Bringa people from one *komšiluk* visited each other during *Bajram* regardless of their ethno-religious identity (Bringa, personal communication).

neighbours. As Safet expressed in the introductory narrative, the death of his mother was a serious matter of concern for the *komšiluk* they had both belonged to. Therefore it was everyone from the *komšiluk* who mourned for the soul of the dead mother. Nevertheless, there are other countless mundane events, moments and situations which characterise *komšiluk* as a consociational neighborhood.<sup>72</sup> These basically differ according to gender relations and various temporal and seasonal rhythms as I shall discuss now (for a detailed account of temporal layouts and reasoning see chapter seven).

### **5.2.1 The rhythms of *komšiluk*: hospitality, guesthood and compassion**

*‘Kako si se naspavala?’* (How did you sleep?), *‘Dobro, dobro, kako ti?’* (Very well, and you?) was usually the first conversation I heard every morning. Ika was asking this question to her female neighbours, while milking the cow or cleaning the path. From as early as sunrise women occasionally stop for a short chat and to exchange news. They often get together around a communal water pump. This is the public place where such chats occur and where women could gather without any inspection or suspicion. Casual coffee visits made by women are another mundane form which cultivates social relations within *komšiluk*.<sup>73</sup> By virtue of the marriage practices women marry into the respective *komšiluk*. Hence, the neighbourhood as an immediate space of proximity thus also becomes an important female sphere of intimacy (cf. Bringa 1995; Delaney 1991; Stirling 1965).

Apart from such moments of everydayness, there is another occasion that embraces gender, neighbourhood and seasonality in an orchestrated way. This is the time between the end of the winter cycle and before the beginning of the summer cycle (see chapter seven). In rural metaphors of livelihood, this period is described as *‘sve je u*

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<sup>72</sup> By using the word consociational I draw upon the phenomenological distinction made by Schütz (1967) between *Nebemenschen* (contemporaries) and *Mitmenschen* (consociates). Consociates, as Carrithers eloquently put it, are ‘people we grow old with, whose lives we participate in, whom we know intimately and in their own terms. We are entwined with them; we are able to join in their absolutely individual life story, and to that extent, we see beyond any generic designation to particularities of attitude, experience, and reaction. We have, with consociates, a “thou-relationship”, an intimacy and mutual knowledge of one another face to face, and a “we-relationship”, in that we have experiences in common with them’ (2008: 167).

<sup>73</sup> I did not have any opportunity to explore this visiting pattern in depth; nonetheless, it was richly portrayed by Bringa (1995: 91-95).

*beharu* (everything is blossoming).<sup>74</sup> The nature-derived regenerative metaphors are in many respects metonymical to the processes within the house. At this time, women regenerate the houses. This includes very time consuming and exhausting painting of all rooms in the house, its careful cleaning, washing all dishes, likewise hand-washing carpets. The house must be clean and figuratively revitalised before the annual feast *dova za kišu* (prayer for rain), which is considered to be an agricultural regenerative ritual. The prayer for rain ritual, likewise *kurban bajram* feast, open the house and expose the moral unity of the *kuća* to the public. Hence, women from the *komšiluk* help each other unanimously to finish all preparations due. Furthermore, during the summer months women from the neighbourhood often go together to collect herbs, healing grass or bilberries that will be used in the winter months.

The orchestration of seasonal rhythms, ritual relations and festivities form an important dualism of everyday life in the mountains of central Bosnia, alternating between winter and summer periods and likewise Islamic and agricultural feasts and rituals. The summer time in the mountains is marked by hard work. People cultivate their fields, make hay, men repair the houses and fences around the fields and prepare firewood for the upcoming winter. Hence, the orchestration of the summer working period has a profound impact on the character of social relations within *komšiluk*. While women continue with affect-like interactions with their *komšijnice* (female neighbours), men pursue rather effect-like interactions with other male neighbours. As male villagers usually put it ‘there is too much to do and the weather is so unpredictable’. However, this does not mean that men would only utilize *komšiluk* networks. Instead, different annual seasons, workloads and activities require and orchestrate different forms of engagement within *komšiluk* (see chapter 6 for a detailed argument about the cooperative work). Nonetheless, men and women both continue with affect-like interactions within *komšiluk*, although to a lesser extent than they usually do during the winter months. Male neighbours always find time to smoke a cigarette together, likewise next-door neighbours find an opportunity to drink coffee together, and any passers-by from the *komšiluk* are then immediately invited to join.

While the soil is covered by a snowy blanket people cultivate and engage in their neighbourhood networks intimately. As an elder male villager put it ‘winter has always

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<sup>74</sup> The word *behar* is an Ottoman Turkish mutation of the Persian *bahâr* which means both ‘blossom’ and the spring season.

been created for *komšiluk* ('*zima je bila uvijek za komšiluk stvorena*'). Indeed, the winter period is marked by countless series of coffee visits. This shift in sociality is strengthened by virtue of the harsh winter weather. I observed that the majority of employed male villagers work in the forest industry, and hence during harsh winter months they very often stay at home as the wood and machines are frozen. Thus, every winter day villagers exchange one neighbourhood visit at least. However, these visits are all but random as they form a highly patterned social form of interaction known as *sijelo* (also Bringa 1995: 92). Since the arrival of the first snow, my landlord Zahid started to receive guests from the *komšiluk* in his *kuća*. At the same moment, however, together with his wife and children, he became a guest elsewhere within the *komšiluk*. While any random coffee visit during the summer season consists usually of a *džezva* (pot) of coffee, an exchange of the *sijelo* visits neatly zooms in for a depiction of the local notions and enactments of hospitality and guesthood.

Indeed, the *sijelo* is a highly orchestrated performance unwrapping hospitality – guesthood etiquette. It takes place in the hearth of the house. Such a visit is the moment when the doors of the *kuća* are opened and the moral unity of the house is exposed. Moreover, strong associations between the house as a place of security and protection, and hospitality as a field of ritualised exchange of intimacy and respect, are common in many Muslim societies (cf. Dresch 1998; El Guindi 2008). As Shryock eloquently puts it

'hospitality creates a momentary overlap of the inner and outer dimensions of a "house" (...) [h]ospitality creates a moral space in which outsiders can be treated as provisional members of the house' (2004: 36)

During the visits women serve fresh fruit, along with a juice that is usually homemade (*sok* or *šerbe*). This is followed by coffee, biscuits, cakes, sometimes even homemade smoked mutton meat (*stelja*) and in the last few years, particularly for children, very popular home made pop-corn. While a woman is serving food and drinks, a man entertains the guests. The ways guests are orderly treated unpacks another layout of embodied cultural knowledge and social poetics as they are conceived in the mountains. The male guests must always be served first, followed by the males of the *kuća*, then female guests and lastly the women of the house. These are the instances during which hosts and guests exchange respect intimately, and when the moral accountability of the house is at stake. Indeed, first *fildžan* (a small cup without a handle) of freshly made

coffee with foam on the top filled from *džezva* is considered as one of the supreme qualities. This practice is strengthened by virtue of the fact that the coffee foam is called *kajmak* and stands in a metonymical relation to dairy *kajmak* (double sour cream), that is considered to be the dairy product of the highest value in the mountains. As I have shown in the previous chapter, in the local lexicons *kajmak* is indexical to the entire domain of domestic purity. The moment of serving the first cup of coffee with the foam on the top then maximises the entire effect of exchanged respect, hospitality and domestic intimacy between the host and the guest. Such a *sijelo* visit lasts between two and three hours during which several conversational themes are usually discussed. Men obviously debate the harvest, the weather, the forest and the politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina; women talk about children, discuss various recipes, and knit wool socks or patchwork various cloths, and/or sometimes jointly watch television (Picture 5.1).



Picture 5.1  
*Sijelo*

The *sijelo* visits are an ongoing flow of hospitality exchanged between neighbours. Indeed, performing hospitality and guesthood is always mutually implicated. The social poetics that are associated with both the *sijelo* and neighbourhood interactions require one to be a good guest as much as a host. Hence, neighbours also think about who they shall visit, and when, very thoroughly. During the winter period of my fieldwork I discussed many times with my landlord who we ought to visit. However, my random suggestions were very often, though politely, rejected. Eventually, after one of my ‘wrong’ proposals I was told that ‘we have visited them twice so far and they have not

come to visit us yet'. Indeed, a month later Zahid and I met a neighbour who asked us when we would come to visit (*na sijelo*) him as he had visited us already. Hence, every *sijelo* visit must always be paid back. Such an ongoing balanced exchange of hospitality and guesthood neatly fits into the encompassing local moral imagination on mutually equal relations between moral persons by and large in the mountains, and thus outlines particular social poetics and engagement within *komšiluk*.

During the late winter months the *sijelo* visits continue and conversational themes change and shift from here-and-now themes to larger social and time scales, although the politics endures and dominates most of the debates. In particular, people discuss the changes in land tenure and extended kinship networks and memories. Both are complex, yet with only a few written records, and hence *sijelo* is the time when the past becomes the present and memories of the *kuća*, land and the *komšiluk* are recalled and revitalised. Moreover, children always play around all the time and they very often interrupt the discussion by asking who is the person, or where is the place or the field their parents refer to. This is one of the ways such a complex relational knowledge - including land tenure relations, people, various networks, and the past - has often been transmitted over generations.

However, the memories and narratives that pass from the elders to children, likewise between co-neighbours during the *sijelo* visits are far more complex. It was during these neighbourhood gatherings that I would hear about particular war memories, rather than encountering them regularly in mundane chats. In the local conversations 'the war' (*rat*) as a narrative theme entails both Muslims' experiences of the Second World War and the 1990s war. Nonetheless, what dominates these intimate conversations between neighbours are two narrative lines as a serious matter of concern.

Firstly, the male villagers often vividly recalled friendship and togetherness they had experienced while defending the fault lines which spanned throughout the hills above the village; they even remembered the jokes they made at the time. On the other hand, the war memories that are recalled during the *sijelo* visits, unpack various layouts of intra-village tensions, animosities and sources of long lasting bitterness sometimes even between close neighbours. Any war experience is beyond the mind's limits. It was argued by the villagers themselves that the 1990s war deeply revealed neighbours' characters

and qualities, as for some people it became more important at the time to save one's own property rather than *komšije* (neighbours). Indeed, as I was told during one such conversation

‘(...) and do you know what is the worst about the war ... [silence] that human life is not even worth a pot of potatoes. I'll tell you what, if another war broke out now, I would kill half of the village. This man got oil to get my ill father from the village but he moved his livestock instead. This is the war my friend’.

Moreover, those people who had survived the war rather safely, took advantage of various post-war donation programs in order to gain more livestock or machines, despite their cowardly behaviour during the war. On the other hand, there are other villagers who lost children, brothers, or fathers and have not gained any compensation. In her thorough analysis of the Srebrenica missing persons, Sarah Wagner amplifies the argument about ‘hierarchies of suffering’, the term coined by Petryna (2002) in an analysis of the post-Chernobyl relief actions and programs during which people were stratified according to various criteria of suffering. As Wagner points out, in post-war Bosnia, similar hierarchies have been developed and these draw new lines of tension and re-shape social relations first and foremost within communities, enclaves or villages themselves (Wagner 2008: 12). However, in the outlined context of mountain regions in central Bosnia, the categories of suffering that generate multiple tensions and differences between villagers themselves have not been imposed solely from the outside. On the contrary the tensions emerged from the agency of concrete co-neighbours during the war and after.

Hence, complex entanglements of the *sjelo* visits with the memories that are transformed into the ‘hierarchies and narratives of suffering’ hint at two broader issues concerning village sociality. Firstly, the *sjelo* visits in the mountains of central Bosnia are the moments during which moral imaginations and cultural intimacies are creatively cultivated. However, at times it may turn out to be a moment when *komšuluk* as a particular sphere of intimacy is thoroughly questioned and social distances between co-neighbours are recast. Secondly, the social life of memories and narratives reveals that trans-generational transmission of traumatic experiences is neither linear (Antze and Lambek 1996: xvi-xix; Loizos 2008: 147), nor inevitably associated with ‘ethnic hatred’

because the 1990s war is remembered painfully differently even within a Muslim mountain community.

The *sijelo* visits are not the only recognised interactions between close neighbours in the mountains. In the local economy of engagement, there are at least two other forms of interactions through which villagers get involved into the lifeworlds of their co-neighbours. These are *na slatko* and *na žalost* respectively (cf. Bringa 1995: 91-95). Unlike the *sijelo*, however, none of them is inevitably restricted by the symbolic boundaries of the neighbourhood. Those visiting patterns bear on the cultural language of the everyday multiple meanings, depending on the scale on which they are performed, whether this is within the boundaries of *komšiluk* or beyond. The *na slatko* and *na žalost* visits trace particular social dynamics and poetics, and both are associated with compassion rather than with the hospitality – guest relationships.

The *na slatko* (for sweet) interactions are related to any joyful occasion in everyday life within the neighbourhood, likewise celebratory events in one's life cycle. The latter instance might emanate beyond the symbolic boundaries of *komšiluk* and at times even *mahala*. Such occasions are for example the arrival of a new bride, a new born baby or a boy's circumcision.<sup>75</sup> The former expresses the sharing of happiness with one's co-neighbours. Everyday life in the mountains is an enduring stream of ups and downs, and every happy occasion is perceived as a blessing from Allah, that ought to be spread and shared with close neighbours. These are for example getting a job, selling or buying a cow or a lamb, or furnishing the house.

The visits *na žalost* (for sorrow), on the other hand, are associated with death or personal loss. The moment of death temporarily dissolves the symbolic boundaries as both *dženaza* (funeral) and subsequent *tevhid* (Islamic collective prayer for the souls of the dead) unite Muslims from the surrounding villages by and large (Picture 5.2). Nonetheless, it is the sphere of *komšiluk* that provides overall, enduring and unanimous support in order to cope with the loss and grief. The *na žalost* visit within the neighbourhood expresses one's compassion with one's co-neighbors. However, someone's death is not the only impulse to visit *na žalost*. This might also be after a daughter has left the house as a bride, which is, however, at same moment perceived as a moment of happiness in the groom's house

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<sup>75</sup> The name giving ritual *akika* is described in the previous chapter.

(cf. Bringa 1995: 93). Other sorrowful instances – such as injuries, damage to the house property caused by natural disasters, or loss of livestock – are the moments during which co-neighbors express their compassion, engagement and willingness to help and share the uneasy downs of life. Hence, *komšiluk* emerges as a specific sphere of intimacy, here understood as co-neighbours' mutual assurance of common sociality (cf. Herzfeld 1987, 1997).



Picture 5.2  
*Dženaza* (funeral) unites Muslims from surrounding villages

In the mountains of central Bosnia people often say the proverb ‘If my *komšija* is doing badly and I am doing well, I cannot be happy’. In saying so and living accordingly villagers neither pose an essentialised base for a (moral) community, nor any rigid boundaries. The very fact that co-neighbours care for each other day-by-day, and the ways they do so, creatively and continuously shape both *komšiluk* as a sphere of moral imagination and belonging, and particular social poetics associated with being a neighbour in mountain villages in central Bosnia. Hence, the neighbourhood embraces three social idioms, that is engagement, imagination and intimacy. Put in this way, both the house and *komšiluk* are very concrete intimate spaces of lived clarity.

In the mountains of central Bosnia the *komšiluk* is an extended social nest woven from face-to-face interactions in the immediate and proximate space of the neighborhood. Unlike Hayden’s and Bougarel’s interpretations of *komšiluk* outlined above, the neighbourliness in the villages entails both relationships based on proximity and social and emotional closeness. Cultural intimacy is multifaceted and cannot be narrowed down into inter-ethnic marriages only. The capacity of intimacy to relate people goes far

beyond marriage or kinship as Bougarel argues. Furthermore, Hayden's rather instrumental interpretation of *komšiluk* overlooks ethnographic comparison of cultural continuities, practices and forms of relatedness in rural communities in (Muslim) post-Ottoman western Eurasia (cf. Delaney 1991; Sorabji 2008; Stirling 1965) where *komšiluk* has historically been a cohesive space spanning between the house and the community. As Azmir-baba, a dervish sheikh and an amateur folklorist, put it during one of the countless conversations we had

‘what relationship between religion and *komšiluk*? That's nonsense, *komšiluk* has always been a matter of ordinary interpersonal relations (*medjuljudski odnosi*). The only everlasting poisoning problem for *komšiluk* has been envy between *komšije* (neighbours)’.

Thus, another facet of intimacy and mutual engagement that is negotiated in the sphere of neighbourhood is the enactment of social control between people living in proximity. A constant flow of various visits between houses and neighbours is also a process of information exchange and gossip in particular. As has been argued (cf. Gluckman 1963), gossiping ought to be conceived as a cultural practice by which morality and social poetics are channeled, negotiated and/or maintained. Nonetheless, *komšiluk* as an intimate sphere implicates rather a double-edged controlling process, that is, an enactment of social control and poetics, and on the other hand, it provides social protection and assistance. This might be well illustrated with the following vignette.

One November morning a message was spread in *Brdo* that in a neighbouring village a dead male body was found in a stream. The body had been highly decayed which meant that the man had perhaps already died a few weeks before. The response of the villagers was straightforward ‘why had nobody been looking for him? Where was his *komšiluk*? Why did nobody help him?’. These villagers' reactions are revealing. Here, the comments from the neighbourhood embraced both social control and protection. Moreover, the tragedy led villagers during the days after to reflect upon the changing character of social relations within *komšiluk* by and large. In conversations which followed immediately after the sad event in *Brdo*, likewise in other villages in the mountains I visited at the time, one theme recurred constantly, that is, a considerable metamorphosis of sociality in the mountains. Today, during conversations with Muslims in the mountains, everyday life is depicted as omnipresent carelessness, lack of mutuality and withdrawing from an engagement in local social relations. Therefore, let me zoom

in for a moment upon the argument about ‘the metamorphosis of sociality’ as I found it in villagers’ conversations. In doing so, I shall introduce another ethnographic nugget.

Spring period is for villagers a time of hard work on their fields. For those villagers who own any machines or working animals this period is extremely exhausting as they are frequently asked by neighbours from the *komšiluk* and *mahala* for ploughing. Once I witnessed a conversation during which the men were discussing for whom Zahid (a horse owner) was ploughing these days. He enumerated a couple of names, and added one more from the *komšiluk* who asked him for help as well. The last name, however, attracted the attention of young Mensur who immediately started making amusing comments about the family. In particular, he advised Zahid not to go because the family causes *sihiri* (sorcery). This was, however, a delicate comment. A few months earlier Zahid had to get rid of a seriously ill cow, and the causes of the cow’s illness was partially explained as a bewitchment. Moreover, the woman from the family which was now under Mensur’s accusations often comes for a coffee or short visits and chats to Zahid’s house, which is considered by many villagers as ‘bad manners’ (*ovo nevalja*), because women ought not walk too much around the village (*puno hodat po selu*). Therefore, Mensur was making a link between the previous events and the possible malevolence of the woman. However, Zahid immediately and straightforwardly replied that there is no way to refuse help to anybody from one’s own *komšiluk*. When Mensur tried to argue with Zahid, another young villager, Adis, shouted Mensur down: ‘shut up, Mensur, this is our *komšiluk*, and it’s worthwhile and good that there is still something like that, look at other villages around’.

Adis and Mensur are in their mid twenties and early thirties respectively. They embody two changing perceptions of *komšiluk* today. During my countless conversations over coffee with the youths in the mountains it very soon became clear that it is unlikely they would prefer to stay and live in the mountains in future. For many young people like Adis or Mensur their daydreams are elsewhere, namely in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo. Moreover, Mensur works in Sarajevo and does not devote his free time to socialising and engaging within the *komšiluk* very much. Furthermore, he has started to build a house in the Sarajevo suburbs. Contrarily, Adis still lives in the village with his family and despite his daydreams about getting a well-paid job one day, he and his family still rely on the *komšiluk*.

And here is the last strand that emerges from the conversations with Muslims in the mountains about the metamorphoses of sociality and neighbourliness. The village *Brdo* is nowadays facing similar problems to many other villages in the mountains of central Bosnia, that is, a constant outflow of people, and considerable depopulation due to migration. This is mainly caused by long-term loss of working opportunities in the region after the collapse of Yugoslavia, the 1990s war, and subsequent inefficient restoration of the socio-economic infrastructure. Consequently, socio-economic changes within the entire region have gone hand-in-hand with the processes of eroding the intra-village intimacies and withdrawing from intimate networks such as *komšiluk*. Indeed, similar processes in other rural corners of Eurasia have been described as a phenomenon of dying village communities (cf. Du Boulay 1974).

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The processes of the post-1989 social change in rural Bosnia have led people to deeply reassess their notions of *komšiluk* as a mode of ‘sociality within proximity’. Traditional duality of social relations and interplay between kinship and residence in mountain villages are melting. For those villagers who are withdrawing from the villages today and migrating to the cities, various kin-oriented forms of relatedness prevail over those that are proximity-oriented. Hence, this process poses a shift from concrete and localized intersubjectively shared lifeworlds towards more abstract and unbounded ways of belonging. Different ways of belonging to the neighbourhood generate and/or cultivate different social poetics and engagement as the reactions of Adis and Mensur illustrate. Moreover, the tragic story of the decayed body refers to similar processes. Indeed, the neighboring village where the body was found has already been facing massive withdrawal of its inhabitants in the last few years. And whenever people from Brdo discussed the neighboring village, they talked about the village ‘where many doors are locked’. I have already showed that the processes of human life and sociality are inextricably associated with the house (*kuća*), where the metaphor of ‘opened doors’ neatly captures relations and the processes of communal life and hospitality in the *komšiluk*. As one of the local proverbs eloquently puts it ‘first search for your neighbour and only then build a house’ (*prvo traži komšiju pa izbij kuću*). In so saying, any neighbourhood without opened doors would not be conceived of as worth living in.

As discussed above in the case of ‘hierarchies and narratives of suffering’ as well as later while discussing the metamorphosis of sociality, the *komšiluk* as a social form of ‘living in proximity’ has undergone considerable changes in the past two turbulent decades. Nonetheless, prevailing analytical perspectivism (e.g. Hayden 2002, 2007) conceives *komšiluk*, or neighbourliness as an imaginative grid through which relations between ethno-religious communities in Bosnia take shape and ought to be understood and expressed. However, such an exaggerated argument travels too far beyond the framework of how the neighbourhood is experienced and conceptualised in rural mountain communities in central Bosnia today. Here *komšiluk* expresses localised moral and intimate space of lived clarity.

## 6 *Halal money: mahala and spheres of moral economy*

In this chapter I continue to unpack the local symbolic and moral geographies, villagers' concerns and imaginations that are associated with the modes of 'living in proximity'. Here I am concerned with local notions, practices and processes located within the boundaries of *mahala* (Bosnian spelling). *Mahala*, a word of Arabic origin, means a quarter or hamlet that is part of either a rural or an urban residential setting. It is a socio-spatial category whereby villagers flatten proximate relations and persons in a particular way. In the mountains of central Bosnia, the *mahala* is conceived as an extension of the neighbourhood sphere.

In Brdo *mahala*, as a form of extended neighbourhood, is associated with two general social processes, that is, ritual and exchange. Whereas *komšilik* is the localised moral and intimate space of lived clarity, *mahala* results in reciprocal help, cooperative labour and giving sacrificed meat (*kurbani*) to neighbours. Put in this way, *mahala* is a sphere in which three large layouts of moral economy intersect. Firstly, the sphere of communal participation involving various forms of social exchange and interactions which are done cooperatively by villagers for communal interests. Secondly, the sphere of day-to-day exchange of help between neighbours or individual houses. However, I shall outline how the hitherto reciprocal processes and mutual relations have been disintegrated and reassembled in the past few decades. Thirdly, the sphere of ritual giving of sacrificed meat. In all three instances I analyse how the spheres of moral economy intersect with the process of 'living in proximity' and thus with the domain of space at large.

In order to unpack and contextualise the meanings of *mahala* as a sphere of social relations I primarily draw upon the debate that has arisen recently within the postsocialist studies of Central Asia. Nonetheless, I do not intend to cast the comparative net too widely. Here I hope that this debate might help us to shed light on the domain of extended neighbourhood. Then, I describe the *mahala* processes, such as ritual, exchange, and relatedness, in the mountains of central Bosnia. Furthermore, I am concerned with the core spheres and processes by which *mahala* gains its meanings for villagers through attending ethnographically to people's actions and interactions, intentions and concerns, narratives and experiences. These are: the spheres of

communal participation, the ideas about *halal* exchange and a detailed extended case study of the *kurban bajram* feast.

## **6.1 Mahala: an overview**

*Mahala* has become a serious matter of concern within the field of anthropology relatively recently (e.g. Kandiyoti and Azimova 2004; Rasanayagam 2002, 2009). Although there are some cross-cultural similarities (i.e. a territorially-based quarter), the meaning has always been equally shaped by both the culturally specific context and the rural and urban settings respectively. So for example according to Brill's *Encyclopedia of Islam*, *mahalla* (turkish spelling) was the term commonly used in Ottoman administration for a residential quarter. However, the Ottoman administrative system recognised various kinds of delimitation for *mahalla*. These were for example a group of co-residents assembled around a place for praying and local religious authority; or based on ethnic designations, or occupation, and very often with a strong sense of corporate identity.

The ethnographic importance of *mahalla* was acknowledged by Stirling (1965) in his classic study of a Turkish peasant village. Stirling writes about the division of the village into a number of quarters (pl. *mahalle*) and more importantly about people's loyalty to their respective *mahalla* (cf. Stirling 1965: 26). Similar arguments were made by Delaney (1991: 107) in her account of a Turkish village in the 1980s; and by Bellér-Hann and Hann (2001: 46) in a rural region in costal North-Eastern Turkey, although the latter authors refer to *mahalla* interchangeably as also an immediate neighborhood (2001: 107).

Similarly, a historical anthropological analysis in Central Asia shows that *mahalla* embraced the ideas of neighborhood and residence. As Geiss (2001: 97-102) illustrates, the processes of Islamisation of Central Asian societies replaced *adat* (customary tradition) in favour of the principles of Islamic law. This shift from kin-based customs towards residential rules also gradually recast people's communal commitments, framed henceforth within the Islamic legal framework, and introduced *mahalla* as an important idiom of moral geography. Likewise, in mountainous areas in Central Asia, as Poliakov argues, the neighbourhood clusters (*mahalle*) operate according to residential rather than kinship-oriented logic (Poliakov 1992: 76).

Perhaps the most thorough arguments have been made by Kandiyoti and Azimova (2004), and Rasanayagam (2002, 2009) in the context of postsocialist Uzbekistan. Doubtlessly, *mahalla* as a spatial form of organisation emerged long ago before the Soviet state took over control in the region. However, in the nationalist enterprise of the newly independent Uzbek state, the *mahalla* has become both a part of the new national ideology and a state administrative tool through which the state's governmentality is enacted and power appropriated over Uzbek citizens. Put in this way, *mahalla* has been wedged into the relationship between the state and local communities (see Rasanayagam 2009). Nonetheless, it continues to be the backbone of associational life and a sphere of day-to-day commitments of neighbours living in one *mahalla* which then 'constitutes the immediate context of a daily life punctuated by participation in the celebration of important life events, religious feasts and national holidays' (Kandiyoti and Azimova 2004: 336).

In his eloquent description Rasanayagam defines *mahalla* thus

On one level this is a territorially defined residential district of a town or a village, and it also serves as model for a moral community (...) [t]he *mahalla* as a moral frame incorporates an ideal of mutual aid and communal solidarity among residents, practically realized in the contribution of labour to common projects and the marking of life cycle events, and is overlaid with Muslim religious identity (Rasanayagam 2009: 103).

This depiction, however generalised, is not simplistic, on the contrary, and I shall build upon it over the following pages. Unlike in Uzbekistan *mahala* does not form any administrative unit in Bosnia-Herzegovina today. Nevertheless, it continues to be a part of the everyday lexicon used in rural as well as urban residential settings. Like many other spheres of Muslim social life in Bosnia-Herzegovina, *mahala* has also not attracted the wider attention of scholarly production. In her account of a Bosnian village Bringa (1995: 54) argues that apart from the category of *komšiluk* the inhabitants of the village conceptualised the place as consisting of several *mahale* (pl.), and that within the village a villager would probably refer to his *mahala* as a sphere of belonging, loyalty and localised identity. Likewise, Lockwood in his ethnography of the valley Skoplje Polje and the village Planinica in particular, described the village as consisting of three *mahale* which seemed to be a form of 'neighbourhood groupings on a larger scale' (1975: 65).

Lockwood identified that *mahala* is an important sphere of communal life and interactions with consensually conceived boundaries in which residence was a driving force in people's moral imagination about/of belonging (ibid.: 65, 111). Finally, in her thorough reassessment of Bosnian neighborhood relations (i.e. *komšiluk*) Sorabji (2008) argues that the word *mahala* is nowadays more likely to be used in negative formulations. In particular, it is associated with the spreading of gossip and gossiping in general (ibid.: 100). Whereas Sorabji is right that Bosniaks may refer to a gossip-spreading person as *mahaluše* and to gossiping generally as *mahalanje*, she underplays other meanings associated with *mahala*. In rural areas neither *komšiluk* nor *mahala* can be easily separated from one another as both are embedded in and derived from the local face-to-face communal interactions and relations, and both social idioms importantly shape symbolic geographies and moral imagination in mountainous villages.

## **6.2 Mahala in the mountains of central Bosnia**

In previous chapters I outlined the historical development of Brdo and the key social and economic processes that shaped the village as well as the entire region. I showed that demographic development in the village and access to economic capital accelerated fission of property and profoundly recast the domestic domain at large. Villagers explained to me that in the late 1980s the number of houses increased up to the number at which an equal exchange of sacrificed meat during *kurban bajram* feast became impossible unless each house would sacrifice two rams at least. Therefore, villagers made a unanimous communal decision and redrew the symbolic geography of Brdo. The village was thus divided into two *mahale*, the lower (*donja*) and upper (*gornja*) respectively. Ever since, the exchange of *kurbani* has been organised within these symbolic boundaries. However, as I shall illustrate shortly *mahala* boundaries replicate by and large the spheres of day-to-day cooperation and interactions.

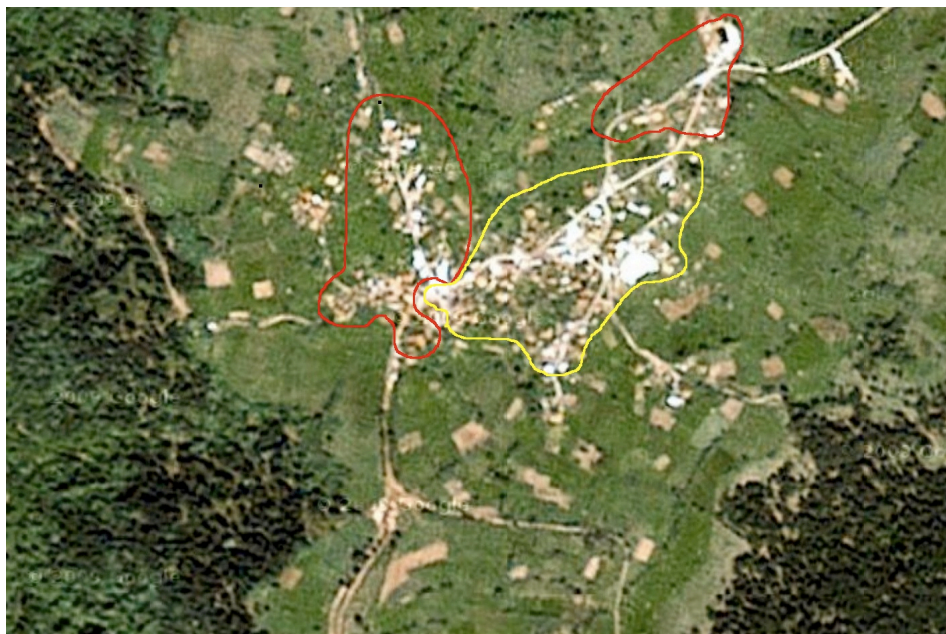
During my conversations with elder males in the mountains I became interested in how individual actors come to an understanding of the multiple spheres of exchange and boundaries of belonging associated with *mahala*. As my interlocutors repeatedly told me

‘Here in the villages the boundaries of *mahala* have always been re-enacted during *kurban bajram*. *Mahala* is just delimited by the

houses where people give *kurbani*. This is how people know which *mahala* they belong to, that's where they give *kurbani*'

The two *mahale* (pl.) in Brdo consist of 35 in the *gornja* (upper) and 39 hearths in the *donja* (lower) respectively. Although the boundaries of *mahala* are ritually re-drawn annually during the *kurban bajram* feast, they gain lived clarity by day-to-day events and processes. In particular, an exchange of work labour and mutual help flows primarily within the boundaries of respective *mahala*. Whereas *komsiluk* is a sphere of immediate neighborhood based on a close proximity, intimacy and loyalty, *mahala* is a sphere of extended neighborhood based on assistance and reciprocity cemented by the ritual.

The *gornja mahala* in which I lived, consists of four agnatic groups divided into 32 houses assembling 35 hearths and 127 individuals. However, the symbolic boundaries of the *mahala* have been redrawn again in the past two decades during which five of the houses were built beyond the physical boundaries of the quarter, simply by virtue of the fact that there was no free space to build up there. Nonetheless, the houses are still considered by villagers as being part of the *gornja mahala*, and there is a continuous flow of visits, mutual help and exchange of *kurbani* between both parts (Map 6.1).



Map 6.1  
Spatial and symbolic boundaries of the village *mahala* (source: ©Google maps)

Indeed, let me repeat Rasanayagam's argument concerning *mahala* again: it is a moral frame incorporating an ideal of mutual aid and communal solidarity that is overlaid

with Muslim religious identity (2009: 103). Hence, unlike *komšiluk*, *mahala* does not necessarily match with geographies of physical proximity. The sphere of extended neighbourhood is first and foremost interwoven from creative interplay between social interactions and moral imagination. In other words, *mahala* is a particular ‘moral frame’ (cf. Rasanaygam 2009) of sociality and proximity, and as such it considerably shapes moral geographies of Muslims’ lifeworlds in the mountains of central Bosnia, which I shall unwrap now.

### **6.3. Communal participation: beyond *mahala***

In the previous chapter, likewise here, I show that the processes of social exchange and moral economy at large have been described as taking place primarily in the spheres of *komšiluk* and extended neighbourhood (*mahala*). Nonetheless, in Brdo there are several instances during which the importance of spatial and symbolic boundaries weakens, and all of which can be subsumed under the umbrella of collective communal cooperative work known in the mountains as *akcija*. In many respects *akcija* as conceived in Brdo is not dissimilar from Bringa’s description, that is, a form of social exchange and interaction which involves any voluntary cooperative work done by villagers for communal interests (Bringa 1995: 70). Similarly, Lockwood (1975: 108-109) described the village communal projects as moments during which the village as a community emerges.

In Brdo, whenever there were some problems with the village roads, cleaning the local *dovišće* (the outdoor sacred site for rain prayers) or repairing the village mosque, older male villagers usually argued ‘*trebalo bi akciju*’ (it would need an *akcija*). The processes of negotiation and organising such collective enterprises usually take place in or around the village grocery shop where male villagers regularly gather; at times in the village mosque, or on Fridays when the majority of male villagers travel to the municipal town and where they usually meet in *kafanas* (coffeehouses). Indeed, these places are a particular sphere of interaction at the communal level, and their significance in the Mediterranean context has been widely described in various ways (e.g. Bringa 1995; Halpern and Halpern 1972; Herzfeld 1985; Lockwood 1975). Furthermore, as Herzfeld pointed out, the coffeehouse is a political arena and hence it provides valuable insights into social intimacy, horizontal ties and divisions at village level, into local social

networks, politicking and the formation of a village's cliques. Contrarily to such public negotiations of collective enterprise by men, women decide and organise *akcija*, such as cleaning the village mosque before upcoming religious feasts, during coffee visits in their houses.



Picture 6.1

*Akcija* in Brdo: fencing the village mosque (left), the piping of springwater (right)

There is considerable social pressure to participate in communal cooperative work (cf. Bringa: 70; Lockwood 1975: 108). Although people's participation in *akcija* is considered as voluntary activity, any communally organised work in rural Bosnia is embraced within particular moral conduct as well as social poetics and control. Hence, during everyday conversations villagers in Brdo often argued *valja ići* (it's good to go) whenever debating whether to attend *akcija*. People's involvement in communal projects entwines the instances during which moral persons as well as the unity of the house are publicly self-displayed (Picture 6.1). Put in this way, (non)participation in any communal enterprise is constantly under scrutiny, and becomes at times a source of gossip, shame or dishonour between other villagers.

#### **6.4 Cooperation and mutuality: *Mahala* as multiplied spheres of moral economy**

I started with the argument that *mahala* is a sphere in which three large layouts of moral economy intersect. Here I define moral economy as a scale of cultural meanings and moral reasoning employed by Muslims in the mountains in various processes of transactions. These need to be understood broadly as embracing circulation, exchange,

giving, (re)distribution, production and consumption within particular regimes of value (cf. Parry and Bloch 1989).<sup>76</sup>

The exchange of mutual help is an inevitable part of everyday life in the mountains of central Bosnia (also Bringa 1995: 70). It varies between individual houses and persons in extent, form and timing, as well as dependency on others. Whereas villagers in Brdo can easily find an emotional shelter and support within the intimate spheres of close neighbourhood (*komšiluk*), they often need to search for help for any other particular tasks in the circuit of an extended neighbourhood (*mahala*). These day-to-day instances of micropoetics of cooperation and mutual assistance are not dissimilar from what has been coined by Sahlins (1974) as generalised reciprocity. Any help between neighbours is performed unanimously and its return is expected in a (non)articulated future. Put in this way, reciprocity as the core form of social exchange between neighbours is embedded within the domain of moral economy.

#### **6.4.1 Komšiluk and cooperation**

In their ethnographies from rural Bosnia, both Bringa (1995) and Lockwood (1975) described the forms of cooperation similarly. Firstly, there is informal assistance between neighbours; and secondly, a labour exchange and voluntary cooperative work known in rural Bosnia as the *moba*. In the previous chapter, I described various forms of intimate and informal assistance in the flow of everyday sociality between women, and partially men, within *komšiluk*. In doing so, I introduced the distinction between affective and effective forms of interaction with particular emphasis on the former, but I argued that one cannot be separated from another. Hence, let me continue with the second half of this argument.

In Brdo mutual help between close neighbours as well as larger corporate cooperative activities are today associated mainly with hay making (Lockwood 1975: 109-112). For example, when in late July 2008, the villager Nusret was ill and could not make hay in one of his meadows, the males from Nusret's *komšiluk* got together one afternoon and in

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<sup>76</sup> The idea of moral economy is one of those in social theory, as well as in anthropology, that bears multiple understandings. It would go beyond the scope of this chapter to trace a genealogy of the concept. Nonetheless, here the moral economy is understood similarly to what Parry and Bloch (1989) outlined as morality of exchange rather than the framework introduced by James Scott (1976) in the context of South Asian peasantry.

two and half hours the meadow was cut. Later it was explained to me that this was real *moba* (*prava moba*). The event itself, however, was also highly orchestrated moral conduct as I shall illustrate in the following thick description of the event.

About 4.30pm Nermin and Zakir started carefully sharpening their scythes by hammer. Both did it similarly, used the same tools, slowly and precisely. As I observed later during the cutting, all men paid particular attention to their scythes. Fahir said that his scythe is more than 25 years old, and later I heard how nowadays smiths are not capable of make such good scythes as in the past. When Zakir finished sharpening, he asked me what the time was; '5pm', I replied. It was time to go. Several other male neighbours were already waiting with their scythes. We crossed several other fields and meadows. Zakir showed me his meadow with two already made haystacks. Nusret's meadow was a bit further down, quite large and hilly. After an obligatory conversation and cigarette three men had started to cut the grass, and three other neighbours came later. Their movement was coordinated and they worked really fast (Picture 6.2). Every half an hour there was a short break to smoke a cigarette; men shared cigarettes with one another. Nonetheless after two and half hours the meadow was cut. During the breaks the men also discussed why not to use a tractor for hay making. *Ovo nevalja* (it is not good) is their conclusion. In fact, the main reason is the hilly topography of the landscape in Brdo. Hence any flattened piece of land is preferably used as a field for vegetable production. Afterwards, Nusret invited the men *na kahvu* (to drink coffee). When they came and sat in the shadow of the veranda, Nusret's wife, Sabira, immediately brought coffee, water and later plates and some other cold drinks. After a few *filđžans* of coffee, Sabira served bean soup with home made bread; then she served chicken and potatoes, filled peppers with minced meat and rice, and at the end some sweet baklava. As they ate, the men also talked about *mevlud* and about the opening of some new mosques nearby. Then, the men thanked Nusret for the food and went home. While the men were leaving (after one and a half hours), Nusret repeatedly thanked them for their help and emphasised that this was *sevap*<sup>77</sup> that his neighbours did today.

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<sup>77</sup> The word *sevap* could be roughly translated as a good deed that acquires merit in Allah's sight, and hence it is a kind of moral conduct of Muslim persons.



Picture 6.2

*Moba - cooperative work and unanimous help between neighbours*

A thick description of the *moba* neatly snapshots and zooms in for an embeddedness of the social poetics, moral conduct and imagination associated with the local notions of mutuality and ‘living in proximity’. However, any analysis of cooperation and social exchange ought to be more than a collection of anecdotal individual case studies. Therefore, let me scale up the cooperation between persons during the hay making period to the *komšiluk* level. In doing so, the data about the exchange of help were obtained by direct surveying and participating during the haymaking process itself in summer 2009. Subsequently, I formalised the data into the actor-by-actor matrix<sup>78</sup> (Fig 6.1):

	15	9	8	5	4	7	10	30
15	–	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
9	2.0	–	1.0	4.0	0.0	1.0	5.0	1.0
8	0.0	0.0	–	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
5	0.0	0.0	0.0	–	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
4	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	–	0.0	1.0	0.0
7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	–	0.0	0.0
10	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	–	1.0
30	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	–

Figure 6.1

Hay making actor-by-actor data matrix (where the number expresses *n* of help)

The actor-by-actor data matrix that I gained while studying mutual help between neighbours during the hay making season and its visualisation (Figure 6.2) add another perspective on the idiom of ‘living in proximity’. The data shows that a significant

<sup>78</sup> The numbers with the grey background {15, 9, 8, 5, 4, 7, 10, 30} represent the houses from the map of *mahala* and *komšiluk* (Map 5.1). The numbers in rows express *n* of help (events) to particular neighbours.

number of houses (8/12) are somehow involved into the processes of social exchange and help during the hay making period. As the network model illustrates, the neighbourhood emerges here as a prime sphere of mutuality and cooperation.



Figure 6.2  
Network model of mutual help within the *komšiluk*

Interestingly, the network model of mutual help supports the argument I made that the boundaries of *komšiluk* are conceived highly consensually by villagers. Nonetheless, any possible overlaps as well as the peripheral and core zones of relatedness within a neighbourhood can be determined from the network model as well. As the hay making case study indicates, 4 houses of 12 were not involved. Does this mean that the four houses (nr. 14, 13, 11, 6) are anyhow peripheral within the neighbourhood or even excluded? Cooperation and involvement in the neighbourhood are a form of generalised reciprocity, and hence not always reciprocated immediately. Indeed, the form of social exchange between neighbours that is presented here can be simply expressed as a formula ' $n \cong 1$ ' or ' $0 > 1$ ' respectively, where the former means inclusion into, and the later exclusion of an actor from the processes of exchange. However, an example of hay making also seems to be too narrow to answer such a question.

Neither is hay making the only form of social exchange, nor is it the most important one in the mountains today due to the profound change in ways of livelihood. Only those villagers who own any mechanisation or working animals continue to be often asked for help, and hence they are more likely to participate in the exchange of help and other forms of cooperation. Therefore, the network of social exchanges needs to be more nuanced and so let me scale up the network again. Here, I introduce an actor-centered network supplemented by other transactions which were collected by virtue of the snowball effect. In doing so, exchanges that are included into the data sample cover a larger time scale. The interactions were recorded gradually between late October 2008 and early April 2009 (i.e. winter period). During this period (nearly 6 months) I gathered data about 350 events of various kinds of interactions within the spheres of close and extended neighbourhood. Although a large portion of the sample is an actor-centered perspective<sup>79</sup> mainly from one house's point of view, the sample embraces extended data about interactions within the entire neighbourhood. Firstly, let me present the data of social exchanges within *komšiluk* (Figure 6.3). Secondly, the data are zoomed out and both *komšiluk* and extended neighbourhood (*mahala*) are included (Figure 6.5).

	9	5	8	7	10	4	14	6	30	15	13	11
9	–	23.0	3.0	10.0	31.0	13.0	1.0	10.0	15.0	5.0	0.0	12.0
5	12.0	–	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	0.0	2.0	3.0	1.0	0.0	2.0
8	8.0	3.0	–	0.0	2.0	1.0	3.0	1.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
7	9.0	0.0	1.0	–	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
10	31.0	5.0	2.0	0.0	–	0.0	0.0	1.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	20.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	–	3.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	0.0	1.0
14	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	–	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
6	7.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	–	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
30	24.0	4.0	1.0	1.0	9.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	–	0.0	0.0	2.0
15	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	–	0.0	0.0
13	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	–	0.0
11	11.0	6.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	–

Figure 6.3  
Actor-by-actor data matrix of interactions within the *komšiluk*

Here the matrix formalises the social exchanges between houses within the *komšiluk*. It shows that all houses (12/12) are somehow involved. Hence, it turned out that the time

<sup>79</sup> Here, by actor-centered I mean house-centered. Hence, interactions of men and women are presented together as any conduct and agency of persons is always associated with the moral unity of the house (for this argument see chapter four).

factor in collecting such relational data is crucial. In other words, inclusion into the neighbourhood networks can be then expressed as  $i(t) = n \geq 1$ .<sup>80</sup> Therefore, let me unpack the four houses (nr. 14, 13, 11, 6) that did not appear in the previous matrix in order to see how their interactions might look in the flow of the day-to-day events if the time factor is included:

<b>14</b>		<b>13</b>		<b>11</b>		<b>6</b>	
visited	were visited	visited	were visited	visited	were visited	visited	were visited
1	7	2	0	18	17	10	15

Social network analysis employed in any anthropological enterprise needs to be always embedded ethnographically (Schweizer 1997). Here, two (14, 13) of the four houses seem to be still less involved in the processes of social exchange within the neighbourhood compared to the rest (Figure 6.4). However, house 13 is considered by villagers as being closely associated with house 7 and forming one hearth (*kuća*).<sup>81</sup> Therefore an involvement of the two within *komsiluk* needs to be understood as ' $i(t) = n$  {nr. 7+13}  $\geq 1$ '. House 14 is consensually considered by other neighbours as participating less.

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<sup>80</sup> In this formula  $i$  (involvement) means the sum of  $n$  (number of interactions) with respect to  $t$  (time).

<sup>81</sup> These two houses have a square symbol in the network diagram in order to highlight their conjunction.

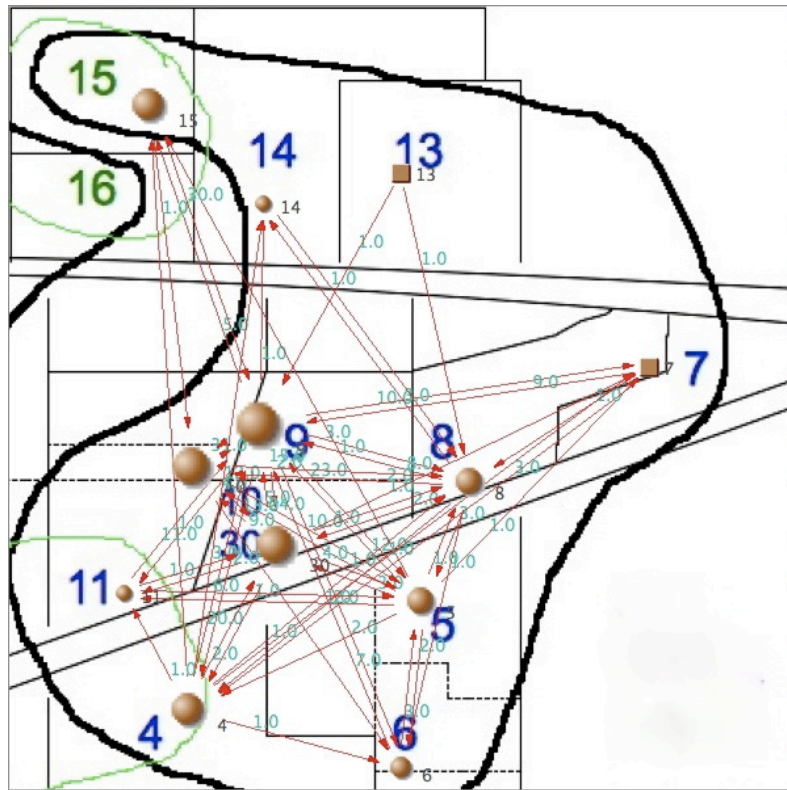


Figure 6.4  
A network model of the *komšiluk*

This formal expression of social exchanges within *komšiluk* reveals three important moments. Firstly, the network analysis overcomes the narrowness of the anecdotal ethnographic snapshots. It is certainly true that cooperative work known in rural Bosnia as *moba* has been an important part of social exchange within the spheres of neighbourhood. Nonetheless, it ought not to be considered as a prototypical example of cooperation or mutuality today when the ways of livelihood changed and people do not rely solely on agricultural production. Despite this, *komšiluk* needs to be considered by and large as an ongoing and emerging form of sociality that is interwoven from day-to-day and face-to-face interactions of people in the immediate and proximate space of the neighbourhood. Secondly, a longitudinal systematic recording of various social exchanges and interactions shows that constructing and maintaining the symbolic boundaries of the *komšiluk* are indeed conceived consensually as an emerged domain of sociality. Thirdly, network analysis helps to identify that there might be central and peripheral spheres of relatedness within the neighbourhood domain.

### 6.4.2 Mahala

In the mountains of central Bosnia *mahala* is primarily conceived as a sphere of mutual assistance and help, that is cemented by ritual exchanges. Different modes of sociality within extended neighbourhoods are interwoven with particular temporal rhythms. While exploring these modes of interactions and social exchanges I was focused on the two main annual periods that punctuate the rhythms of everyday life in Brdo. Firstly, the winter period, during which an exchange of mutual help is less demanding and villagers are involved in cultivating affective relations in particular. Secondly, the summer period when cooperation and help are needed, and as such villagers are involved mainly in the effective networks of cooperation.

During the period between October and early April (i.e. winter period), when mutual help is less demanding, the sphere of extended neighbourhood embraces idioms of hospitality and neighbourhood visits. Therefore, I also decided to record any events within the extended neighbourhood of *gornja mahala* systematically. Here, the network compounds actor-oriented relations and interactions within *mahala*, yet it embraces other snowballed information about interactions I encountered during the given period (approximate 6 months of systematic recording).<sup>82</sup> The matrix of events as collected on a day-to-day basis shows that *mahala* is for the house, from which perspective the sample was mainly taken, as well as for others from the *komšiluk*, a very important sphere of interactions and social exchanges. The sphere of extended neighbourhood as seen from this perspective assembled 34 actors (houses); and as the visualisation indicates only 4 of 34 actors were not from *gornja mahala* (Figure 6.5).<sup>83</sup> Thus, the network perspective sheds light on a variety of modalities of sociality within the extended neighbourhood during the winter period. These interactional events were primarily conducted as coffee visits of various kinds and including *sijelo*, *na žalost* and *na slatko* visits as well. However, the visits within the extended neighbourhood are conducted mainly as orchestrated performances of the local etiquette of hospitality rather than as an expression of compassionate

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<sup>82</sup> Since its outset, social network analysis posed methodological issues in respect to data collection. As Mitchell already pointed out several decades ago ‘the use of questionnaires to collect information in relation to social networks on a large scale seems to have been only partially successful’ (1974: 295). In an ethnographic enterprise the only solution then seems to be to record data systematically during fieldwork. This might produce a limited sample in terms of scale and breadth of a network, nonetheless, with in-depth insights.

<sup>83</sup> Ritual relations and interactions shall be introduced shortly, and are not included into the data set here as they pose a particular moral conduct.

relationships as would be in the case among close neighbours (see the previous chapter).<sup>84</sup> Therefore, the *mahala* and *komšiluk* are not entirely alike, and an extended neighbourhood as a scale of social interactions and exchanges emerges here as a particular sphere of local moral geographies, imagination and belonging.

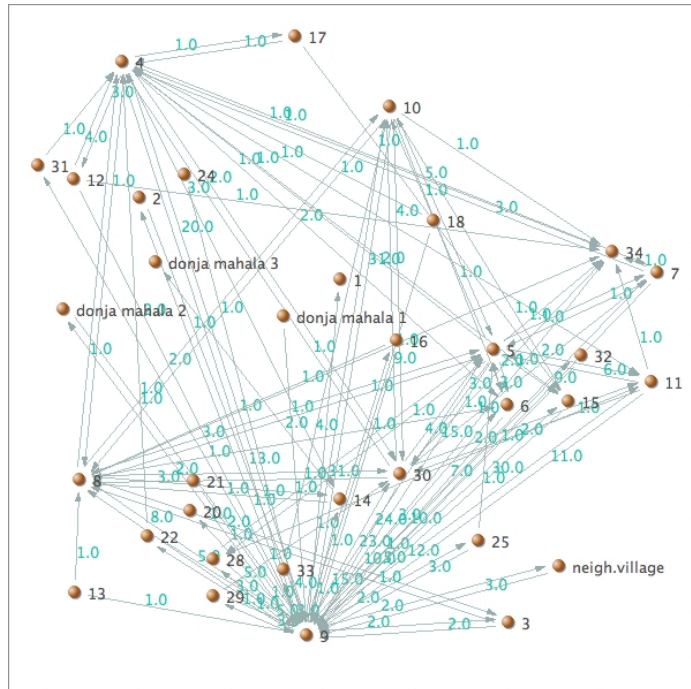


Figure 6.5

A network model of interactions within *mahala* as observed from an actor's (nr. 9) point of view during the winter period

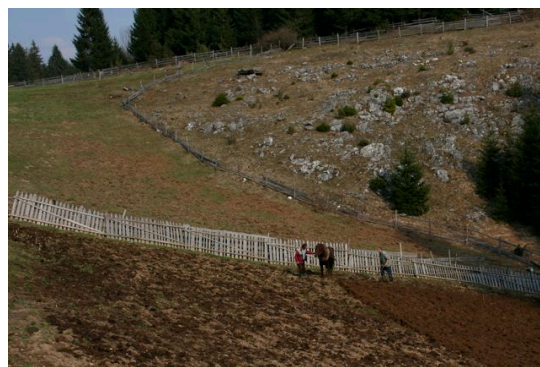
Interactions during the early (April - May) and late summer period (September - early October), as I observed<sup>85</sup> occur with similar frequency in both *gornja mahala* as well as *donja mahala*. This is the time when mutual help - specifically ploughing, fencing the fields, and preparing firewood - are highly in demand (Picture 6.3). Nonetheless, the exchange of help rarely extends beyond the symbolic boundaries of the respective *mahala*.

The everyday processes, actions and particular flows of sociality tacitly reenact the symbolic boundaries within the village. Bourdieu's (1990) notions on the generative logic of social actions and forms are not entirely irrelevant here in regard to perception of the

<sup>84</sup> As described in the previous chapter, I never encountered the 'narratives of suffering' during the visits between two *mahala* neighbours, and the conversation themes were rather focused on harvest, animals or family relations.

<sup>85</sup> I did not undertake any systematic recording as I spent two summer periods in the mountains (April 2008, and from June 2008 to late September 2009), and hence the reliability of my participant observation was sufficiently saturated.

village as a symbolic space. As Bourdieu countlessly argued, through internalisation and replication, particular social forms are objectified. Nonetheless, these forms are always intersubjective social constructions and their ‘objectified nature’ needs to be constantly re-made through everyday practice. Put in this way, symbolic boundaries and moral geographies of *mahala* in the way that they are imagined, considered and enacted in the village, are constantly being re-made through an interplay between individual agency and objectification of social space.



Picture 6.3

Exchange of help

Cooperation

During the conversations between Muslims in the mountains the word *mahala* is not used with the same frequency as *komšiluk*. In everyday conversations *mahala* is stated as a serious matter of concern in reference to ritual in two ways. Firstly, it is associated with the *kurban bajram* feast. As I have already quoted above, villagers explained to me that ‘the boundaries of *mahala* in the villages have always been re-enacted during *kurban bajram*’. Secondly, the time of Ramadan is a moment during which the symbolic boundaries of extended neighbourhoods emerge and are explicitly discussed and experienced again. At the time the Imam (*hodža*), who otherwise is not permanently settled in the village, stays as a guest in Brdo for the whole month in people’s houses. In doing so, the *hodža* usually attempts to move between both *mahale* (pl.) regularly and in a balanced way, and maintains the boundaries as well.

So here are the three modalities of sociality in the extended neighbourhood. These are associated with the etiquette of hospitality, an exchange of help, and ritual performance and relations, yet entangled with distinct temporal rhythms of everyday life in the mountains. Let me recall for a moment Rasanayagam’s depiction of *mahala* again.

According to this argument, *mahala* as a moral frame embraces mutual help and communal solidarity as overlaid with Muslim religious identity at the levels of both moral conduct and imagination, as well as practice. However, as has been shown throughout these two chapters, the sphere of extended neighbourhood needs to be understood as a moral and spatial domain respectively. Therefore, in what follows I will explore the moral reasonings that underline the processes of social exchange within the sphere of extended neighbourhood. In particular, I analyse the local notions and practices assembled around the idiom of *halal* exchange.

### **6.5 *Halal* money and the morality of exchange**

Any form of exchange of help between persons in the mountains is performed as a form of generalised reciprocity. In practice, the actual enactments and forms of reciprocity are multiple, relative and situational (Sahlins 1974: 192ff). Moreover, the multiplicity of reciprocal forms is scaled up by virtue of social distance or intimacy between involved actors. Sahlins (*ibid.*: 196-204) relates social distance to kinship-residential grouping in the processes and forms of exchange. However, in the mountains of central Bosnia, as has been argued throughout the thesis, kinship and residence (i.e. spatiality) need to be understood as two different vectors of relatedness. Therefore, it is the domain of space rather than kinship that drives and multiples the forms of exchange in the spheres of *komšiluk* and *mahala*.

Villagers often explained to me the meaning of mutual help between close neighbours by using the proverb '*danas ti meni i sustra ja tebi*' (today you will help me, and tomorrow I will help you). Such micropoetics of mutuality between neighbours shapes local discourses and strong sentiments on equality, and any imposition of superiority is publicly conceived of as dishonourable. Indeed, in the previous chapter I described the moment when two young villagers had an argument over whether to help a neighbour from the *komšiluk* or not, and what kind of sentiments this dispute provoked. Contrarily, the elder villagers always highlighted that *valja ići* (it's good to go) when envisaging any help to a close neighbour.

It is rather unusual to encounter an immediately reciprocal transaction between villagers in the mountains that would fit neatly into the framework outlined by the local proverb.

An exception is the hay making season during which mutual help is reciprocated almost immediately. However, the *moba* as a particular form of balanced cooperation and exchange of help convenes only a very restricted domain of sociality and interactions. Moreover, this form of mutual exchange is situated primarily in the *komšilik* networks, and hence it encompasses a particular intimacy, moral imagination and poetics of involvement.

A half century of dramatic transformations of the Bosnian countryside profoundly recast the modes of livelihood in the villages. The conduct of subsistence farming was gradually replaced by a dual economy integrating both participation in the (post)socialist wage labour market as well as in the house economy. However, as a result of these changes the modes of livelihood, the spheres of cooperation between neighbours as well as forms of exchange, underwent considerable transmutation. The notions on mutuality and an ongoing balanced exchange were reframed. What underlies by and large the morality of exchange in the mountains of central Bosnia today is the *halal* category. The idiom of *halal* exchange is not necessarily localised within the symbolic boundaries of *komšilik* and *mahala*, as it concerns any exchange between persons in the mountains. However, in the case of social exchange between persons living in proximity the *halal* category flattens various transactions into the frame of generalised reciprocity. Indeed, I have described the three main layouts of moral economy that intersect with the idioms and practices of 'living in proximity'. These are encompassed within the moral frame of social exchange within *mahala*. The moral frame of exchange between neighbours emerges from a duality that underpins the symbolic world of transactions by and large. Most social transactions between Muslim persons in the mountains are understood as a form of *halal* exchange.

Here I draw upon Parry's and Bloch's (1989) argument on the two general transactional orders, that is, the short term and the long-term transactional orders respectively. The former is concerned with the arena of the everyday and the individual, the later with the reproduction of enduring social and cosmic order (1989: 24). Put in this way, the *halal* category mediates the two orders. The category of *halal* is derived from Islamic cosmology. Hence, it reproduces the cosmological order as it is conceived in the mountains of central Bosnia. However, it is also entwined with the *mahala* that is understood as a moral frame of everyday social exchanges and transactions. It informs the moral conduct of persons in the flow of everyday transactions, as well as ritual

exchanges. Therefore, the logic of *halal* exchange emerges from the outlined duality of the two transactional orders.

### **6.5.1 Halal exchange**

In Brdo people always used the word *halal* in the course of their transactions. This was puzzling at the outset of my research as the term is in many lay discourses usually associated with Muslims' food taboos, requiring that meat must be slaughtered accordingly. However, the category of *halal* is broader and generally associated with any actions or objects that are authorised to be used or done in agreement with Islamic law and orthodoxy. As such, *halal* (permissible) always stands in relation to *haram* (forbidden) category. Hence, *halal* is in the flow of everyday transactions an important rhetorical, moral and classificatory category that leads to particular actions, and neatly situates entities, relations and exchange between Muslim persons into the framework of villagers' conceptions of Islamic cosmology.

In the local Muslims' lexicons *halal* is one of the core terms of moral economy. *Halal* is all but utterance. It is a moral performance. When one villager had taken care of a hay meadow of one of his brothers who moved out from the village, he paid his brother for hay anyway. He explained to me later that perhaps he could choose not to pay, but it was *halal*, and that is how things ought to be. Or, whenever someone's cow is pregnant or is suckling a newborn calf, neighbours supply the house with milk during the period. This was also the case of Remza whom I followed when she went to negotiate with old Resula over how an extra supply of milk ought be paid back. Resula just said 'you don't need to give us anything. If we need something, we will tell you; and if we don't, then it's *halal*'. As these instances illustrate, affective and effective relations, during which various forms of social exchange emerge and take shape, between persons living in proximity cannot be clearly separated from one another.

The *halal* category overcasts the morality of exchange among Muslims in the mountains. It underlies the morality of generalised reciprocity between persons and flattens social exchange into symmetrical forms. Hence it prevents transactions from becoming asymmetrical, that is, *haram*-like. Here let me outline the logic of the *halal* morality of exchange (Figure 6.6).

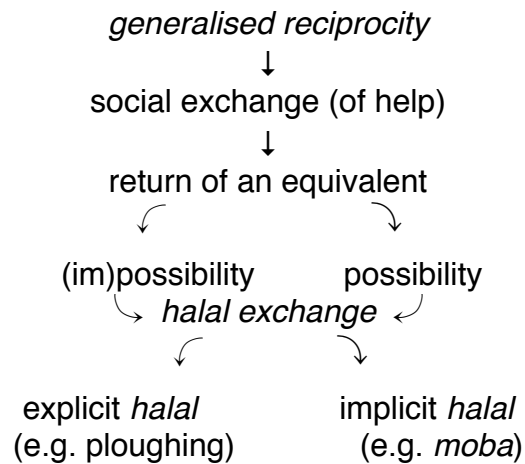


Figure 6.6  
Generalised scheme of the *halal* exchange

As has been argued, the spheres of exchange are multiple and range from hospitality and ritual giving of sacrificed meat, to help between neighbours. Nonetheless, the *halal* comes chiefly into play and is properly expressed during any exchange when the return is located in an inarticulate future. The sources of inarticulateness are twofold. It is an impossibility to return as such. Or, it is the issue of equivalency, and namely an incommensurability of transactional orders during particular exchanges. Let me elaborate the latter point further.

Firstly, any exchange during which the possibility of return is known, is conceived and conducted as the mode of *implicit halal*. So for example *moba* or other cooperative work usually results in mutual exchange of help and *halal* is often not even uttered (hence the local proverb ‘today you will help me, and tomorrow I will help you’).

Secondly, there are instances during which the possibility of return is expected, nonetheless, with inarticulate time delay and these are conceived and conducted as the mode of *explicit halal*. Here the time factor is significant, and *halal* utterance flattens both obligation and expectation in the course of transactions between persons into the moral framework of generalised reciprocity. In order to illustrate this argument let me zoom into the *halal* exchange between Zahir and Nihad. The two neighbours usually help each other. One day, Zahir was asked to come with his horse into one of Nihad’s meadows to move some fallen trees. Immediately afterwards Zahir was invited for a coffee and only then asked if Nihad owed him anything (*Šta sam ti dužan?*). However, this question was delayed, in accordance with the local etiquette of hospitality, until the very end of

conversation and the coffee visit. Then Zahir said ‘you don’t owe me anything, it was *halal*’. The question was raised by Nihad only when Zahir was about to leave, and his subsequent answer was meant as the end of the transaction. Nonetheless, a month later Zahir asked Nihad whether he could arrive with his tractor to one of the fields which he wanted to use for crops in the following year. Nihad replied that although he has many things to do he will come because Zahir had helped him and it is *halal* to do so. In this case, the question of whether Zahir owes Nihad anything was also asked during common coffee in Zahir’s house after ploughing. Nihad declined and repeated that it was *halal*. This short ethnographic illustration is an example of the *halal* morality of exchange. Here the *halal* was uttered in both instances as a result of social exchange, and yet in order to fill the time gap between the two transactions. Furthermore, the *halal* utterances restored the obligations and expectations between the two persons into the morality of generalised reciprocity again.

Thirdly, the *explicit halal* utterances play an important role in such transactions during which the return is rather unlikely by virtue of incommensurability of transactional orders. Indeed, there is an increasing amount of unidirectional help between persons in the village today. In those instances the money is paid in return. However, social exchange of help and/or money in return are two entirely different transactional orders (cf. Parry and Bloch 1989; Hart 2000, 2007). Nonetheless, by framing these flows of transactions into the *halal* morality of exchange the incommensurability becomes flattened and the idiom of generalised reciprocity between neighbours who ‘live in proximity’ is sustained as I shall illustrate now.<sup>86</sup>

An inseparable part of the dual local economy in the mountains is subsistence farming. On the other hand, several decades of wage labour opportunities, that had dragged male villagers away from the agro-pastoral ways of livelihood in the mountains, led to a considerable decrease of working animals since the late 1970s, especially oxen and horses. Animals important for land cultivation, however, were hardly replaced by any new mechanisation because of the growing economic problems of Yugoslavia in the 1980s and the war in the 1990s. Today, there is only one house that owns a pair of oxen, three houses owning horses, and eight houses owning some mechanisation. But nearly

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<sup>86</sup> Indeed, as has been pointed out (e.g. Parry and Bloch 1989: 13-14; Piot 1991), the appearance of money in local economies does not eliminate multiple exchange spheres. Or, it could also be argued vice versa. As Humphrey (1985) shows, in times of economic disintegration money can be substituted by other forms of exchange such as barter.

all houses in the village continue with growing crops, especially in the post-1989 times of economic hardship. Moreover, all houses rely on firewood as the main source of energy for heating and cooking, and it needs to be transported from surrounding forests by using mechanisation as well. Therefore, using a tractor to carry firewood or hay from distant places, or ploughing with a horse on the hilly fields became a ‘currency’ highly in demand for those villagers who own them. Whenever a villager needs help with ploughing or transportation he usually searches for someone in the extended neighbourhood (*mahala*). Such a request is framed into the morality of living in proximity, and hence could hardly be declined. On the other hand, there is no possibility that the receiver of help would reciprocate in the (in)articulate future in a similar way. Thus, those villagers reciprocate by using the idiom of *halal* money (*halal pare*) instead. During my fieldwork I observed that villagers who own any mechanisation or horse respectively never paid each other for help; this was also the case of the transaction between Zahir and Nihad, that I described above. The *halal* money transactions are otherwise orchestrated and performed in a similar way to any other exchange of help among villagers who live in proximity. At the end of such a transaction, while coffee is served, the question ‘*Šta sam ti dužan?*’ (what do I owe you) is immediately followed by ‘denying’ any prestation. However, this denial is without uttering ‘*halal*’. Only after the question is raised again and the money given is ‘*halal*’ uttered by both actors and mutuality between persons living in proximity restored.

The *halal* idiom as a moral category is not imbued with fixity. Let me therefore repeat two propositions I made at the beginning of this section. The category of *halal* mediates and is mediated by two orders, that is the cosmological order (i.e. Islamic orthodoxy) that is entwined with the flows of everyday transactions. The logic and morality of *halal* exchanges (re)emerge then from the outlined duality of the two transactional orders. Therefore, moral frameworks that underline relations and interactions between persons ‘living in proximity’ are constantly in the making. Put in this way, the morality of exchange that draws upon Islamic cosmology is also embedded in the historical and political circumstances of the changing Bosnian countryside.

## **6.6 Moral economy and ritual: *Kurban bajram***

This extended case study focuses on the annual Islamic feast of neighborhood *kurban bajram*. It examines the ritual as a particular sphere of social exchange where moral

economy and Islamic orthodoxy intersect. Furthermore, it shows the importance of *kurban bajram* for the ways the symbolic boundaries and moral geographies are constructed and Muslim persons are related. *Kurban Bajram* (in Turkish *Kurban Bayrami*, in Arabic *Eid al-Adha*) is part of the backbone in the ritual calendar of Muslims in Bosnia. It is celebrated and performed every year two months and ten days after the end of Ramadan, that is, one day after the beginning of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. *Kurban bajram* is an archetypal ritual repetition of the story of Ibrahim recognised by all three Abrahamic religions, that commemorates Muslims' devotedness to God. This is the story about the willingness of Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Ismail as an act of obedience to God; and how at the very last moment Ibrahim was instructed by an angel to sacrifice a ram instead.

At the heart of the four day long ritual in the Bosnian mountains is the act of sacrificing the ram on the first day of *kurban bajram* and its subsequent exchange within the extended neighbourhood. The sacrificed meat (*kurban*) ought to be divided into three parts and one third given to poor people who cannot afford to sacrifice an animal, one third exchanged with neighbors within one's *komšilik* and *mahala*, and finally one third consumed by the family.

As Bowen (1992) pointed out in his comparative study on the Islamic feast of sacrifice in Sumatra and Morocco, there is considerable variability in ritual practice among Muslims. Hence, ritual actions and forms pose a particular methodological problem for anthropologists conducting research in a Muslim society. Neither is the Islamic ritual of sacrifice solely a local form of knowledge, nor is it enactment of Islamic orthodoxy because it blends both cultural and orthodox orders of reasoning (cf. Bowen 1992, 1993). Therefore, the study of ritual variations requires unwrapping an ethnographic specificity and accommodation of the contrasting knowledge orders as well as a logic of (ritual) practice. Hence, let me continue here to unpack Bosnian ethnographic specificity.

### **6.6.1 Kurban bajram in the mountains of central Bosnia**

There is a long continuity of ritual performance in the mountains of Central Bosnia. The legendary Sultan Mehmed II. el-Fatih (the Conqueror) invaded Bosnia in 1463 and islamized the territory. The legend narrated in the mountains says that while the Sultan was invading Bosnia it happened to be the time of *kurban bajram*. Hence the Sultan with

his troops sacrificed the rams in a particular place in the region. The place is known as *kurban kamen* (kurban's stone) and became an important pilgrimage site for Muslims from the whole region. The oral history I collected throughout the region reveals a long lasting continuity of both the pilgrimage site and the feast of sacrifice as well. In the village Brdo as well as in other surrounding villages Muslims have sacrificed regardless of the political circumstances; that is, the Second World War, Tito's regime with its ideological agitation for erasing superstitious beliefs and parochial customs, and the breakdown of Yugoslavia and the subsequent harsh war.

In Brdo the feast of sacrifice begins to occupy everyday conversation very soon after the end of Ramadan. The time between the end of Ramadan and the *kurban bajram* is interwoven with a continuous exchange of information such as where to buy a good ram, whose ram is already heavy enough or whose ram has the right colour.<sup>87</sup> Male villagers often pay visits to one another in their respective neighbourhoods and exchange this information. While men are responsible for the rams, women are responsible for the house. Women from the village already several weeks before the feast begin very carefully to prepare and decorate their houses and with other female friends from *komsiluk* or *mahala* they also exchange new cake recipes. The way they treat their guests along with their husbands is the way both women and men creatively re-negotiate their moral personhood.

The visits between neighbours during *kurban bajram* are chiefly coordinated by women and unwrap again the local etiquette of hospitality. During the feast families from respective *komsiluk* and *mahala* visit each other for a coffee, homemade cakes and in the case of close kin neighbours they also might exchange little presents. During the feast the house (*kuća*) becomes an open space, the boundaries between public and private domains are blurred, and the moral unity of the house is exposed. This very moment is expressed by the host's welcoming greeting *bujrum* whenever guests are entering the house.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> The complex animal symbolism among mountainous agro-pastoral communities has been discussed widely by anthropologists (for example see Cambell 1964: 19-33; Parkes 1987).

<sup>88</sup> '*Bujrum*' is likely the warmest welcoming greeting one can receive in the Bosnian mountains and its meaning is nicely captured by Mujo, one of my Bosnian friends as follows "*Bujrum, my house is now your house*".

### 6.6.2 The rhythms of *kurban bajram* in Brdo

For Muslims in Brdo the feast begins after sunset the night before, during which the Imam also arrives to the village. On this night older women and men usually gather in the mosque to pray the evening prayer (*jacija namaz*). After the prayer the women leave the mosque first as usual, whereas men gather around *hodža* (Imam), greet him and talk about the details of the morning prayer.

The following morning, only male villagers gather in the mosque for the morning prayer (*sabah namaz*). It is the local custom (*adet*) that only male Muslims attend the mosque the first morning of the feast. In the meantime between the morning prayer and *bajram namaz* (the feast prayer) *hodža* is reciting from the Qu'ran by microphone and his voice and the message of the Qu'ran spreads throughout the village and beyond to the surrounding hills. Right before the *bajram namaz* (prayer) the mosque is usually overcrowded and men are squeezed in on the ground floor as well as on the balcony. Most of the men do not attend the mosque regularly and some often do not know how to pray properly. Therefore, *hodža* usually instructs everyone at the beginning how to pray *bajram namaz*. After the prayer, *hodža* delivers a short sermon during which he explains the meaning of *kurban bajram*, and why Muslims sacrifice. He also instructs how to sacrifice properly (*kolit kurbana*) otherwise God will not bless their sacrifices. During the sermons I attended, the *hodža* also put emphasis on the morality and changing character of the feast, and highlighted that the feast has been performed in more materialistic and consumerist ways in the last few years and said that

‘Nowadays men are more interested in the weight of their rams [*kurbani*], than how many poor and miserable neighbors [*komšija*] around them would need their help’

A similar argument was also repeatedly made by the leading Bosnian Islamic clerics in the media those days. At the end of the *bajram* prayer all men shake hands with each other and with *hodža*, and while leaving the mosque they give some money to the already-prepared paper box next to the entrance to the mosque. The money people collect is used as a payment for *hodža*. Therefore, it is also a matter of collective villagers' honour to pay the Imam enough. Hence, everyone is under the scrutiny of others to

contribute with a small amount.<sup>89</sup> After the prayer, men stays outside the mosque for a while; they smoke and greet each other again while the boys play with fireworks. In the following four days people in the village and elsewhere switch their greetings codes from ‘*Merhaba*’ or ‘*Salam*’ to ‘*Bajrambarećola*’ and ‘*Allahrazola*’ or ‘*Allah Razi Olsun*’ respectively. After the collective gathering men quickly disappear and follow one of their *komšije* (close neighbours) to their houses for a morning coffee (Picture 6.4).



Picture 6.4

Hospitality in the making - cake preparation

*Bajram namaz* (prayer)

### *Sacrifice*

The late morning is the time to sacrifice. However, before the act of ritual slaughtering a hole in the ground in the garden needs to be dug. The ram is sacrificed over the hole in order to make sure that the sacrificed blood will be collected, as well as other parts of the ram which cannot be used such as hooves. These will return immediately to the earth and become part of the nature conceived as part of God’s cosmos. However, this is not always obeyed by the male Muslims in the mountains. The size, colour and horns of the ram are entangled with the man’s own public self-presentation and *kurban bajram* is then a moment during which a man negotiates and contests his manhood (Picture 6.5).<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Over the following weeks I witnessed how particularly old men from different villages were discussing over coffee in *kafanas*, where they regularly meet on Fridays in the municipal town, how much money was collected in various villages. If people in some village collected money that seemed to be unsatisfactory the old men vigorously doubted whether the people from the respective village were good Muslims. Yet they often argued that nowadays Muslims do not know anything about what is good and that they do not respect Bosnian traditions to treat *hodža* with respect and honour.

<sup>90</sup> Bowen points out Combs-Schilling’s Morocco account where the author argues, that ‘the sacrifice reaffirms patriarchal power in the family and embodies a notion of male fertility (...) The size and virility of the ram are taken as a measure of the man’s own virility’ (Combs-Schilling 1989: 231 quoted in Bowen 1992: 657); for a similar argument in rural Turkey see Delaney 1991: 298-303.



Picture 6.5

Rams, sacrifice and the poetics of manhood

In doing so, some of the male villagers amplify the temporal effect of *kurban bajram* and conspicuously and prestigiously, as a mode of male social poetic (cf. Herzfeld 1985), display in public the horned skulls of their finest rams (*kurbanı*) above the entrance to a sheep shed. Hence, anyone who is passing by the house can easily see it even at the time beyond the feast. Furthermore, the horned skulls as well as some other parts of sacrificed rams are imbued with divine agency, and protective and healing power (Picture 6.6).



The hole dug for sacrifice



Beyond the ritual - amplified effects of the sacrifice

Picture 6.6

The very act of sacrifice is ritual action par excellence (cf. Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994). The ram is laid down right above the hole facing in the direction of Mecca. The person who is going to ritually slaughter the ram utters '*Bismillahi Allahu Ekber*' before the act. Once the ram is slaughtered a member of the house (*kuća*) performs a short *namaz* (prayer) in the house in order to thank Allah for the blessing (Picture 6.7).



Picture 6.7

The moment of prayer before sacrificing

The act of slaughtering

The short prayer can be done by any person of the house, that is, either by a man or a woman. Otherwise, villagers perceive the sacrifice in many respects as a male matter. It was stated that women should not have anything to do with processing sacrificed meat whatsoever. The only exception would be to clean and process ram's offal. Thus, women usually do not touch the ram and will not be in contact with the sacrificed meat while it is wrapped and hence prepared for the giving (Picture 6.8). This practice is entangled with the local implicit meanings of pollution and impurity associated with women and the sexual division of labour in many Muslim societies (cf. Bringa 1995; Holy 1991; Douglas 2003 [1970]; Delaney 1991).



Picture 6.8

Implicit meanings embodied: a woman and a child are cleaning ram's offal

*Moral imagination of giving*

Muslims in the mountains of central Bosnia care tremendously about to whom they ought to give sacrificed meat. According to the language of Islamic orthodoxy the ram ought to be divided into thirds; one third ought to be given to the poor and another given to one's neighbours. Unlike in Muslim societies with hierarchical social fabric and strong vertical relationships (cf. Lyon 2004), in Bosnia the *kurban bajram* is conceived as the feast of the neighbourhood that strengthens horizontal relations between neighbours. Therefore, the ritual needs to be associated with an exchange rather than with redistribution of meat. Nonetheless, it is a matter of villagers' serious concern to whom they ought to give sacrificed meat. After the act of slaughtering and skinning, the ram is left for a few hours in a cold cellar. In the meantime, the list of names to whom the meat ought to be given is discussed over coffee within the house. Let me illustrate this process of decision making by zooming in on a particular case during which two brothers were arguing over to whom they ought to give the meat.

While drinking coffee, one of the brothers was going to write down a list of names when his brother Zakir said '*you don't need to write everyone, you need to give to 35 kurbani in our mahala and David [anthropologist] is included of course*'. However, the brother anxiously replied '*How does it come to 35? I have listed 34 even with David. Ehh, hold on! You want to give also to Safet, don't you? He is not in our mahala any more, he moved! I won't give him anything! And he didn't sacrifice this year so why should I give him anything?*'. For that moment the situation was very tense. The brothers were watching each other, their wives were watching their *fildžani* and only the burning firewood disrupted a tense silence. Then, Zakir explained straightforwardly that even though Safet moved to another part of the village, he and his family are and will always be considered as members of the *mahala*. Moreover, as Zakir subsequently argued, Safet's mother and brother still live in the *mahala*; he also argued that the land where Safet built the house has been owned by his family for ages, and thus it has always been related to the *mahala*. Furthermore, Zakir reminded his brother that he had begun building a new house in the same place as Safet, so if Zakir moved would the brother consider him as a member of the *mahala* or not? Then, the brother concluded that Zakir is right but he will not give the meat to Safet in any case because Safet did not sacrifice. Zakir reminded him of the morning sermon and the morality of *kurban bajram*. That is, to give meat to neighbors (*komšije*) and to people who cannot afford it (*siromašni*) regardless of what one might receive from others, because one hopes s/he

will receive a blessing from Allah. So the story continues. Zakir also reminded his brother of the main reason why Safet did not sacrifice. Safet was heavily indebted as he has borrowed money in order to build a house and therefore he could not afford to sacrifice. At the end of the coffee visit the brother put Safet on the list and was thinking who else ought to be added. In this particular case, the logic of moral reasoning of the brother seems to be calculative and driven by an inseparable dyadic imperative of 'give and take'. The reason why this was so lies in the fact that the brother is one of those villagers who have largely withdrawn from engagement within the spheres of the neighbourhood, though not entirely.

The *kurban bajram* in Bosnia is understood and enacted as the feast of neighbourhood (cf. Sorabji 2008). As such it embraces three moral tropes of imagination, reasoning and practice. Firstly, it is a form of Islamic charity. Secondly, it is a Muslim's moral self-accountability and search for Allah's blessing. Thirdly, it is locally cultivated compassion and engagement within the neighbourhood.

#### *Giving*

A few hours later after the sacrifice men cut the ram into the required number of pieces according to the prepared list (Picture 6.9). The pieces vary in their size, meatiness and fatness. Neighbours from the *komšilik*, relatives and people who are somehow important are given qualitatively better pieces. Neighbours from the extended neighbourhood shall receive rather small pieces that bear first and foremost a symbolic value. The act of giving the sacrificed meat itself is a particular performance during which the moral unity of the house is exposed. The giving takes place in the village mainly during the second day of the feast. It is a task for children and women. Children are well dressed for this occasion as they shall represent the house within the *komšilik* and the *mahala*. Yet they are carefully instructed what they are required to say while giving the *kurban* and which piece is for whom in the neighbourhood.



Picture 6.9  
Cutting *kurbani*

The very act of giving *kurbani* is important in the entire context of ritual exchange. When a person, who is giving meat, comes onto the doorstep of a house s/he greets the inhabitant with *Bajrambarećola* and the reply is *Allahrazola*. Then s/he asks for the head of the house, that is, a mature male; otherwise the meat will be given to a woman. When the meat is distributed by a woman and not by children it is preferably given immediately to the female members of the house. The way *kurban* is given, accepted and repaid between the neighbours creates a temporal illusion of the ‘pure gift’ rather than highlighting a balanced social exchange between neighbours (cf. Bourdieu 1990: ; Parry 1986). The person who receives the meat is obliged to say *kabulosum* (which means in this context ‘I honestly agree to accept this’) at the very moment of receiving. The giving person is then obliged to utter *halalosum*. This is derived from the *halal* category, and confirms that the given *kurban* does not establish any demand of repayment to the giving person. Here, the process of exchange operates mainly through performative acts (Austin 1975: 6-7) and cultural rhetoric (Carrithers 2009). In other words, the utterances *kabulosum* and *halalosum* are parts of performing actions and enactments, in this case of the ritual exchange, during which an obligation to exchange *kurban* is performatively suppressed.

The act of giving *kurban* is always performed in the house of the receiver. When a person stands on the doorstep of a neighbor’s house and is giving *kurban*, she is not repaid *kurban* back at the same moment. The *kurban* has to be mutually brought to one another’s houses. Thus, an orchestration of the ritual embraces both time and space.

Through the work of time (Bourdieu 1990) an act of giving separates persons from direct exchange and creates a temporal illusion of the 'pure gift'. The meanings of such a practice are associated with the moral tropes of generous giving and moral self-accountability as outlined above. Furthermore, the ritual is usually understood as reweaving the networks of social exchange, mutual respect and recognition within *komšiluk* and *mahala*.

### **6.6.3 The power of exchange networks**

The Durkheimian echoes in performing the feast of sacrifice are obvious here. The collective ritual reintegrates the *komšiluk* and *mahala*, and regenerates social bonds, ties and networks. However, as Bauman's (1992: 99) subversive reading of Durkheim indicates, ritual may be performed by competing constituencies; likewise it can serve to negotiate the differing relationships of its participants, or it may speak to aspirations towards cultural change. Hence, in what follows I shall multiply the differing relationships and vectors of giving *kurbani*.

Through tracing the contradictions in conversations about, as well as practices of ritual exchange, the *kurban bajram* feast sheds light on the ongoing metamorphosis of sociality outlined in the previous chapter, and on the ways the modes of intersubjectivity are reshaped within *komšiluk* and *mahala* today. In doing so, I argue that the feast also unwraps how through the ritual the differing relationships between participants are negotiated and vectors of relatedness reassembled. Put in this way, I shall illustrate that *kurban bajram* is a moment through which aspiration towards redefining the verticality and horizontality of relationships among neighbours might be created, and thus expand into the everyday life in the village. This, however, contradicts the local notions and ideas of equality and compassion within the intimate neighbourhood networks.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> In the context of the anthropology of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, anthropologists discussed widely the vectors of social and power relations and their cultural continuities (for an in-depth overview see Lyon 2004). The main argument in those debates was concerned with 'patronage' and its multiple political forms and enactments (cf. Boissevain 1966; Campbell 1964; Davis 1977; Gellner 1977). However, the social relations in northern areas of the Balkan peninsula, and in Bosnian Muslim mountain villages in particular, seem to reveal rather weak patronising contours. Although the tracing and unwrapping of ethnographic contradictions in the feast of sacrifice reveals micro-vectors of how power is enacted, this does not necessarily lead to any 'patronage' form of relations.

### *Ethnography of verticality*

Let me begin with the vector of *vertical relatedness*. During my fieldwork, only one household from the *mahala* did not sacrifice and the reason was simply an economic one. The family could not afford it. Nonetheless, the family was included into the giving networks, though the processes of giving were in this particular case only one-directional. Safet's family was entwined into the ritual exchange through the triangular moral imagination of *kurban bajram*. Although the act of giving sacrificed meat was one-directional, it did not create an act of symbolic violence in the process of giving (Bourdieu 1990; Lyon 2004). What drives the moral imagination and moves people into actions here is the play of the moral tropes that overcast the feast. Here, it is the moral trope of communal life within *komšiluk* and *mahala*, cultivated by compassion and engagement, and shaped by mutual solidarity, respect and help. This ethnographic moment allows the opaqueness of Bourdieu's argument about the ever immanent power-like logic underlying any act of giving to emerge. Here I am concerned with both the act of giving as well as with the power of narratives circulating in a community (Gilsenan 1986, 1996). In doing so, I reproach the narratives that were flowing within the *mahala* during the feast and after. As I shall argue the plot of this particular case study lies at its rhetorical edge (Carrithers 2009).

The act of giving to Safet's family created a convincing narrative of solidarity among villagers rather than expressing a logic of symbolic violence. Safet was given many *kurbani* irrespective of his indebtedness, or as people in the *mahala* repeatedly said 'because of his indebtedness'. Furthermore, he was given *kurbani* despite the fact that he moved beyond the physical boundaries of the *mahala*. The moments of giving were thus creatively turned into a persuasive narrative of solidarity and mutuality within *mahala*. The moral tropes on charity (i.e. generous giving), sharing of blessing and compassion reframed the act of giving, and reconfirmed that Safet's house still belongs to the *mahala*'s networks.<sup>92</sup>

### *Horizontal relatedness*

Except for Safet's house there was an equal exchange between the houses in the *mahala*. Nonetheless, what Nihad's family did was perceived as dubious. Nihad's house consists of extended family assembling his wife and two children, father Ibrahim and mother

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<sup>92</sup> Moreover, when Safet and his family moved to the new house, people from the *mahala* came to visit them *na slatko*, that is a ritual located also within the boundaries of *mahala*.

Sabiha, as well as his uncle Abdija (Ibrishim's brother). Nonetheless, in the local symbolic geography they are all conceived as one *kuća* because they all eat together (*zajedno*). Hence, being considered as one house they usually sacrifice one or two rams in total. However, during my fieldwork they sacrificed, conspicuously as was initially interpreted by the neighbors, three rams which provoked at the time (silent) discontent between the neighbours. Let me here turn to the power of narratives again and shed light on horizontal relatedness within the spheres of extended neighbourhood.

I have argued that Nihad's sacrifice was perceived as dubious and ambiguous. By virtue of the fact that his extended family is conceived of as one *kuća*, the neighbours were expecting to receive only one *kurban* and to give one back. However, this year Nihad's *kuća* gave three *kurban* and thus people got confused, because no one was sure whether it means to give three *kurban* back in order to sustain a balanced exchange in flow. Here, the problem was not the scarcity of the blessed meat itself, as one or two pieces more or less would not be any problem for most of the neighbours. The ambiguity lies elsewhere. What Nihad's family had done in the process of giving was perceived as an unnecessarily intrusive act. The giving of three *kurban* in the name of one *kuća* created (un)consciously for a moment a prerequisite for unequal exchange between equals. Put in this way, despite the *kurban bajram* being understood as the feast of neighbourhood, Nihad's *kuća* drove a wedge between neighbours in the ritual process of remaking horizontal relatedness within *komšilik* and *mahala*. Indeed, during the following winter months when the intensity of visits among neighbours is high, Nihad was often asked 'why they did so'. His answer was 'Allah gave us more rams than usual this year so we decided accordingly'. Although such an explanation was eventually accepted, it unpacks the complex semantics of *kurban* exchange. Furthermore, the fact that people raised the question even several months after the feast reveals the dubiousness that overcast the ways Nihad's *kuća* disturbed the ritual process that is inextricably entwined with the morality of *kurban* and with the local moral tropes and imagination of equality, mutuality and community within the spheres of the extended neighbourhood in particular.

#### *Asymmetries in the making*

Let me for the third time turn to the power of narratives and especially to the narratives of power. Whereas the two previous ethnographic examples showed how the moments

of unbalanced exchange might be creatively framed and hence reconciled with a particular moral imagination, the third example demonstrates another social dynamic. Here, an act of giving leads to disjunction and production of asymmetrical social distance.

One house in Brdo gave *kurbani* to all houses in the village. The house is associated with a family that is considered to be very rich. The family had taken an opportunity after the war, developed a small sawmill business and has become economically successful and powerful. The owner, Rustem, has three matured sons, two of whom live with him in a newly built conspicuous house. The oldest son Mesud lives with his wife and little daughter separately in a house also built by Rustem. Mesud studied in *madrasa* and at a university. He works as a teacher in the municipal town and also as *hodža* (Imam) in one of the neighbouring villages. Thus the family is conceived in Brdo as economically and symbolically dominating. However, this creates and leads towards a particular dynamics of social relations during the ritual process of giving, notably to asymmetries, and these tensions emanate into everyday interactions and conversations.

The first night of the feast I visited Mesud effendi in order to ask him about a list of people to whom he wants to give *kurbani*. His answer was straightforward ‘to everyone in the village’, and added that also to some people in the village where he is designated *hodža*. However, in Brdo he is considered first and foremost as a neighbour and this also implies different moral conduct and reasoning. Therefore, not all villagers associated the giving of *kurbani* ‘to everyone in the village’ with his status of being *hodža*, in which case this would be acceptable. On the contrary, in this particular case an act of giving to everyone in the village was interpreted as an expression of domination of the family, and as recasting the village social relations by and large. Indeed, when Mesud was giving (by himself!) *kurbani* in the village he repeatedly stressed that he is in a hurry and needs to distribute in the entire village. The fact that Mesud had publicly articulated what he was doing created a narrative plot. The power of this narrative lies in the narrating of power of Mesud’s family.

During *kurban bajram* as well as after, while commenting and reflecting upon the feast, villagers embraced in their conversations Mesud’s act of giving, the fact that his father Rustem conspicuously sacrificed an exceptionally heavy ram of a hundred kilos, and yet even more importantly the new conspicuous house Rustem built recently. As I wrote at

the beginning of the chapter, in the 1980s villagers made a communal decision and divided the village into two *mahalas* in order to sustain an equal ritual exchange of *kurban*, and hence social exchange in the village. Today, however, when a family gains economic independence and symbolic power, it can easily detach itself from the moral imagination and conduct on mutuality and equality in the village.

Indeed, the third narrative reveals another dimension in the process of ritualised exchange in *mahala* and beyond. It illuminates the ways through which identity becomes difference in the village, by means of creating an asymmetric relatedness. Such an exchange entangles religion and ritual, symbolic and economic domination, and becomes at times a vector through which new hierarchies take shape. Hence, we might conclude that the study of ritual variations and exchange unwraps an ethnographic specificity as well as contradictions about the ways particular cultural and cosmological orders are accommodated through moral imagination into the Islamic local knowledge and practice. Neither is the *kurban bajram* feast as practiced in the Bosnian mountains solely related to the Mecca pilgrimage (Delaney 1990), nor to the performance of Muslims' devotedness and obedience. In Brdo only some Muslims utterly identified the practice of sacrifice with the Islamic orthodoxy and scriptural tradition, and thus with the Quaranic story of Ibrahim. The vast majority of villagers conceive the feast of sacrifice as *adet* (custom) that regenerates both the locally constructed Islamic tradition as well as the sociality with *komšiluk* and *mahala* by and large.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

In this and the previous chapter I showed that living in proximity entwined with social intimacy are serious matters of concern in the mountains of central Bosnia. Through attending ethnographically to people's actions and interactions, intentions and concerns, narratives and experiences I reassessed two core idioms of communal life and moral geography. In doing so, I introduced *komšiluk* and *mahala*. Both idioms considerably shape Muslims' understanding of village space. Here I showed how the two social forms of 'living in proximity' are assembled through multiple processes and entities, drawing upon Islamic cosmology, relations between persons as well as their intersections with spheres of moral economy.

The cultural domain of space as it is conceived in the mountains informs everyday life in the village at large. What creates ties between persons is an ongoing flow and exchange of mutuality, recognition and hospitality. Here proximity is the vector of relatedness. Similar logic operates at both *komšiluk* and *mahala* levels. Whereas the former is embedded in the next-door proximity and associated with intimacy and engagement, the latter is located in the village moral geographies whose symbolic boundaries are drawn by ritual. Indeed, *mahala* is an important spatial idiom. It amplifies the spheres of engagement described as *komšiluk*. The boundaries of *mahala* are constructed through the ritual of sacrifice and day-to-day exchange of mutual help. However, here the proximity, intimacy and empathy extend to the networks of commensality.

In recent years the idiom ‘living in proximity’ dominated the debates in understanding social relations in Bosnia. The idiom of neighbourhood was employed in order to shed light on the long lasting antagonistic relations between ethnoreligious communities (Hayden 2002, 2007). However, the flow of everyday life in a Muslim mountain village, likewise an excursion into the pre-war ethnographies, show an exaggerated usage of the neighbourhood metaphor (i.e. *komšiluk*) in understanding relations between neighbours without careful ethnographic grounding. Let me repeat an argument I made in the previous chapter. In his social phenomenology, Alfred Schutz (1967) made an important distinction, while analysing the character of social interactions, between *Nebemenschen* (contemporaries) and *Mitmenschen* (consociates). There is a fundamental semantic distinction between the two German prepositions *neben* and *mit* respectively. The former means ‘next to, by’ and the latter ‘with’. Put in this way, *komšiluk* (neighbourhood) is in rural Bosnia understood as a social space in which lifeworlds of neighbours living in proximity intersect, that is the space where people live *with* one another, rather than *next to* each other. Surely, there were political tools used by the Ottomans such as the millet system based on the logic of difference. And its cultural continuities in the post-Ottoman territories need to be examined thoroughly. However, *komšiluk* and millet have very different meanings and operate at very different scales that ought not be analytically intermingled. Moreover, one unwraps the pragmatics of everyday life, whereas the other points to ideology and ethnopolitics. Thus, I reassessed in the last two chapters the pragmatics of interactions at the grass roots level as it is conceived in the mountains of central Bosnia.

## 7 **The rhythms of Islam**

The previous chapters unwrapped the relations between space and everyday processes of social life in the mountains. Residence and kinship, two pivotal vectors of social organisation in rural Bosnia (Lockwood 1975), continue to inform the social relations of Muslims in the village. Both residence and proximity shape the ways an embeddedness into and belonging to the neighbourhood and *mahala* are imagined, conceived and enacted. I showed that the house is a scale of relatedness through which Muslims filter their memories and belonging in space and time. An intimate link between the house and the land unraveled another spatiotemporal layout of the past in the present, that is between the living persons and the dead ancestors. However, as I show in this chapter the spatiotemporal rhythms of everyday life in the mountains of central Bosnia are always embedded and understood within the context of local cosmologies and meanings.

The life of any Muslim is punctuated by a series of sequences and located within the discursive framework of Islamic tradition. Performing *namaz* (*salāt* in Arabic; the five daily prayers; cf. Bowen 1989; Henkel 2005; Mahmood 2001), fasting during the holy month Ramadan (cf. Schielke 2009), pilgrimage (cf. Eickelman and Piscatori 1990), collective mourning and praying *tevhid* (a funerary prayer a day, forty days, and a year after someone's death; cf. Bringa 1995; Sorabji 1994), or praying for rain annually, are just a few examples of how various emotions, events and practices of everyday life are entwined with discursive traditions of Islam, and how the spheres of the profane and the sacred are always interrelated and intermingled (Durkheim 2001 [1912]). Both Islamic discursive traditions and culturally informed practices and idioms go hand-in-hand and form distinct rhythms of Muslim lives. El Guindi (2008) argues that *rhythm* is the idiom through which Islam is lived and felt, and through which it ought to be understood. The concept of rhythm as a means by which to approach Muslim life intelligibly embraces categories of space and time. In her analysis, El Guindi (2008: 123-155) presents Muslim life as an ongoing stream of merging ordinary and sacred time and space, the sacred and privacy, cosmologies and calendars, ritual and the everyday into a distinctively Islamic form of spatiotemporal human existence. However, any Islamic rhythm needs to be analysed and understood within a particular context of culturally-informed practices and knowledge traditions (cf. Barth 2002). Following El

Guindi's argument about Muslim rhythmic-cum-spatiotemporal experience, in this chapter I analyse the rhythms, processes, actions and ways of temporal reasoning in the mountains of central Bosnia. Let me start, however, with a brief overview of the anthropology of time.

## **7.1 Time and anthropology**

Time is a classic topic of anthropological investigation (Durkheim 2001 [1912]). Nonetheless, the anthropological analysis of time headed in multiple directions, and it would go beyond the scope of this thesis to outline all debates (e.g. Fabian 1983; Gell 1992; James and Mills 2005; Munn 1992). Here I outline only briefly some of the major arguments that informed my work in the Bosnian mountains. At least since Durkheim the debates about time have been linked to its social nature. Social time became conceived as a category that is embedded in the collective representations of a society and derived from the rhythms of collective activities (Durkheim 2001 [1912]: 11-12). Henri Hubert continued in the footsteps of Durkheim, and as James and Mills (2005) remind us, he put emphasis on calendars or timing of activities in social life in particular. According to Hubert, the development of calendars and their importance in social life and time-reckoning is endowed with rhythms and it might be well expressed in a periodicity of various religious and mythic durations, orchestrations or date sequences (James and Mills 2005: 7-9). This argument echoes Durkheim's well-known sociological description of religious beliefs, that is '[t]he division of the world into two comprehensive domains, one sacred, the other profane, is the hallmark of religious thought' (2001 [1912]: 36). The relationship between time-reckoning, calendars and altering the sacred – profane time was also discussed by Leach (1961: 124-136). However, Leach's main critique is targeted at using various geometrical metaphors in anthropological analysis, such as cycle or circle (for a critique of this argument see Gell 1992). There is nothing, Leach argued, 'intrinsically geometrical about time as we actually experience it' (1961: 126). According to Leach, time is a human experience with repetition and irreversibility. Whereas Durkheim put emphasis on concepts of time and its social function, and Hubert explored how time-reckoning and temporalisation is actually put into action, Leach highlighted an experiential dimension of altering times in human existence.

Another line of anthropological thinking that developed from Durkheimian sociology dates back to Evans-Pritchard. In his classic monograph *The Nuer* (1967 [1940]), Evans-Pritchard outlined the distinction between *ecological* and *structural* time. The former is associated with time-reckoning of social activities that developed during human interaction with the environment, and with punctuation of activities as such. The latter outlines the ways social structure, i.e. lineage system and relations, is organised. A similar distinction was later made by Bloch (1977), although he recognised two different regimes of time, that is cognitively universal and socio-ritually derived (*ibid.*; see also Gell 1992: 84; Munn 1992: 100). However, as Gell argues, the two regimes of time need to be entwined with a practice-oriented analysis of time (e.g. Bourdieu 1990). A similar conclusion was drawn by James and Mill as they searched for ‘a fresh way of bringing *the timing of how things are done* into the foreground of anthropological analysis’ (2005: 2, emphasis in the original); and also by Munn (1992) who views human experience with temporality as a continuous symbolic process that is produced in everyday practices in a radical actor-oriented perspective (*ibid.*: 106, 116). However, as El Guindi (2008) pointed out, Munn is critical of the idea of sociocultural time but, as El Guindi immediately adds, ‘when she writes of “time as symbolic process” and “time being continually constructed by actors” is there not an ambiguity of contradictory approaches?’ (*ibid.*: 9).

This chapter goes beyond Munn’s (1992) rather practice-oriented understanding of temporalisation. Although I agree with her argument that temporalisation of everydayness is produced by practices, I also argue that the meaning cannot be understood solely as a matter of practice. Instead, I analyse an interplay between practices, informed by the Islamic and socio-cultural idioms, and the processes of symbolisation. Therefore, in the first part of the chapter I draw upon careful examination of the interplay between time reckoning, ritual calendar and work<sup>93</sup> as to how these are conceived in the mountains and how they inevitably penetrate social life and practices. In searching for a balanced analysis of the interplay between symbolic systems, practices and processes of spatiotemporal symbolisation, I borrow from Lansing’s (1991) argument that the relationship between symbolic systems, ritual and productive systems is the task of ‘a search for relationships, which can only be discovered by tracing the logic of particular symbols and practices’ (*ibid.* 1991: 10). Hence, I

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<sup>93</sup> The idea of work in the mountains is not solely a utilitarian activity, or controlled transformation of energy that would lead to particular ends. Rather, it is a combination of technical skills and knowledge with modes of livelihood and ritual knowledge and practice.

analyse multiple calendars used by Muslims in Brdo, vegetative periods, annual work orchestration and management of agriculture, along with religious rituals and overall temporal orchestration of social and religious life as the means of the rhythms and processes of Muslim life in the mountains of central Bosnia.

## **7.2 Seasonal morphologies: Vegetative cycles and agricultural management**

Temporalisation and time-reckoning in the mountain villages in central Bosnia have been historically shaped by various cultural grammars. Today, the villages are firmly embedded into the structures of complex society in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The dominant way of time-reckoning is the Gregorian calendar penetrating into various spheres of everyday life. However, as has been pointed out (cf. Eickelman 1978; El Guindi 2008; Gell 1992; Munn 1992), there are other calendric traditions and multiple ways of marking time resisting hegemonic temporalisation based on the Western/Christian conceptions of time. And as El Guindi adds, ‘the Gregorian calendar is widely used for global communication of temporality, but often alongside other more culturally meaningful calendars’ (2008: 95). Indeed, time-reckoning in the mountains is informed by the Gregorian and Julian calendars as well as Islamic lunisolar calendar. Yet the modes of temporalisation draw upon people’s practices and continuous attachment to the land, and upon continuous agro-pastoral modes of production which are themselves based on seasonality, vegetative periods and agricultural rituals.

Agricultural calendars, rituals, and seasonal periods of agro-pastoral mountain communities in various corners of Eurasia have been widely discussed by anthropologists (cf. Campbell 1964; Cole and Wolf 1975: 127-128; Hann 2006a; Layton 2000: 22-23; Lockwood 1975: 101-105; Matley 1968; Ott 1981: 31-38; Parkes 1987). Similarities and complementarities between various mountain communities at various places are striking at the level of practice, although not surprising (cf. Vincze 1980). Productive systems, practices or time-reckoning are inevitably shaped by interactions with the environment. Therefore, rather than solely practice-oriented analysis (e.g. Munn 1992), I explore an interplay between practices and the processes of symbolisation, upon which villagers draw in their everyday conduct, from a temporal perspective. Put in this way, I outline the modes of temporalisation which form meaningful frameworks of relevance to Muslim lifeworlds in the Bosnian mountains.

In his classical study of Bosnian Muslims in the west Bosnian highlands Lockwood (1975: 85, 101) discusses a careful balance and synchronisation of agricultural and pastoral periods.<sup>94</sup> He shows how winter months contrast sharply with productive summer months, particularly at the level of social interactions. Although Lockwood (ibid.: 104-105) argues that Muslims in the highlands use Islamic as well as other calendars, he does not provide any systematic account. Similarly, Bringa (1995) discusses ritual calendars of Muslims in the rural context of central Bosnia. However, her primary locus of analysis is the actual conduct of religiously-informed ritual actions, rather than culturally informed time-reckoning and temporalisation as such. Agricultural rituals, labour activities and orchestration of social life in Brdo are reckoned as two seasonal periods. The two axes of seasonal morphologies are the winter and the summer period respectively (Figures 7.2, 7.4). Let me start here with the former.

### **7.2.1 Winter period**

The winter period in the village is reckoned according to *takvim* (Figure 7.1).<sup>95</sup> It is known as *Rozi-Kasum* and begins on the 8th November. However, the winter period starts only when the first snow arrives to the mountains. Nonetheless, around the time of *Rozi-Kasum* the everyday conversations slowly turn to recounting previous winter seasons, and this becomes a serious matter of concern among villagers. In local collective remembering villagers easily trace their memories of the past winters several decades back, and particularly the harsh winter memories can be traced back into even more distant times. Such a collective remembering, as villagers believe, might help them with predicting and scheduling remaining working activities and with preparation for the upcoming winter. Most of the activities after *Rozi-Kasum* are done around the house and the sheds as daylight shortens and mornings get cold, though the making of firewood continues. All in all the rhythms of the daily working routine slow down.

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<sup>94</sup> Lockwood uses the word ‘cycle’ instead of ‘period’ in grasping temporalisation. However, in the following pages I prefer to use ‘period’ or ‘seasonality’ when necessary, as more appropriate analytical terms (for the debate on (not) using ‘cycle’ in the analysis of time, see Leach 1961: 124-136).

<sup>95</sup> *Takvim*, the Islamic calendar, is published by the Islamic Union (*Islamska zajednica*) according to the Gregorian calendar every year, either as a book, or as a wall calendar, with detailed prayer times, and the dates of feasts.

The winter period embraces particular visiting interactions (*sijelo*) and specific narrative activities. In their everyday talks during the transitory period around *Rozi-Kasum* villagers are chiefly concerned with two narrative themes. Firstly, the narrating and sharing of memories and experiences of the past winters and what then emerges as a collective memory. Secondly, the memories are framed into the encompassing local discourse on fortune (*nafaka*) and luck (*sreća*), thereby Allah's blessing and help. In the narratives as well as conversations Muslims in the mountains reflects upon seasonal vegetative periods, and on time reckoning derived from people's everyday interactions with the environment. However, an environmental knowledge entwined with temporalisation is always validated and framed as Allah's will, and hence associated with the overall rhythms of Islam.

In their conversations on the end of the productive season and winter preparations Muslims constantly thank Allah for enabling them to finish all their work and preparation for winter. Indeed, at the time of my fieldwork in Brdo the holy month Ramadan happened to be in late August and September when the productive season and many agricultural activities as well as winter preparations intensified.<sup>96</sup> Hence, Muslims' fasting during the holy month meant that people could conduct only minimal work as they soon got exhausted during the sunny days. As a result many activities were delayed due to Ramadan. When the first snow arrived in late November, although it was expected in early November, villagers immediately argued that this was Allah's will. In other words, Allah gave villagers enough time and enabled them to finish the work which could not be done during the Ramadan period because people were fasting. Experiences of exhaustion during Ramadan in the last two years became a serious matter of concern. In the following years Ramadan will be shifting closer to the period of haymaking activities that cannot be postponed. Nonetheless, older villagers continuously reassured others, by telling them stories of how they fasted three or four decades ago, that haymaking even during Ramadan is bearable if people live in a good *komšiluk* and believe in God and its blessing. In doing so, Muslims entwine everyday life and agricultural conduct with their experiences of the overarching rhythms of Islam.

With the arrival of snow the rhythm and orchestration of everyday life in the mountains profoundly change. The day becomes almost timeless, filled by countless coffee visits

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<sup>96</sup> As I conducted my fieldwork for 15 months in total I was in the mountains for two Ramadans (in 2008 and in 2009).

(*sijelo*). Working activity is minimised into necessary chores in the house and the sheds.<sup>97</sup> Unlike the summer productive season the winter period is characterised by a lack of rituals which shape time-reckoning and temporalisation during the summer period. The only exception would be the years when religious Islamic rituals such as Ramadan, *ramazanski bajram* (Eid al-Fitr) and *kurban bajram* (Eid al-Adha) happen to be during the winter period.

Villagers use an Islamic calendar in their time-reckoning to grasp the winter period. According to *takvim* the winter period is divided into several phases. The first forty days of winter are known as *Erbeini*, in which the coldest period of the winter is called *Žemherije*, and finally the second half of the winter is known as *Hamsini*. The second half of the winter is further subdivided into three *Džemre* phases which subsequently mark an upcoming end of the winter. Muslims in the village say that ‘*prvo džemre pada u zrak, drugo u vodu i treće u zemlju*’ (‘the first *džemre* falls down into the air, the second into the water and the third into the earth’).

<b>Rozi-Kasum</b> (08.11.) beginning of the winter period		
<b>Erbeini</b> (21.12. - 30.01.) first forty days of winter	<b>Žemherije</b> (←06.01.→) the coldest days of winter, lasts usually for three weeks	
<b>Hamsini</b> (31.01.-20.03) last 50 days of winter	<b>Džemre</b> (upcoming end of winter)	19.02. air
		26.02. water
		05.03. earth

Figure 7.1  
Winter period according to *takvim* (Islamic calendar)

The Gregorian calendar is the official and in many respects main source of time-reckoning. Villagers also eagerly and regularly follow the weather forecast on television. Nonetheless, *takvim*-derived time-reckoning continues to be employed in their temporalisation as well as orchestration of agricultural and domestic activities. Periods of *Žemherije* and *Džemre* are of particular matters of concern in day-to-day conversations. The former is a critical moment in the whole winter period. Extremely cold days might affect many houses in the village if the water supply networks get frozen. The latter is

<sup>97</sup> From those men in Brdo who have a job, the overall majority are employed in one of the local sawmills and during winter the sawmills work only occasionally. As I wrote in chapter three, women in the village run the household and only four women were employed in the municipal town at the time of my fieldwork.

awaited as it brings the winter period to its end. Indeed, during my fieldwork villagers started discussing after the second *Džemre*, which '*falls into the water*', that the winter is over, and planned work on the fields. By framing the final part of the winter period as *Džemre* 'falling' into the air, water and earth Muslims in the mountains also allegorise in the language of the everyday already recurring vegetative processes.

November	December	January	February	March	April
<p>cleaning the house</p> <p>visiting pattern: <i>na sijelo</i></p> <p>ploughing, fertilising the fields (by using the dung)</p> <p>preparing firewood</p> <p>milk processing</p> <p>sheep/cattle herding (if weather conditions allow)</p> <p><i>Kurban Bajram</i> becomes a matter of concern</p> <p>8.11. <i>Rozi-Kasum</i> (beginning of winter period)</p> <p>snow-discussions</p> <p>snow: a shift to leisure and regeneration</p> <p>Thursday's mosque prayers, Friday's džuma</p>	<p>visiting pattern: <i>na sijelo</i></p> <p>milk processing</p> <p>feeding <i>kurbani</i> (rams)</p> <p>making smoked mutton</p> <p>wool processing and knitting</p> <p>cleaning the mosque</p> <p>8.12.-11.12. <i>Kurban bajram</i></p> <p><i>Erbeini</i> (first 40 days of winter, from 21.12. to 30.1.)</p> <p>Thursday's mosque prayers, Friday's džuma</p>	<p>visiting pattern: <i>na selo</i> (enlarged into the whole <i>mahala</i>)</p> <p>milk processing</p> <p>wool processing and knitting</p> <p>getting more firewood if possible/necessary</p> <p>regeneration</p> <p><i>Erbeini</i> (first 40 days of winter, counted from 21.12. to 30.1.)</p> <p><i>Zemherije</i> (the coldest days of the winter, last usually ~10 days around 6.1.)</p> <p>Thursday's mosque prayers, Friday's džuma</p>	<p>↪</p> <p>↪</p> <p>↪</p> <p>↪</p> <p>co-operative snow cleaning in the neighbourhood and <i>mahala</i> if necessary</p> <p><i>Džemre</i> (19.2./26.2 upcoming end of winter, counted according to <i>takvim</i>)</p> <p>Thursday's mosque prayers, Friday's džuma</p>	<p><i>Džemre</i> (5.3. upcoming end of winter)</p> <p>regeneration, wool processing and knitting, visits <i>na sijelo</i> if weather allows</p> <p>milk processing</p> <p>cleaning the house</p> <p>controlling the land after the winter</p> <p>cleaning the dung yard → fertilising the fields</p> <p>preparing timber for fences</p> <p><i>Hamsini</i> (the end of the last 50 days of winter, from 31.1. to 20.3.)</p> <p>21.3. <i>Sultan nevruz</i> (first day of spring, celebrated by dervishes in particular)</p> <p>Thursday's mosque prayers, Friday's džuma</p>	<p>milk processing</p> <p>cleaning the pastures and fields</p> <p>the fields and pastures are fenced</p> <p>ploughing</p> <p>sheep/cattle herding</p> <p>preparing the vegetable gardens</p> <p>seeding potatoes</p> <p>visiting pattern: <i>na sijelo</i> is weakening</p> <p>Thursday's mosque prayers, Friday's džuma</p>

← winter season →

Figure 7.2  
Winter period summarised

### 7.3.2 Summer period

The summer period begins in the mountains by *Jurjevdan* (6th May). Nonetheless, the seasonal orchestration of work, agricultural activities and social relations changes considerably and gradually day by day as the snow thaws. In the previous chapters I described some of the processes and activities associated with transitory periods between the seasons in the mountains. The end of the winter period is marked by particular activities in the house and the land, such as cleaning, painting, and more importantly checking the fields for any damage in order to orchestrate subsequent agricultural conduct. During April the land (fields and meadows) needs to be cleaned and re-fenced wherever it is necessary. This is followed by ploughing and subsequently sowing some of the vegetables, such as potatoes, onion and beetroot.

Of particular importance in time-reckoning are *Jurjevdan* (6th May) and *Alidjun* (2nd August).<sup>98</sup> These two dates orchestrate agricultural activities as well as rituals. Both are pivotal in the temporalisation of working activities. It is believed that some seeds, such as beans, should not be sown before *Jurjevdan*; or that herding on the land should last only until *Jurjevdan* and continue only after the haymaking which is usually due in the second half of July. Indeed, the overall axes of the summer period stretch along *Jurjevdan* and *Alidjun*. These two dates overarch the vegetative phases of the summer period, and orchestrate agricultural activities as well as the ritual calendar (a similar observation was made by Bringa 1995: 225-226). The date itself is derived from the Orthodox tradition of celebrating St George's day according to the Julian calendar (6th May). St George is conceived to be the patron of farm animals. The feast is widely spread throughout the Balkan peninsula (e.g. Sikimić and Hristov 2007). As Sobolev (2007) illustrates, the beginning of the spring-summer period which is related to St George is often celebrated with an animal sacrifice (*kurban*) dedicated to the saint. However, Muslims in the mountains of central Bosnia do not conceive *Jurjevdan* primarily as an Orthodox feast. Although villagers are aware of the Orthodox St George's day tradition, they do not sacrifice on that date. The ways Muslims conceive *Jurjevdan* are mainly twofold. Firstly, it is entwined with the ideational framework of the natural rhythms and symbols of spring, regeneration and fertility (cf. Bringa 1995: 226). Secondly, it is understood as a part of the Islamic rhythms in the mountains.

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<sup>98</sup> 2nd August known to Muslims in Bosnia as *Alidjun* is also recognised as *Iinden* or St Elias' day (see Malcolm 1994: 58).

### 7.3.3 Morphology of the summer period: Ritual calendar

Before and after *Jurjevdan* the work on the fields continues. Women, besides working on the fields, carefully and thoroughly paint and clean the houses and wash the carpets. Those activities are conceived of as a preparation of the house for the village prayer for rain and symbolise the regenerative processes of changing seasonality. Moreover, in chapter five I described how on the eve of *Jurjevdan* women in the village *Brdo* after the sunset prayer (*akšam-namaz*) walk three times around the house and the sheds with the Qur'an wrapped in a cloth and simultaneously reciting a particular prayer (*dova*). In doing so, Muslims believe that the house and all living (non)human beings related to the house will be protected from any attack of malevolent spirits (*džin*) and powers.

*Jurjevdan* structures the ritual calendar in the mountains, and prayers for rain in particular. Prayers for rain (*dove za kišu*) have a long continuity in the regions of central Bosnia dating back to the pre-Islamic periods (cf. Hadžijahić 1978; Muftić 2004; Mulahović 1989). The annual gatherings of Muslims to pray for rain is an example of living Islam in the mountains. The places of gatherings and worship, known as *dovišća*, are often outside of the villages. *Dovišća* can be found around the ancient Islamic tombs or mausolea (*turbeta, mezare, šehitluci*), but also around the top of the hills, springs, caves and lime trees (cf. Muftić 2004; Hadžijahić 1978). There is a fixed date of the prayer at respective places (*dovišta*). The dates for the prayers are reckoned from counting Tuesdays or Sundays respectively after *Jurjevdan*. In the village Dolina studied by Tone Bringa in the late 1980s, there was an annual prayer for rain, which was organised by the local mausoleum and tombs. The prayers were held on the seventh Tuesday after *Jurjevdan*. According to Bringa the prayers were attended 'exclusively by women and the prayers were led by local *bula*' (Bringa 1995: 172). Furthermore, Bringa argues that 'the prayers for rain, which are clearly a fertility ritual should be the concern of women' (ibid.). This argument is, however, intriguing as I shall illustrate now.

In the entire region where I carried out my fieldwork, prayers for rain are the annual gatherings of male Muslims to pray for rain during which women do not participate. The prayers are organised mainly under the open sky. Until 1945 there were approximately 50 - 60 *dovišća* ranging throughout the northern areas of central Bosnia (see Muftić 2004: 221). Although there has been a continuity of prayers for rain, and the tradition of the prayers has been renewed in the 1990s in some places, the number of

actually used *dovišt'a* under the open sky does not exceeds 35 today. The rest of the prayers have been relocated to the mosques (see the following chapter).

The date of prayer for rain in the village Brdo is reckoned as the 7th Tuesday after *Jurjevdan*. The official organisation of prayers for rain is under the competence of the local office (*medžilis*) of the Islamic Union (*Islamska Zajednica*). The office is also responsible for preparing a schedule for all places where the prayers take place in the region.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, the respective *medžilis* also schedules Imams who will lead the prayers during these gatherings. Then, the schedules are distributed in April in the mosques during Friday's noon prayers. Nonetheless, the majority of villagers knew most of the dates by heart. Whenever I asked they smoothly reckoned a date of the respective prayer. In doing so, the date is derived from its relation to *Jurjevdan* or *Alidjun* respectively.

Prayers for rain along with *Jurjevdan* and *Alidjun* are a means of temporalisation of work and time-reckoning in the mountains. Muslims in the village Brdo conceive and structure time and work as 'before' and 'after' prayers for rain. It was for example argued that haymaking would never begin before the village prayer for rain (i.e. about 15th-18th June). As Fahir, an older villager, pointed out to me, 'every year we have had the hay under the roof before the dova in Kolakovići is due'. According to the schedule this was meant to be the 16th week after *Jurjevdan* (about 28th-30th July), and this is also the last prayer before *Alidjun*.

Prayers reckoned after *Jurjevdan* are known as Jurjev's prayer (*Jurjevske dove*). This period is in the local lexicon and narratives associated with rain and water, hence prayers for rain (*kišne dove*), and also with the processes of growing crops, grass and later with haymaking. The mid summer period is marked by *Alidjun* and the prayers are known as Alidjun's prayers (*Alidjunske dove*). The period around *Alidjun* is associated with sun, storms and fires. Thus, activities after *Alidjun* are associated with work on the fields and harvest. It is said in the mountains that *Alidjun* is the time when potatoes need to be 'woken up'. Indeed, during my fieldwork women from the village went on this date to their fields to dig out a few potatoes in order to check their quality and thus anticipate the time of harvest which is usually due about a month later. Although there is no sharp dividing

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<sup>99</sup> In total, there are 20 prayers scheduled every year by the *medžilis* to which Brdo is affiliated.

line between the two dates in people’s agricultural activities, the morphology of the summer season reckoned by Muslims in the village might be therefore outlined thus:

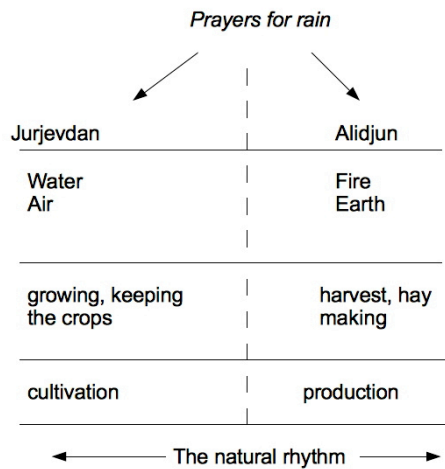


Figure 7.3  
Morphology of summer season

As the visualisation illustrates, the logic of time-reckoning draws upon agricultural activities, vegetative processes and symbols and these are overarched by divine power enacted and appropriated through prayers for rain. Put in this way, the seasonal morphologies emerge from three interrelated processes, that is production, symbolisation, and ritual. This form of time-reckoning is used alongside the Gregorian and Islamic calendar and shapes the overall rhythms and temporalities of Muslims’ lifeworlds in the mountains of central Bosnia.

May	June	July	August	September	October
<p>milk processing</p> <p>fencing the fields and pastures</p> <p>preparing firewood</p> <p>shearing sheep</p> <p>sheep/cattle herding until <i>Jurjevdan</i></p> <p>6.5. <i>Jurjevdan</i> (the beginning of summer period)</p> <p>seeding beans - only after <i>Jurjevdan</i></p> <p>painting the house</p> <p>washing the carpets</p> <p>3rd week after <i>Jurjevdan</i> - first prayer for rain in the region</p> <p>Thursday's mosque prayers, Friday's džuma</p>	<p>milk processing</p> <p>preparing firewood</p> <p>cleaning, painting and decorating the house - preparing for <i>dova za kišu</i> (prayer for rain)</p> <p>⇒ the end of activities before <i>dova za kišu</i></p> <p>7th Tuesday after <i>Jurjevdan</i> - <i>dova za kišu</i></p> <p>⇒ activities after <i>dova za kišu</i>: haymaking never before prayer for rain</p> <p>gathering of wild fruits, flowers - making jams, juices, herb teas</p> <p>prayers for rain continue</p> <p>Thursday's mosque prayers, Friday's džuma</p>	<p>milk processing</p> <p>honey collecting</p> <p>haymaking (2-3 weeks): mutual help and co-operation within <i>komsiluk</i></p> <p>prayers for rain continue</p> <p>Thursday's mosque prayers, Friday's džuma</p>	<p>milk processing</p> <p>honey collecting</p> <p>2.8. <i>Aličjun</i> (the mid of summer period)</p> <p>⇒ periodisation of activities: before/after - after <i>Aličjun</i> (work on the fields, harvesting beans, onions, maize)</p> <p>sheep/cattle herding in the fields and meadows</p> <p>10.8. less than two weeks before ramadan - a matter of concern and coordination of 'must-do' activities before the feast will start</p> <p>20.8. ramadan</p> <p>prayers in the mosque every day, collective <i>iftar</i> → a distinct sociality; Friday's džuma</p>	<p>ramadan orchestrates activities and sociality</p> <p>milk processing</p> <p>cropping wheat, harvesting potatoes</p> <p>preparing firewood</p> <p>sheep/cattle herding</p> <p>pears, plumbs collecting, storing or processing</p> <p>the end of ramadan</p> <p>an increase of working activities</p> <p>Thursday's mosque prayers, Friday's džuma</p>	<p>milk processing</p> <p>sheep/cattle herding</p> <p>transporting potatoes, beetroots from the fields and storing</p> <p>apples collecting and storing</p> <p>winter preparation: cleaning the fields, cleaning the dung yard, moving hay from more distant meadows, making and conserving cabbage salads, preparing firewood</p> <p>ploughing and wheat seeding</p> <p>~ 20.10. expectation of snowing</p> <p>Thursday's mosque prayers, Friday's džuma</p>
← summer season →					

Figure 7.4  
Summer period summarised

## 7.4 Islamic rhythms

Rhythm is an idiom that reveals multiple layouts of Muslims' lifeworlds (El Guindi 2008). It encompasses figuratively as well as corporeally the orchestration of the everyday, the sacred and rituals. Thus, rhythm analysis is a means to entwine intimate experiences, resonances and rhythms of being a Muslim. Let me start here with a short excerpt from the notes I took during my fieldwork.

Yesterday was the second day of *ramazanski bajram* [*Eid al-Fitr*]. The time of celebration continues and the village is no longer a silent and sleepy place as it used to be during Ramadan, on the contrary. However, today my landlord's brother brought sad news from the municipal town. A 24 year old son of their friend from a neighbouring village died in a terrible car crash during the first night of the feast. Perhaps he was drunk. Such a skeleton at the feast has spread throughout the region immediately. People in the village bitterly lamented that this is the way young Bosnian Muslims celebrate the end of Ramadan these days.

Today I travelled with my landlord, his brother and nephew to attend the burial (*dženaza*). It took place in the neighbouring village where the family lives. We were standing in front of the village's magnificent traditional Bosnian mosque with its wooden minaret, beautifully nested into the hilly mountainous landscape. During the half hour that followed our arrival (at 3.30pm) more than two hundred men gathered, still standing outside of the mosque and smoking, and others were still arriving. Silence! *Ramazanski bajram* is the feast during which Muslims get together to celebrate the end of fasting and intense worship. This afternoon, however, everyone knew what had happened 40 hours earlier and everyone was silent because the reason for which people had come together was painfully different. The silence was omnipresent. Women were coming later, by the side way behind the backs of men smoking cigarettes, and immediately entering the mosque. At 4.15pm two Imams arrived and a short while after *ezan* began to call everyone to the afternoon prayer (*ikindija-namaz*). It should have been the same sound as usual, but it was not. The *ezan*'s voice was more painful than usual, the phrasing was prolonged, the rhythm seemed to be slower. The call was spreading throughout the surrounding hills and forest and echoing again and again. After the afternoon prayer the *ezan* had started to call

to the prayer again; it was the call to prayer for the dead at the nearby cemetery. Men were leaving the mosque. Then the body was slowly carried by a car to the cemetery followed by the father and other men. They walked together, no one was smoking. Silence. Women were standing beside the mosque as they are not allowed to take part in the funeral, some of them were crying – silently though. The body was slowly separating from the living, the son was definitely detaching from his mother and sisters. Women were going back to the mosque to pray *tevhid*, a collective prayer for the souls of the dead. Meanwhile men had assembled in the cemetery where they prayed for the dead. The body lay on a wooden tablet, wrapped into a dark cloth with embroidered Islamic calligraphy, facing in the direction towards Mecca. Men and the two Imams were gathered and the body was laid at the front. Imams instructed the assembly and the men prayed again. Then, the body was carefully and slowly buried by two undertakers but many men were assisting as well. Almost everyone wanted to drop a bit of soil onto the tomb. Men assembled around the piled ground where the body was buried. They recited from the surah *Yasin*, and collectively prayed for the dead. Later on in the evening *ramazanski bajram* in the village continued.

The story is evocative as it touches upon the relationship between temporality, divinity and worship in the mountains. This ethnographic vignette casts light on at least three important temporal layouts of Muslims' lifeworlds in the mountains, that is daily, annual and life-cycle Islamic rhythms. There is no hierarchy between them and one often merges into another. Each of them becomes a matter of concern at particular moments of an individual Muslim's life. Put in this way, the rhythms of Islam are experienced by Muslims in the mountains, so to speak, differently during the day, the week, the year, the life-cycle, and multiply the meanings of what is understood as Muslim piety (e.g. Mahmood 2005).

#### **7.4.1 Everyday rhythms**

Everyday rhythms of Islam navigate and orient Muslims in time and space (cf. Delaney 1990; El Guindi 2008). In particular, the practice of *namaz* (five daily prayers) is a corporeal performative activity that punctually structures the flow of everyday routine into the sacred and profane moments (El Guindi 2008; Mahmood 2001; Schielke 2009).

Although the practice of *namaz* is considered in the mountains as a Muslim's duty (*farz*), many villagers do not perform *namaz* regularly. Nonetheless, it would be problematic to consider Muslims in the mountains as people who had 'lost their faith and heritage', and Islam in central Bosnia as 'a lapsed faith' (cf. Gellner 1983: 72; Jansen 2003: 217). The intensity of worship and conduct of piety vary between persons, as well as temporarily during the days, weeks or life-cycle. On the other hand, any debate on everyday rhythms of Islam in the mountains cannot be reduced to the practice of *namaz* only. The ways through which Muslims in the mountains develop their self-understanding of what constitutes them as being Muslims are multifaceted. One of the means to unwrap the formation of a Muslim selfhood is to explore the practice of piety at large (for the relation between the self and practice of piety see Mahmood 2005).

The everyday rhythms of Islam in the mountains can be understood by and large as a conduct of piety enacted along two axes. Firstly, the organisational axis of piety along the continuum between public or private spaces. Secondly, the social form of piety performed either as collective or individual acts respectively. In Brdo the practice of piety is individualised and localised primarily in the private spheres of the house. As I argued in previous chapters, there is no Imam permanently settled in the village, and hence the village mosque is not used for daily prayers. The collective prayers in the mosque are organised once a week. They take place every Thursday at the evening prayer (*jacija-namaz*). During my fieldwork I attended Thursday's evening prayers regularly. The number of attendees was relatively stable, and about ten villagers came regularly. People themselves explained to me that during the winter period it is easier to go to the mosque because there are fewer duties. However, some of the more pious villagers argued that if there were an Imam (*hodža*) in the village and if *ezan*'s voice sounded regularly, more people would be aware of what their duties really are, and would come to the mosque. This argument was often discussed in a lively manner by older villagers during Ramadan when the overall rhythm of Islam in the village changes profoundly and when the contrast is perhaps most visible.

The individualised practice of piety located in the house changes in intensity over the course of the year. The time between Ramadan and *kurban bajram*<sup>100</sup> might be characterised as a time of heightened observance of *namaz*, although it is localised

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<sup>100</sup> It is two months and ten days after the end of Ramadan.

chiefly in the private sphere of the house. Nonetheless, of those Muslims in the village who observe *namaz* even during the rest of the year after Ramadan, most of them do so irregularly. During my long stay in the village I only gained intimate insights into the everyday conduct of the houses within the *komšiluk* where I lived, and into several others beyond. Here the number of women who observe *namaz* was slightly higher than men. In one of the chapters I touched upon different modes of private piety between men and women in the house, and made a similar observation to Bringa (1995) that women are in many respects the guards of spiritual life, piety and transmission of muslimness in the house in the mountains of central Bosnia.<sup>101</sup>

Although the Gregorian calendar predominates in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Friday continues to be an important day of the week for many Muslims in the mountains. This is the time when particularly male villagers come to the municipal town every week. Here, they meet with the men from neighbouring villages over a coffee and exchange news, they visit the weekly organised market (*pijaca*), and some of them attend the Friday noon prayer (*džuma*) in the municipal mosque.<sup>102</sup> The collective prayer in the municipal mosque is usually well attended and some Muslims from Brdo attend regularly, other villagers only occasionally if they happened to be in the town by the Friday noon. The continuous importance of Friday for Muslims in the village might well illustrate also the fact that the local sawmills in the village do not usually work on Friday, and the day is generally considered as a day of rest.

An inextricable part of daily rhythms in the mountains is the moment of death. It moves Muslims temporarily away from the rhythm of everydayness. Although death inevitably brings grief to the lifeworlds of Muslims, it also needs to be considered as a punctuated economy of mourning in the context of Islamic rhythms. The deceased body ought to be buried the following day by the afternoon prayer (*ikindija-namaz*); yet the mourning ritual, prayers for the dead and the funeral, orchestrate the bodies of Muslims also in space. Male Muslims follow the deceased body into the cemetery where they pray for the dead (*dženaza*), meanwhile female Muslims pray collectively in the mosque, or alternatively in the house, for the souls of the dead (*tevhid*). Moreover, there is

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<sup>101</sup> For a similar argument about the relationship between ritualised piety and gender in Turkey see Tapper and Tapper 1987.

<sup>102</sup> The reason why the Friday noon prayer was not organised in the village is that either the village would have to prove that there are at least about 150 households (during my fieldwork there were actually ~74) or the village community would have to pay the Imam from its own pocket which seemed improbable.

another collective prayer for the dead organised 40 days (*četrdesnica*) and one year (*godišnjica*) after the death in the mosque which is also well attended and is a part of collective remembering.

The ways Muslims in the mountains reckon the rhythms of the day embrace particular practices with the processes of symbolisation. I showed that Muslims in the village conceive of the threshold as a materialised liminal space between the inside and outside of the house which is considered to be a potentially dangerous and ambiguous sphere. Processes of symbolisation of ambiguous places, or transitory phases of the day operate under similar conceptual logic. In structuring the day Muslims in the village draw upon temporal categories derived from the Islamic rhythms. The rhythmic categories which penetrate villagers' time-reckoning of this ambiguity are *sabah* (sunrise, morning period) and *akšam* (sunsets, twilight) respectively, and can be express thus:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \text{night} & \leftarrow & \text{day} & \rightarrow & \text{night} \\ & & \text{-- -- --} & & \\ & & \text{sabah} & & \text{akšam} \end{array}$$

Although the categories themselves are derived from the the practice of *namaz*, they are shared in the local lexicon as a means of temporalisation of the day at large. In the language of piety *sabah* refers to the first morning prayer (*sabah-namaz*), and *akšam* refers to the evening prayer (*akšam-namaz*). The ways villagers greet each other during the day mirror the similar logic of time-reckoning, and require an enactment of a specific social poetics. In addition to everyday usage of greetings such as *salamalejk* and *merhaba*, Muslims switch their greeting codes in the morning and greet their neighbours by saying *sabah hajrola* and *akšam hajrola* respectively. The later is also used as a formal code of greeting during the evening visits while people are entering the guest's house.

The everyday rhythms in the house obviously begin in the morning only after *sabah* and any work in general ought to last only until *akšam*. Villagers also use the word *sabahile* (adjective derived from *sabah*) as a virtue and characteristic of those who wake up early and who value work since early morning. On the other hand, *akšam* is conceived more ambiguously in the village. As I argued earlier, the night before the *Jurjevdan* (6th May) women walk around the house with the Qur'an only after *akšam* in order to protect the household from evil powers. Moreover, people avoid being outside the house during *akšam* and children are instructed in particular to stay indoors because this period is

generally conceived as potentially dangerous and ‘not good’ (*nevalja*). The period of twilight is the moment, as villagers believe, when various malevolent spirits and *jinn* (*džin*) are most active and might harm an individual’s well-being (cf. Bringa 1995: 179; Edgar and Henig 2010). During the winter period women prepare dinner after *akšam*, whereas during the summer period they prepare it beforehand; likewise, it is common practice in the village that the evening visits ought to take place only after *akšam*.

Everyday rhythms in Brdo are punctuated by a practice of piety that is chiefly associated with the spheres of the house and performed individually. Furthermore, *sabah* and *akšam* are important categories of time-reckoning that are informed by the rhythms of Islam. Although everyday life in the mountains is not always driven by the public rhythms of Islam, which are usually orchestrated around the mosque, the outlined categories of time reckoning and the practice of piety shape corporeal rhythms and temporalities of Muslims’ lifeworlds in the mountains of central Bosnia.

#### **7.4.2 The life cycle rhythms**

The rhythms of worship and practice of piety which are embedded into the lifeworlds of Muslims also have biographical layouts. Hence, any experience with Islamic rhythms cannot be separated from the life cycle of an individual and from her life narrative. Throughout my thesis I have shown that Islamic rhythms are conceived in the mountains differently in the course of a Muslim’s life cycle. The biographical timelines of Fadil, Ika and Selim illustrated different perspectives on the practice of piety in the mountains. All three narratives are entwined with local traditions, transmission of religious knowledge as well as the historicity of Bosnian Islam in particular ways. Furthermore, the narratives show that being a Muslim is an ongoing process of becoming a person throughout the course of life. This process is shaped by individual biographies, memories as well as individual creativity, aesthetic and moral standards (for a similar though more generalised argument, see Carrithers 2000).

In Brdo the practice of piety is primarily localised within the spheres of the house. I showed that there are gender differences in performing piety among Muslims in the village. However, another modality in performing piety is associated with a biographical time-line. Thus, the practice of piety also alters over the course of the life cycle. In my

conversations with and among Muslims themselves the elder generations often argued that Muslims ought to observe the Islamic duties (*farz*), for example performing *namaz* daily. However, younger villagers often argued contrarily. I was often told that any person ought to act first and foremost in a morally accountable way and that this is exactly what it means to be a virtuous Muslim. The two perspectives, however, are complementary rather than necessarily conflictual. Here let me illustrate the contradiction in a dialog I recorded in the village between two neighbours, Ragib (63 years old) and Zakir (43 years old).

Ragib: Well, it's time to go to the mosque to pray.

Zakir: Why? You don't need to go there. No one will come. You can easily pray at home. You are like my brother! Whenever he does not work he goes to pray at the mosque, that's weird, he could easily pray at home.

Ragib: I tell you what, whenever you can, you ought to pray in the mosque.

[short silence]

Ragib: I have read the Qur'an. Do you know what is written there? That Allah is merciful but one thing is unforgivable, and this is *namaz* [prayer].

Zakir: Well, maybe I don't pray regularly, but this is not so important, it's more crucial to be a good Muslim – I don't cheat anyone, I don't steal, nothing. And God should know that and I hope it will be so.

The following argument was expressed by a female Muslim in her mid thirties in the village. She was discussing with her neighbour a verbal dispute between two other villagers during which arguments about 'who is a good and bad Muslim respectively' had been used.

'And what does it mean to be a better Muslim? Is it someone who prays five times daily [*namaz*] and does not even know why? Or is it she, who is veiled and does not know why? Or is it someone who carries her faith in her heart, feels it in her soul, yet does not harm anyone and on the contrary tries to help everyone in the way that it should be? With the expectation that this is the way Allah wants it? Maybe I do not pray regularly but it does not mean that I am a bad Muslim'.

These two vignettes from my fieldwork are not in any way anecdotal. Muslims in the mountains engage in discussions about morality and piety constantly. However, such debates chiefly concern the moral conduct of persons in the flow of everyday life rather

than grand theological disputes. The sources of complementary perspectives on Muslim morality and the practice of piety are multiple. Different cohorts inevitably conceive the ways of being Muslim differently, depending on whether they were brought up in the pre-1950s socialist times, during or after the collapse of Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the ethnonationalism and the 1990s war as well as the recast post-Yugoslav religious landscape nurture these debates between Muslims as well (cf. Bringa 2002).

The individualised practice of piety takes another form during various life crises, or when individuals are considering making important life decisions, such as marriage choice for example. As I have argued elsewhere (see Edgar and Henig 2010), *istikhara*, an Islamic dream incubation practice, which is mainly prayed by women, is not unknown in the mountains of central Bosnia.<sup>103</sup> The *istikhara* prayer is performed either individually or by a healer, and in the case of marriage decisions in particular (see also Bringa 1995: 215). Likewise, in instances such as sorcery attack, prolonged physical or mental afflictions or a long-lasting misfortune when a Muslim person is trying to recuperate her well-being, Muslims in the Bosnian mountains obviously visit a healer as well as shifting towards particular modes of piety and religious observance. Indeed, as Csordas (1994) pointed out, every culture develops its own forms of coping with afflictions and in the case of religious healing ‘the locus of efficacy is not symptoms, psychiatric disorders, symbolic meaning, or social relationships, but the self in which all of these are encompassed’ (*ibid.*: 3). Thus, an individualised practice of piety or visiting a healer, are for Muslims in the mountains the ways to recuperate the self from a harmed well-being (cf. Edgar and Henig 2010: 256).

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<sup>103</sup> During the interviews with various Imams, sheikhs and also lay Muslims regarding this topic, one theme recurred often. It was a serious matter of concern about the increased spread of various healers and charlatans in contemporary Bosnia. In particular, the numbers increased after the war in the 1990s when many people were most susceptible to looking for this kind of help. Today, there is even one journal called *Aura* where many healers advertise themselves. On the other hand, as has been pointed out by Senad Mičijević in one interview ‘Bosnia is full of false messiahs’ (Mičijević 1999).

**VLADAR DUHOVNE MOĆI**  
*Amina - Minela*  
 Uz Allahovu dž.š. pomoć, Amina - Minela od svoje dvanaeste godine učenjem Kur'ana uspješno liječi i otklanja sve vrste bolesti i problema:  
 Uspješno otklanja sve vrste crne magije, uroka, nervoze, depresije, strah, napetost...  
 Pomaže u rješavanju vašeg poslovnog napretka, finansijskog uspjeha, poboljšanja koncentracije i pamćenja, porodičnog mira i sloge. Pomaže vam da uspostavite miran san, i da pronađete izgubljene ili otuđene lične stvari.  
 Liječenje visokog ili niskog pritiska, šećer u krvi, masnoća, oboljenje očiju, reumatska oboljenja, kičmeni stub, kamenac u žuci, nervna oboljenja, sterilnost.  
 Ako ste nesretni, ili tražite svoj mir, ili vas bilo šta drugo tišti, obratite se Aminu - Mineli, jer vi i vaši najmiliji zaslužujete da uz ALLAHOVU i našu pomoć izađete iz tame.

■ BIOENERGIJA ■ UČENJE I LIJEČENJE KUR'ANOM ■ PRONALAZENJE SIHIRA TESPIHOM ■ OTKLANJANJE SVE VRSTE CRNE MAGIJE (SIHIRA) ■ IZRADA HAMAJLIJA (LIČNE, KUĆNE, PORODIČNE)

TERMINI SE ZAKAZUJU SVAKODNEVNO OD 8:00 DO 15:00 h TELEFON:  
**063/152-837**

Picture 7.1  
 Islamic healer advertising her service in a local magazine

In Brdo I often came across a discussion concerning *sihir* (sorcery). In dozens of recorded instances, such as an animal's illness, poor quality cow's milk, or an individual's afflictions, villagers usually both visited a healer as well as temporarily shifted to the practice of piety (Picture 7.1). In chapter four I introduced the biographical time-line of Ika and a narrative of love, tears and remembering. When her husband decided to go to work in Azerbaijan Ika's personhood was severed as she was left behind alone with her children in the house. However, while Ika was experiencing such a sundering moment in her life course, she turned to piety. During one conversation she explained to me

'whenever I pray, I ask Allah PBUH to protect my husband, and I ask for his *hajr* [happiness, goodness]. Since he has gone I cannot sleep properly, but there are *dove* [prayers] you can recite and pray in the evening that calm you down, and this is better than whatever pills'

The practice of piety and performing *namaz* (*salāt*) does not necessarily differ only between 'during' and 'after' Ramadan (as discussed by Schielke 2009), but also during particular moments of a Muslim's life cycle itself. Indeed, as the last narrative illustrates any decisive moments in an individual's life cycle open a range of moral possibilities for persons to cope with the vicissitudinous flow of social life (cf. Carrithers 2005; Zigon 2009). For Muslims in the mountains, when facing a life crisis or anyhow severed well being, they seek any appropriate and effective culturally informed ways of recuperation (cf. Csordas 1994; Rasanayagam 2006). In doing so, villagers turn to a practice of piety

which draws upon local Islamic healing cosmologies punctuated by the rhythms of Islam as well as life cycles as understood in the mountains of central Bosnia.

### 7.4.3 Religious rhythms

The annual axis of Ramadan (*ramazan* in Bosnian spelling), *ramazanski bajram* (*Eid al-Fitr*) and *kurban bajram* (*Eid al-Adha*) are the moments of intense worship in the mountains. Similar observations were made by Bringa (1995) and Lockwood (1975) in other parts of Bosnia. Both authors argue that Ramadan was considered to be the most important feast of the Islamic calendar. Bringa (1995: 160-164) illustrates this in the village Dolina, where mainly women and older men fasted and observed *namaz* (daily prayers) during the holy month of Ramadan. Lockwood goes further in his analysis of Ramadan and argues that:

‘In practice, a man is considered a Moslem, not because he holds to the tenets of Islam, but because he is circumcised or observes Ramazan’ (1975: 48).

Much has been written on Ramadan from various corners of the Muslim world (eg. Bowen 1993; Delaney 1991; Möller 2005; Schielke 2009). In most of the recent debates the emphasis has been put on morality, practice and power relations of different regimes of truth (or authorising processes cf. Asad 1993) in shaping the Muslim self (cf. Deeb 2006; Mahmood 2005; Rasanayagam 2009). In his reflection on Ramadan in contemporary Egypt, Schielke (2009: 25) for example argues that intensified worship during Ramadan might often legitimise Muslims’ less intense worship and observance during the rest of the year. Indeed, there is an ambiguity, ambivalence and fragmentation in the practice of piety, as Schielke argues (*ibid.*), between moral reasoning shaped by an Islamic discursive tradition and Muslims’ everyday conduct, as well as between the time of Ramadan and the rest of the year. Likewise, I would add, Muslims’ personhood is permanently fragmented and reconfigured in regard to the particular rhythms of the day, year or life-cycle. However, as I have shown in this chapter the practice of piety in the Bosnian mountains is not sharply divided between the Ramadan feast and the rest of the year. Instead it needs to be understood on the continuum of intensity of worship. Muslims in Brdo conceive the period between the end of Ramadan and *kurban bajram*, which lasts for about ten weeks, as a continuity rather than discontinuity of a particular practice of piety. Intensity of worship in the

rest of the year does not rely solely on moral imperatives such as ‘being good at Ramadan’ that are derived from an Islamic discursive tradition. Contrarily, the relationship between morality and practice of piety in the flow of everyday life emerges from an individual biography, and thus it is located in the lifeworlds of Muslims. Hence, there is no single perception of morality and practice of piety ‘during’ Ramadan and ‘after’, but multiple and kaleidoscopic perceptions.

### *Ramadan and morality*

Indeed, in the mountains of central Bosnia Ramadan is also for Muslims one of the most important religious feasts. Let me start with two perceptions of Ramadan I encountered during my fieldwork in the mountains. However, these are not ideal types in the Weberian sense, despite both illustrating a range of possibilities on the continuum. Here I start with the perception of a dervish sheikh with whom I worked during my fieldwork. The sheikh often figuratively explained to his disciples (*murids*) that Ramadan is the time when Muslims try to imitate God. By using such a hyperbolic figurative explanation the sheikh put emphasis on the contemplative yet corporeally cultivating facets and strengths of Ramadan. Indeed, Ramadan is for dervishes conceived as a unique time for taming *nafs* (a set of ego’s desires), and thus for Muslims’ detachment from the mundane and material world. However, as Muslims are just humans, the sheikh immediately added, an act of imitating God has only temporary effects because any individual after hours of fasting always looks forward to breaking the fast, strives for a sip of water, or a bite of food. Ramadan, the sheikh usually concluded, is confirmation of who is the Lord and who is a mortal human. Hence, the time of Ramadan brings to the forefront the tension between deity and humanity.

Although such a way of framing Ramadan was shared by all of the sheikh’s disciples, it was not necessarily part of the common knowledge shared by the villagers. Muslims in the village understood the meanings and purposes of Ramadan, and especially their observance of fasting in a different way. A recurring argument in everyday conversations before and during Ramadan was that ‘it is worthy to fast’ (*‘valja sa postit’*). However, it was argued without providing any covering narrative such as that used by the sheikh. Instead, Ramadan and fasting observance were conceived by and large as *adet* (custom) that ought to be followed.

The two perceptions show different modes of moral reasoning employed by Muslims in validating the practice of piety during Ramadan. In the hyperbole about Muslims imitating God, the sheikh pedagogically entwined the practice of piety during Ramadan with the practice of cultivation of the self that is largely shared among various sufi groups (cf. Werbner 2004). Put in this way, an act of observance in Ramadan is conceived and validated as a possibility of becoming someone other, and hence as a way to get closer to God and more importantly to befriend God.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, the latter proposition ‘*valja sa postiti*’ (‘it’s worthwhile to fast’) needs to be understood in relation to the intensity of piety practice during the rest of the year. Whereas dervishes validate both fasting and piety as a continuous process of cultivation of the self, villagers put emphasis on *adet* (custom). Hence, fasting and intense worship during Ramadan are conceived by Muslims in the village as an enactment of continuity, mimesis of Islamic tradition and religious matters affecting how they ought to be.

During Ramadan Muslims in Brdo paid tremendous attention to who visits the mosque regularly, who attends *teravija-namaz* (the evening prayer during Ramadan), and who fasts. Whereas during the rest of the year I barely heard or witnessed any negative comments on an individual’s observance, the only occasion being when someone publicly drank alcohol, Ramadan is a time of different moral conduct posed by the discursive traditions, likewise personal virtues and piety. In Brdo villagers started soon after the beginning of Ramadan to comment upon those people who neither fasted nor attended the prayers in the mosque. In contrast to the conversations during the rest of the year, villagers used arguments such as the individuals’ infidelity, bad muslimness, or lack of respect to *adet* (customs, traditions). I also witnessed several conflicts between neighbours within neighbourhoods on the same matter. The reasons for disagreements and tensions were usually generated by the two clashing modes of moral conduct, that is being a good neighbour and Muslim respectively.

In chapter five I described everyday life in the neighbourhood as a particular regime of morality where neighbours are expected to pay a visit *na slatko* to their neighbours during various important and joyful occasions. It happened in one neighbourhood, that a few days before the beginning of Ramadan one family from the *komsiluk* succeeded in getting running water to their house after many years of getting water from their

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<sup>104</sup> Dervish ethics of self-alterity might be understood in Foucauldian terms as a technology of the self, that is, an ongoing and everlasting process ‘to become someone other’.

neighbours. This was conceived as a very important and celebratory moment in the life of the house, and hence the neighbours were expected to come and pay a visit *na slatko*. However, no one from the family who invited the neighbours either fasted or attended the prayers in the mosque during Ramadan. Therefore, the family expected that their neighbours would come even during the holy month, but the other neighbours were overwhelmed by Ramadan, and in the end nobody came.

Indeed, the neighbours could not pay a visit *na slatko* because the evening prayers ended usually after 10 pm, and the following morning those who had been fasting had to wake up around 3 am. What had happened was that after a week of waiting the head of the house got very angry and instructed his wife that she should not talk to anyone in the neighbourhood unless they came, and she did so eventually. Once she passed around the wife of my landlord and a few other neighbours who were sitting in the garden; she just silently said ‘how are you?’, and rejected an invitation to join them, although she has otherwise usually done so. Then she mentioned ‘we have been expecting you to come *na slatko* but you didn’t come, my husband is really angry now because he thinks that this *komšiluk* is not worthy at all [*nevalja*]’. People replied politely that now it is Ramadan and the family should not expect neighbours to visit them if people were fasting. The woman did not reply and walked away. The group of neighbours was disappointed and upset for a while and then one woman said

‘so what, no one can expect from me that I will walk around the village and hang around with someone for a coffee or whatever, it’s Ramadan! It is worthwhile to fast! But they don’t fast so how could they understand? They ought to wait until the end of Ramadan, but I tell you what, they don’t know what it means to be worthy [*šta valja*]’.

Similarly, during a collective *iftar* organised in the house of a family from the *komšiluk* one of the invited neighbours had to go home in the middle of feasting because someone from the *mahala* came to visit her. The woman was really angry and lamented ‘do they know that during Ramadan people should not walk around and hang around with others pointlessly or without any invitation?’. Nonetheless, she eventually left the dinner and went back home quickly in order to serve coffee to their guests from the *mahala*, and yet was still able to attend the evening prayer later. The two examples then clearly illustrate two moral idioms that are constitutive aggregates of personhood in the mountains of central Bosnia, that is being a good neighbour as well as being a good

Muslim, and these might clash at times. However, it also illustrates that Muslims are not vehicles solely enacting an Islamic discursive tradition. Instead, Muslims always validate the immediate circumstances in accordance with their own aesthetic standards and moral creativity (e.g. Marsden 2005).

### *The rhythms of Ramadan*

In the rest of this chapter I shall attend ethnographically to the rhythms of Ramadan in the Bosnian mountains. Ramadan becomes a serious matter of concern already a few weeks before the feast itself. The village mosque, which is not otherwise in daily use during the rest of the year, becomes during Ramadan the pulsing social heart of the village community. Male villagers organise communal work (*akcija*) before the beginning of Ramadan in order to repair and prepare the mosque for the feast. Women come and clean the interior of the mosque as they will do at the end of Ramadan, as well as before the *kurban bajram* feast. Yet women again carefully clean and decorate the houses because the intimate spheres of the house become a part of public worship, particularly during the collectively organised *iftar* which are held in the houses.

Everyday life in the village is structured by and large according to the voice of *ezan* (muezzin) and public *namaz* (daily prayers) in the village mosque. The way the day is orchestrated during Ramadan differs from other periods of the year. It stretches between *sehur - sabah* and *iftar - akşam* respectively. *Sehur* is a morning meal served before the beginning of daily fasting during which all members of the house eat together. It needs to be finished minutes before the dawn, and sunrise prayer (*sabah-namaz*). After some necessary chores in the house and in the sheds those villagers who are not required to go to work try to relax for a few hours. The village everyday life during Ramadan is characterised by a considerable silence compared to other periods of the year. During the day villagers conduct only necessary tasks around the house and in the fields, otherwise, they stay in their houses and relax, or read the Qur'an.

Sunset (*akşam*) is the time to break the fast (*iftar*). During the holy month, the temporarily settled Imam moves from house to house, and from one *mahala* into the other in rotation every day. He does so obviously before *iftar* and stays until the afternoon of the following day, when he moves into another house. This tradition is reckoned back to the time when there was no mosque in the village and Muslims organised Ramadan prayers in their houses. At the time, the Imam stayed in the houses where the prayers were

organised.<sup>105</sup> The house where the Imam stays also invites neighbours from the *komšiluk* to attend *iftar*. As I argued in previous chapters, one of the definitions of *iftar* I was given by villagers is ‘people get together, they eat a lot, drink a lot of coffee, it’s a joy, that’s real *komšiluk*’. Indeed, I showed that the feasts such as Ramadan and kurban bajram are conceived as both religious rituals as well as feasts of neighbourhood.

*Iftar*, the time when neighbours get together and eat together is a highly orchestrated performance. It is usually known a few days in advance where the Imam is going to stay, and hence the respective house has enough time to invite neighbours. People usually get together already half an hour before the time of break, and slowly gather around *sofra*<sup>106</sup> where they will eat together, although men and women are separated. Meanwhile the guests are chatting or watching a special TV Ramadan program, with the punctual time clock on the screen (cf. Armbrust 2006). Nonetheless, the audiosensual confirmation of the break from fasting is synchronised with *ezan* which sounds from the village mosque. The voice of muezzing, which signals the moment of the break from fasting, is followed by a short prayer and a glass of water and *sok* (home made juice). The *iftar* menu consists of many courses, usually made up of the local favourite meals (bean soup, roasted meat, *pita*, *sarma*). After the main courses Muslims pray together, first only briefly while they are gathered around the table, and then, still in the house, they pray the sunset prayer (*akšam-namaz*), which is followed by coffee and cakes. Later on people go collectively to the mosque to pray *teravija-namaz*.

The time of Ramadan is also an experience of a distinct temporalisation for children in the village. Overall, children get very excited about the Ramadan rhythms. This sometimes sharply contrasted during my fieldwork with the practice of piety of some parents who neither fasted nor participated in the collective piety. Children were in, or around the mosque all the time, and befriended the young Imam whom they highly admired. During Ramadan there is a regular *mekteb* (Quranic school) organised by the Imam in the village mosque for all children. This sharply contrasts with the rest of the year when *mekteb* is organised in the mosque either irregularly or only in the municipal town. During the first half of Ramadan *mekteb* is usually run twice a week. Later, when

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<sup>105</sup> At the time when Ramadan was organised in the houses women did not attend the Ramadan prayers organised collectively.

<sup>106</sup> *Sofra* has several meanings, usually it is a dinner table or large piece of cloth, or a large tray where people sit around and eat together.

the children and the Imam prepare a program for the 27th night of Ramadan, they meet in the mosque more often and learn not only about the elements of Islamic orthodoxy but also about the practice of singing *ilahija* (religious songs) and reciting *mevlud*.

Children who have already begun to attend the school, around the age of six, are slowly supported in fasting during Ramadan. Nonetheless, it is not expected that they would fast for the entire Ramadan period. Either they fast for half a day until midday and the following day another half-day after noon, or the whole day every second day. Those children who succeeded to fast for the entire Ramadan period are highly esteemed and conceived as already matured. This moment of the first successful fasting during Ramadan is an important mark in the individual's life cycle. During Ramadan these experiences with the first Ramadan fasting are often vividly remembered by the elders, and thus also used as a pedagogical exemplum to supportively teach children about fasting and the practice of piety at large.

Ramadan brings particular experiences with temporalisation for Muslims in the mountains. Time-reckoning and temporalisation are drawn along the axes *sehur - sabah* and *iftar - akşam*, and from *ezan* to *ezan* respectively. Furthermore, villagers use a Ramadan calendar (*ramazanska vaktija*) with the punctual times for prayers, beginning and breaking the fasting. The calendars are usually brought by the Imam from the regional office of the Islamic union and freely distributed at the beginning of Ramadan.<sup>107</sup>

Nowadays, the television is an inextricable and important part of everyday temporalisation during Ramadan in every house in the village. Anthropologists have paid increasing attention to the role of new media in Muslim societies (e.g. Eickelman and Anderson 1999; Hirschkind 2006), and to 'new Islam in the media world' (Abu-Lughod 2006: 20). In Bosnia-Herzegovina there is a special Ramadan program on the TV. It brings and mediates experiences of Ramadan from various corners of the Muslim world into the houses in the Bosnian mountains. Furthermore, every morning during *sehur*, I listened with my host family to the recitations of Quranic *suras* on the TV.

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<sup>107</sup> In 2008, only a few days after the end of Ramadan there were local elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the SDA party, which is generally considered as a Muslim party, freely distributed before the beginning of Ramadan its own *vaktija* and thus advertised itself; in the neighbourhood where I lived every house had it and used it.

We also synchronised the organisation of *sehur* and *iftar* not only with *ezan*, but with the time clock authority of the Ramadan broadcasting as well (cf. Armbrust 2006).

Muslims in the village often explained to me that the first and second half of Ramadan are qualitatively different. The first is conceived as more difficult and requires time and discipline to corporeally attune oneself to the particular rhythms. The second part is considered contrarily as a joy, when the body is disciplined enough and less tired, and the remaining days seem to be reckoned faster. Of particular importance is the 27th night of Ramadan (*lejletul kadr*). As I wrote in the preface, *lejletul kadr*, sometimes also called the night of power, commemorates the night when the Qur'an was revealed, as all Muslims in the village believe. Muslims also believe that every prayer performed that night is a thousand times more powerful than any other prayer during the year. Hence, at that night after *teravija-namaz* villagers stay in the mosque and organise a special social gathering during which children and the Imam sing *ilahija*, and together with older women children recite collectively *mevlud*.

The end of Ramadan slowly merges into *ramazanski bajram* which lasts three days. By contrast to Ramadan the bajram feast is characterised by an overabundance of sweet cakes, coffees and visits. However, there is no sharp distinction in the practice and rhythms of piety between the two.

Instead the end of Ramadan is followed by sensitive though less intense worship and observance as the overarching rhythms of everyday life are reoriented again towards 'mundane' activities. Moreover, after Ramadan the Imam leaves the village and regular prayers in the mosque take place again only on Thursday evenings. Nonetheless, as I observed women in particular still continue with performing daily prayers, though not with all five prayers regularly, even after Ramadan. Such an intensified practice of piety lasts until *kurban bajram* and only hereafter their intense worship slowly decreases.<sup>108</sup>

## **7.5 Conclusion: The rhythm of Islam in the mountains of central Bosnia**

The regimes of temporality in the Bosnian mountains are multiple. In this chapter I focused on the relations between practices, environment and processes of symbolisation

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<sup>108</sup> Here I do not discuss those who pray regularly.

that shape the rhythms of Islam and lifeworlds of Muslims in the Bosnian mountains. An interplay of various cultural grammars as embodied in local rituals, folk calendars, and agricultural practices unravels multiple trajectories of cultural continuities in the Balkans (e.g. Hadžijahić 1978; Malcolm 1994: 58; Sikimić and Hristov 2007). By attending ethnographically to the ways Muslims in the mountains signify their actions and experiences temporally, as well as how Muslims understood them, I found a continuity of a knowledge tradition from which Muslim persons draw upon local cosmologies in their acting and understanding of the world they live in.

Lifeworlds of Muslims in Brdo consist of multiple temporal horizons, and these merge into one another. In her analysis of Muslim Arab culture, El Guindi (2008) builds her argument upon the trope of rhythm. She argues that rhythm eloquently grasps Muslims' everyday experiences with the merging of time between the sacred and the profane, between the prayers and the everyday, or between the public and the private (El Guindi 2008: 137). Such an experience of constantly merging time creates what El Guindi interprets as a distinct rhythm of Arabo-Islamic culture. The rhythm analysis is arguably useful in understanding how a person experiences, grasps and reckons temporality in the vicissitudinous flows of events. Yet it also sheds light on the ways a stock of knowledge employed by a person situates and is situated in the rhythms of local cosmologies. However, as I showed in this chapter, although the idiom of rhythm is a powerful tool in El Guindi's comparative analysis of Arabo-Islamic culture, an ethnography of the Bosnian mountains reveals in many respects different rhythms of Islam, and different Muslims' experiences and rhythms of their lifeworlds. In Brdo the rhythms of Islam are intermingled with agricultural rhythms as well as with multiple though overlapping calendars. Hence, agricultural rituals, Islamic tradition and a personal practice of piety are various modes from which divination is appropriated, and these modes are embedded into the local cosmologies in the flow of time.

## 8 Sacred landscapes contested

In summer 2009, after having spent more than a year in the mountains of central Bosnia conducting my fieldwork, once on the way back from the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, in a bus I was struck by a billboard along the road advertising the 499th Ajvatovica pilgrimage. Neither was it the anniversary, nor the advertisement itself that perplexed me. It was a red-coloured graffiti sprayed on the bottom of the billboard '*The biggest heretic religious feast?*'. For a while my imagination was haunted by the images of ethno-religious conflict, which is recurring here through the (ethno)politics of the sacred. After my return to the mountains I mentioned what I had seen to my friends in the village, and also to my dervish friends with whom I worked. However, both interpreted the graffiti differently and they provided me immediately with another interpretative framework: '*eh, Wahabis!*' I was told.

This short excerpt from my fieldwork outlines contemporary ambiguities and competing meanings in Muslim politics over sacred authority among Bosnian Muslims. It shows a particular example of how Muslims in Bosnia respond to changes in the religious landscape that have taken place in the past two decades at the grass-roots level in the mountains. The post-socialist liberation of religious expression and conduct, as well as the postwar public 'identity' debates and proliferation of various Islamic humanitarian organisations in Bosnia, opened the public debates to the questions of the authenticity and specificity of Bosnian Islam. Special attention was paid to the discourses on renewed Bosniaks' traditions, and Muslim holy sites such as the Ajvatovica pilgrimage in particular (Picture 8.4).

In the public debates as well as in intimate conversations many of the sacred sites are conceived either as an expression of an authentic Bosnian Islam or as a parochial non-modern religious conduct, or as a syncretic and thus un-Islamic faith that should be abandoned. These debates are shaped by changing ideas, conceptions and notions of what constitutes 'correct' Muslim practice in Bosnia today. However, these debates are not in any case exceptionally Bosnian, and need to be considered as a part of social

dynamics and broader ongoing debates within many Muslim societies today.<sup>109</sup> Eickelman and Piscatory (1996) for example argue that Muslim politics need to be understood broadly as ‘the competition and contest over both the interpretation of symbols and control of the institutions, formal and informal, that produce and sustain them’ (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996: 5). A similar argument can also be found in Talal Asad’s work (1986, 1993). Asad argues (1986: 7) that Islam ought to be understood as a discursive tradition in which particular ideas compete with each other over authorising ‘proper Islam’ and orthodoxy. In other words, as Asad argues, we need to study how a particular set of ideas becomes an Islamic orthodoxy and ‘correct practice’ within the web of power relations. Although Asad’s conceptual toolkit helps to unmask the ideological underpinnings of Muslim politics, it does not provide us with a nuanced analytical tool by which we could unwrap the micro-politics of excluded, marginalised and muted ideas and practices.

At the levels of the micro-poetics and micro-politics of everyday life we can find that the boundaries of inclusion/exclusion are rather blurred and the categories interconnected. As Ladislav Holy for example showed in his analysis of Islamic symbolism and ritual practice among the Berti in Darfur, Sudan, Islam is always both a localised form of orthodoxy as well as orthopractice. As such, the processes of authorisation of a particular orthodoxy need to be examined at the grass roots level and as Holy showed, in a Berti society we might find a scale in which locally defined orthodoxy (normative Islam) and deviant and seemingly excluded beliefs and practices, in fact, operate together at various scales (Holy 1988: 469), and as such these are dwelled into the local cosmologies of Muslims’ lifeworlds (Holy 1991). Similarly, as Rasanayagam pointed out (2006: 388), ‘we need to study processes of authorisation at the micro-level’ if we want to study the multifaceted ways of becoming and being a Muslim.

Therefore, as I argue in this chapter, in attending to the lifeworlds of Bosnian Muslims we need to integrate both a study of Muslim politics as well as explore what constitutes coherent reflections of the world and the place of humans (i.e. Muslims) in it. In particular, I analyse the public rhetoric as well as intimate conversations of what constitutes a ‘correct’ Bosnian Islam in the mountains today. In these debates the veneration of holy sites and ritual conduct through which the sacred landscape is

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<sup>109</sup> For similar, though varied processes in other ‘margins’ of Muslim world see: Rasanayagam 2006, 2010 (for ‘post-socialist’ Uzbekistan); Deeb 2006 (for Shi’i Libanon); Marsden 2005 (for the Pakistan North-Western Frontier); Gilson 2000 (for peasant women in Egypt); Hart 2009 (for western Anatolia, Turkey).

constructed and appropriated has been questioned in particular. However, I show that both the veneration of holy sites as well as ritual conduct need to go beyond the debates about identity politics. I shall conclude that through intimate relations to the holy sites Bosnian Muslims access and appropriate individuals' fortune and luck in the flow of uncertainties of everyday life. Therefore, any exploration of a 'correct' Muslim practice needs to be contextualised first and foremost within the cosmologies of Muslims' lifeworlds.

### **8.1 Holy sites in the Balkans: A theoretical overview**

Sacred landscapes in the Balkans have attracted the attention of many anthropologists in the past decades (cf. Albera 2008; Bax 1995; Bielenin-Lenczowska 2009; Bowman 2010; Bringa 1995; Hayden 2002; Dubisch 1995; Duijzings 2000). The main theme has become the politics of sharing of holy sites by various religious constituencies. In particular, the emphasis has been put on how various holy sites gain a multivocal character and a capacity to accommodate the differences. Put in this way, the prevailing and dominant scholarly views on Balkan holy sites have been anchored to a politics of sharing and difference between (ethno-)religious communities, such as Serbs (Orthodox Christians), Croats (Roman Catholics), Bosniaks (Muslims), Kosovo Albanians (Muslims) and so forth.

Of particular importance have become the thought-provoking concepts of 'antagonistic tolerance' and 'competitive sharing' outlined by Robert Hayden (2002) in a comparative analysis of sharing sacred sites by multiple ethnoreligious groups in the Balkans and India.<sup>110</sup> Hayden anchors his comparative sociology of shared holy sites to the concept of 'antagonistic tolerance'. In his definition of the concept, Hayden borrows from the negative definition of tolerance as understood by moral philosophers such as John Locke, and which means 'passive noninterference and premised on a lack of ability of either group to overcome the other', and 'attitudes of strategic calculation of the value of tolerating others' (2002: 206). The idea of 'antagonistic tolerance' hence embraces sharing of holy sites with 'a pragmatic adaptation to a situation in which repression of the other group's practices may not be possible rather than an active embrace of the Other' (ibid.: 219).

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<sup>110</sup> For critical reflection on Hayden's argument in the Bosnian context see Sorabji (2008).

The idea of ‘competitive sharing’ accommodates both conflict and sharing as inevitable modalities into the pragmatics of social life. Put in this way, latent conflict is an inherent condition in the processes of making and sharing sacred sites. Hayden portrays a picture where a sharing is understood only as a temporal moment expressing actual processual relations rather than a fixed quality of inter-group stasis, that is based on long lasting difference and pragmatic acceptance (see also Hayden et al. forthcoming). This view highlights that the differences between the groups who share a holy site are continuous and profound. As he argues, the conviction that ‘identities are fluid or changeable does not mean that distinctions between groups are easily removed’ (Hayden 2002: 207). In arguing so, Hayden also questions arguments about unproblematic peaceful multicultural traditions of places such as Bosnia and which see the 1990s war as a betrayal of the Bosnian tradition of tolerance (for this argument see Donia and Fine 1994).

Nonetheless, Hayden’s analysis becomes arguably problematic at the moment when we look closely at the scales on which his arguments are discussed. In particular, sharing of holy sites is attended to from the top-down political perspective where the unit of analysis is chiefly an ethno-religious ‘group’ instead of a close ethnographic examination of the local micropolitics and practice of sharing by various actors at the grass-roots level. In other words, Hayden emphasises a sociology of *inter*-group relations and boundaries where sharing and difference, the processes of inclusion and exclusion and other contrasting dichotomies have been studied as emerging from sharing holy sites, nonetheless with enduring boundaries between groups.<sup>111</sup> This argument replicates the same logic of ‘groupism’, which Hayden also employs in his interpretation of neighbourhood (*komšilik*). As I argued in chapter five, ‘groupism’ describes a tendency to ascribe agency to entities such as ethnic groups, which are taken for granted and considered as basic constituents of social life (cf. Brubaker 2002: 164). The prevailing emphasis oriented entirely at inter-groups levels has reduced, thus, complex social fabrics to their ethno-national dimensions, while overlooking at the same moment other related processes.

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<sup>111</sup> A trap of essentialism was pointed out by Bowman (2002) in the ‘Comments’ on Hayden’s paper, see also Albera (2008).

Several critiques of ‘competitive sharing’ pointed out two important and omitted perspectives. Firstly, Albera (2008) in his critical reassessment of Hayden’s arguments takes as a point of departure a *longue durée* scale of devotional and cultural continuity in the Mediterranean, and argues

‘the sharing of sacred sites is a wider and complex phenomenon which needs a more flexible interpretative framework – and a perspective less engaged in (and influenced by) contemporary political debates (...) [i]n order to grasp these phenomena we need more historical and ethnographic, as well as more flexible comparative frameworks, equipped to take distinctions and nuances into account’ (ibid.: 38-39,40).

Thus, Albera (2008: 53-56; see also Albera and Couroucli forthcoming) argues for an analytical shift towards a greater complexity and broader scale of continuity in any analysis of holy sites. Furthermore, he calls for both careful exploration of historical sources and more detailed folklore and ethnographic research. In particular, the continuity of holy sites might be studied from the perspective of the pilgrimage sites per se, and through tracing agency of various actors in the processes of making a pilgrimage site. An emphasis on pilgrimage sites and call for ethnographic research seems to be a suitable point of departure for understanding the competing meanings and practices over the holy sites in the Balkans and helps us understand the holy sites as contested places nestled in a sacred landscape.

Secondly, Bowman (2010) opens the issues of agency of/around holy sites. Bowman attends to the analysis of agency ethnographically, and argues

‘The presence of agency necessitates close attention to what people are doing, and what they say they are doing, while they are in the process of doing it. It is vital to attend to *who* is saying *what* to *whom* and *who* is listening; long-term historical processes are characterized by silencings as well as debates. It is important to examine both if we want to really know what goes on in “sharing”’ (Bowman 2010: 198, italics in the original)

Based on his comparative research of shared holy sites in Palestine and in Macedonia, Bowman (2010: 196) points out that there is no antagonism as foundational logic for intercommunal interactions. Nevertheless he observed another dynamic that resulted from contingency, situations and constantly shifting power relations, rather than from ‘antagonistic tolerance’. Indeed, sharing of a holy site might result in antagonism,

tensions, mixing or it might not. Hence, as Bowman adds, ‘we must attempt to see what happens on the ground *while* syncretistic practices are occurring’ (ibid.: 199, italics in the original)

In what follows I shall draw upon Albera’s and Bowman’s arguments and parallel them with the processes of contestation between Bosnian Muslims themselves over the meanings, sharing and control of sacred landscape at large. Namely, I am concerned with pilgrimage sites per se, and yet trace agency of various actors assembled around the holy sites in the mountains of central Bosnia. I introduce and discuss the Karići pilgrimage conceived by many Bosnian Muslims as Bosnian (little) *hajj*, and the cycle of *dove za kišu* (prayers for rain). In particular, I attend to local conversations of various Muslims in the mountains, in order to trace ‘who is saying what to whom and who is listening’. In other words, I shed light on *intra*-communal interactions among Bosnian Muslims themselves.

### **8.1.1 Pilgrimages, contests and anthropology**

Here let me only briefly revise the pilgrimage debate with particular reference to the Muslim world. Pilgrimage as a subject matter of anthropological analysis is inevitably linked to the work of Victor and Edith Turner. Particularly Victor Turner (1974) used the dynamic tripartite of ritual process, that is, structure – antistructure – *communitas*, and expanded and applied it to the pilgrimage as a kind of ritual action *sui generis*. According to Turner, the moment of pilgrimage creates an antistructural *communitas*. However, as Coleman and Eade (2004) pointed out, the Turners stayed in a place-centered approach instead of studying ‘journeying’ – modes of sacred travel as such. Therefore, the authors call for a new perspective which would include various forms of motion ‘embodied, imagined, metaphorical as constitutive elements of many pilgrimages’ (ibid.: 2-3).

Islam is inextricably tied with journeying and sacred travels. Both journeys in time and space as well as journeys of the minds, imagination and heart have profoundly shaped Muslims’ awareness of Islam as moving religion (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990). Of particular importance in Muslims’ thought are the concepts of *hajj* (pilgrimage) and *hijra* (emigration) and their rich figurative usage by many Muslims during various occasions

of their everyday as well as spiritual lives (cf. Delaney 1990). However, there are other examples of sacred travels in the Muslim context, that is, *ziyaras* (visits to local or regional shrines), and *rihla* (travel in search of knowledge) (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990: 5). In particular, the *ziyaras* travels are shaped by culturally informed understanding, imagination, practice and an expression of living Islam. Therefore, any movement in sacred space needs to be understood as a kind of Muslim's self-expression and agency. On the other hand, the *ziyaras* travels might also help at times when the self is reassembled during various life crises or harmed well-being.

In this chapter I follow the place-centered approach while studying sacred landscape in Muslim Bosnia. Nonetheless, I argue that in this context any pilgrimage as well as any ritual gathering does not necessarily create a catch-all antistructural *communitas*. Nevertheless, it might strengthen structural differences, detachment and/or conflict. As I showed in chapter six, Baumann's (1992) subversive reading of Durkheim indicates that ritual may be performed by competing constituencies; moreover, ritual can serve to negotiate the differing relationships of its participants; ritual may also speak to aspirations towards cultural change (cf. Baumann 1992: 99). Therefore, Muslim pilgrimages and ritualised ways of visiting holy sites in the mountains of central Bosnia ought to be understood as contested places where Muslims' self-expressions and belonging are negotiated.

## **8.2 Sacred landscape in Bosnia**

The worship of holy sites has a long-lasting continuity across the Balkans, and the Bosnian sacred landscape is part of this continuity (e.g. Bringa 1995). The notions of good livelihood in the mountains of central Bosnia exist in divine conjunction with veneration of multiple holy sites that assemble various tombs, caves, water springs, hills and trees, all of which are sources of personal blessing (*bereket*), fortune (*nafaka*), luck (*sreća*), and good life as such.

The highland range Zvijezda where I carried out my fieldwork is closely associated with the early history of Islamisation and the conquest of Bosnian lands by the Sultan Mehmet II. Fatih in the second half of 15th century. There are many *šehitluci* (Muslim martyrs' gravestones) and *turbeta* (mausoleums) from this period scattered across the

region. These have been worshiped until the present days. Moreover, the local historical narratives portray one of the places for rain prayers, called *Kurban kamen* (Kurban's stone), as the place where the Sultan sacrificed a ram during the Islamic *Kurban Bajram* (*Eid al-Adha*) feast (Picture 8.1).



Picture 8.1

*Šehitluci*

*Kurban kamen*  
(the stone where the Sultan sacrificed a ram)

In the mountains of central Bosnia, both visible material imprints of the long-lasting practice of worship inscribed into the sacred landscape, and the vivid narrative culture shaped a distinct regional identity and self-understanding as firmly embedded in this heritage as an enduring historical stream of Islam and being a Muslim. Of particular importance that spreads beyond the region is the Karići pilgrimage site with hundreds of years' long-lasting continuity of the annual Muslim pilgrimage, and rather distinctively regional 'little tradition' of prayers for rain.

### 8.2.1 Karići

Karići is the annual three-day pilgrimage during which Bosnian Muslims worship Allah and pray *hatma-dova* (recital of the entire Qur'an) for Hajdar-dede Karić at the place with the wooden mosque called Karići at the top of one plateau. Although there are perhaps no written historical records about Hajdar-dede Karić (cf. Muftić 2004; Mulahalović 1989: 192-196), his cult exists and lasts through the tremendously vivid narrative tradition, the annual pilgrimage and individual visits.

It is believed that Hajdar-dede Karić was one of the messengers of Islam who were brought to the Balkan peninsula during the early Islamisation by the Sultan.<sup>112</sup> The legends say that Hajdar-dede Karić was a wise, knowledgeable Islamic scholar, effendi, and a dervish sheikh. The reasons why Hajdar-dede Karić decided to build the mosque at the top of the plateau are related to his dream incubation (*istikhara*), when he dreamt about where the mosque ought to be built.

In the narratives I was told about Hajdar-dede Karić I found several oft-repeated motifs: *učenjāk* (scholarly person), the founder of the mosque/holy site in Karići through the dream revelation, *evlija* (from Arabic *walī*, *awliyā* pl., a friend of God), a person who performed miracles (*keramet*) during his life.<sup>113</sup> The very first tomb (*mezar*) in the Mecca direction by the mosque, with a small pit in the middle is perhaps Hajdar-dede's as this kind of gravestone (*nišan*) was usually made for individuals who performed miracles during their lives. The raining water caught in the pit is conceived as healing and is used for various kinds of healing and illnesses; as well as for good luck, blessing and fortune as I shall discuss shortly.

Good luck and divine power are associated with the place as such. There are stories told that during the Second world war, the Četnik troops tried to burn down the wooden mosque but they could not by any means set it alight. Another story says that in the last 150 years there has not been any *džemat*<sup>114</sup> in the plateau, and the mosque and pilgrimage site have been used only during the annual pilgrimage. The only residents living in relative proximity have been a few Serbian houses.<sup>115</sup> The Orthodox families cared for the mosque and held even the key in the past, although they did not participate in the pilgrimage and worship as such. Even in the more distant villages I was repeatedly told one story. At the time when the Karići mosque was abandoned and worshipped only during the annual pilgrimage or individual visits, these Orthodox families despairingly struggled with bad crops as much as with illnesses of their livestock. While searching for help they were told by an Orthodox cleric that there must be a

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<sup>112</sup> According to some legends the other one was Ajvaz-dede (Hajvaz-dede) from Prusac, the founder of the Ajvatovica pilgrimage.

<sup>113</sup> These motifs are characteristic, as founding narratives, for such charismatic living saints and sheikhs also in other parts of the Muslim world and in Central and South Asian context in particular, see Kehl-Bodrogi 2006; Lyon 2004; Werbner 2004; Werbner and Basu 1998.

<sup>114</sup> Islamic organizational unit consisting of mosque, Imam and congregation

<sup>115</sup> Who appeared at the time there as *kmets* working on the lands for Ottoman's *begs*.

sacred object near by their homes which they need to take care of, and it was the Karići mosque. Eventually, the families did so and all the bad luck vanished. However, during the Bosnian war (1992-1995) the tank of the YNA went through the ancient wooden mosque in 1993. The terrain was also hardly accessible as there were many landmines scattered in the terrain around the pilgrimage site. After the war the landscape around was slowly demined and the wooden mosque was eventually rebuild in 2002 (Picture 8.2). During conversations in the mountains I was often categorically told that the mosque was destroyed by someone who was not from the region, because all people from the Zvijezda highlands have always taken care of Karići.



Picture 8.2  
*Karići* today

Karići pilgrimage opens up the issue of (dis)continuity of Islamic practice, worship of holy sites and ritual memory during communism and renewal of Islamic tradition after the breakdown of Yugoslavia. Although the Yugoslav communist regime oppressed and widely controlled various religious manifestations and gatherings, the Karići pilgrimage was not banned. This is arguably remarkable because the pilgrimage has been historically always well attended. Moreover, it is linked to the history of dervishes in the region and with a continuity of performing *zikr* prayers during the gathering in particular. The *zikr* prayer, that is largely associated with dervishes, was also performed during communist times. On the other hand, however, dervish orders were banned

officially in the 1950s by the Islamic Community itself, although with the state assistance, as being ‘devoid of cultural value’ (Algar 1971: 196; Bringa 1995: 221; Duijzings 2000: 112).<sup>116</sup>



Picture 8.3  
*Karići* in the 1960s

There is a continuity of the Karići pilgrimage which has not been severed and has lasted for more than 400 years (cf. Mulahalović 1989: 192-196). Some authors who associate the holy site with prayers for rain trace the continuity of the practice even further (Hadžijahić 1978). During the 1990s war when the mosque was damaged and the terrain was not accessible due to landmines, Muslims gather annually in a near municipal town to pray for Hajdar-dede Karić. This contrasts remarkably with the Ajvatovica pilgrimage that is nowadays presented by the Islamic Community as the biggest Muslim gathering in Europe with a long continuity, despite Ajvatovica having been banned during the socialist period in 1947 and renewed only in 1990. Although I did not carry out any systematic fieldwork on Ajvatovica let me introduce only briefly

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<sup>116</sup> Duijzings even argue that ‘the official Islamic Community, in particular, was co-opted by the Communist system, more than the Catholic and Serbian Orthodox churches (...) [i]t was sometimes compared with a melon: green (the colour of Islam) outside but thoroughly red inside’ (2000: 112). During my fieldwork I heard often similar negative comments blaming the Islamic Community as being the last communist organisation in the country.

the pilgrimage because, as I shall argue shortly, it plays a significant role in the local conversations and experiences of the Karići pilgrimage as well as self-understanding of Muslims in the mountains. Moreover, such a juxtaposition of Ajvatovica and Karići sheds light on transformations of living Islam in the mountains of central Bosnia at large.

The Ajvatovica pilgrimage is nowadays presented, to paraphrase various local sources I came across, as a ‘manifestation of tradition and long lasting continuity of Bosniak [Muslim] identity and culture’ or as the ‘largest Muslim gathering in Europe’ (see for example ([www.ajvatovica.org.ba](http://www.ajvatovica.org.ba); [www.rijaset.ba](http://www.rijaset.ba))). The Ajvatovica pilgrimage and related legends became considerably fertile symbolic sources in the post-Yugoslav public debates on collective identity of Bosnian Muslims, and on severed tradition and searching for authenticity and certainty of Bosniaks as a *nacija*. The pilgrimage was banned in 1947 and renewed in 1990 mainly through engagement of the Islamic Community, various media such as *Preporod*, and also the SDA party led at the time by Alija Izetbegović. The region where the Ajvatovica pilgrimage site is located was controlled and defended during the war by the Bosnian army, and hence it gained through public rhetoric the character of a holy land expressing continuity of a threatened Muslim community.

The pilgrimage site is associated with Ajvaz-dede Prusac who is considered as a messenger of Islam who came from Anatolia in the early period of Islamisation. The legend says that there was no water in Prusac at the time. The only spring of running water near by Prusac in the forest was blocked by a rock. Hence, Ajvaz-dede spent forty days praying at the place. On the fortieth day he dreamt that two white rams collided (or hit the rock), and when he woke up the rock was split and the water spring could run through to the village. Then the Ajvaz-dede organised construction works and together with local people they brought running water to Prusac.<sup>117</sup> However, some narratives trace the Ajvatovica pilgrimage site further back to pre-Islamic times and relate it to prayers for rain, because the date of the pilgrimage is counted, similarly as other rain prayers in the region, as the seventh Tuesday after *Jurjevdan* (e.g. Hadžijahić 1978).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> The legend has a similar form as the one about Hajdar-dede Karić. The place became a holy site and Ajvaz-dede a holy person as he made *keramet* (miracle), he was *evlija* (a friend of God) with whom Allah communicates through dreams.

<sup>118</sup> Hence also the vandalistic graffiti sprayed on the billboard advertising the Ajvatovica pilgrimage as being ‘heretic feasts’.



Picture 8.4

Anti-Ajvatovica graffiti (*širk* is derived from Arabic and means idolatry, or polytheism as opposed to the veneration of one God)<sup>119</sup>

Today, Ajvatovica is an assemblage of religious pilgrimage, political gathering and social parade with various events, concerts and lectures, and heavily advertised and promoted by the Islamic Community with many billboards in the Bosnian public sphere at large.

### 8.2.2 Karići as a spiritual cradle

It has been argued that Hajdar-dede Karić is considered as a dervish sheikh and *evlija* (a friend of God). As I was explained by a dervish sheikh with whom I worked during my fieldwork, there are further reasons supporting this argument. Firstly, the gravestones around the Karići mosque are ornamented with headgear that resembles turbans of several dervish orders. Secondly, some of the headgear gravestones refer to the Bektashi symbolism of 4 fields and 12 folds.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, dervishes of the Bektashi order were inextricably interrelated with the Janissary troops, and during the early time of Ottoman's presence in the peninsula in particular (cf. Čehajić 1986; Norris 1993, 2006).<sup>121</sup> Thirdly, according to the interpretations of several dervish sheikhs with whom

<sup>119</sup> The picture is part of the text 'A cultural boom underneath Ajvaz-dede's cliff' (Kulturni bum ispod Ajvaz-dedine stijene), source: <http://muhamedjusic.blogspot.com/2010/06/kulturni-bum-ispod-ajvaz-dedine-stijene.html> (last visit 4. 2. 2010).

<sup>120</sup> The sheikh explained to me the numbers thus: number four refers to four stages in the sufi quest in order to reach *al-Haqiqah* (the True reality and total self-annihilation) as well as to four elements of nature. Both demonstrate the Unity of God, *tawhid*. The twelve folds symbolise twelve *tawhid*'s names of God's unity (in Bosnian transcription): *La ilahe ilallah, Allah, Hu, Hakk, Hajj, Kujjum, Kahhar, Vehhab, Fettah, Vahid, Ehad, Samed* (see also Trimmingham 1971: 184).

<sup>121</sup> Some authors have argued that Bektashis appeared in the Balkans already before the Ottomans' arrival at the end of 14th and in the early 15th centuries (cf. Norton 2001).

I had an opportunity to talk, the continuity of the *zikr* prayer is an important proof because this form of piety has been historically performed by dervish sheikhs. Moreover, some of them highlighted the fact that the Karići's *zikr* has been characteristically performed as 'loud' and 'standing' (*kijam-zikr*), and during which musical instruments such as *kudüm* (a drum) have always been used. Hence, the local dervishes associate the practice of *kijam-zikr* accompanied by *kudüm* under an open sky at Karići with Alevi ferment of the feast. However, that is paradoxically the one which does not gain any support from the Islamic Community (i.e. Sunni Islam of the *Hanafi* interpretation). Last but not least the title *dede* in the name of Hajdar-dede referred to the title of a dervish sheikh in the Ottoman context.<sup>122</sup> Unlike the traditional cradles of Bosnian sufism in the western parts of central Bosnia around Fojnica, Visoko, and Blagaj in Herzegovina (cf. Algar 1971; Bringa 1995; Čehajić 1986; Mičijević n.d.) the continuity of *tarīqat* was severed in the northern parts. Hence, Karići is presented and understood in public primarily as a place of Muslim annual pilgrimage.

However, in the late 1980s a dervish group of the Rifa'i order was established in the region.<sup>123</sup> In searching for authenticity and the restoration of a severed continuity of living sufism in the region the group entwined its existence with the historical figure of legendary Hajdar-dede Karić. Although the dervish group traces its identity through the sheikh's *silsila* (religious lineage) to Kosovo, the dervishes also consider Karići as their spiritual cradle. For them Hajdar-dede Karić was the messenger of sufism in the region, and hence he is conceived as being their spiritual forefather. Indeed, the dervishes at the end of their weekly gatherings and *zikr* prayers also pray the surah *Al-fatīha* for Hajdar-dede Karić.

### 8.2.3 The Pilgrimage

Although the restoration of the mosque was initiated by a group of local engaged Muslims at large the land and the mosque are officially owned and run by the state-

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<sup>122</sup> Particularly in Mevlevi, Halveti, Bektashi, and Bayrami orders.

<sup>123</sup> Several authors such as Duijzings (2000) or Popović (1985) pointed out that in the 1980s many dervish order flourished in Yugoslavia and it is often related to larger processes of a so-called 'Islamic revival in Bosnia' (Irwin 1983; Sorabji 1988, 1994). However, this term seems to be rather misleading as it refers to Islam and Muslims by and large. However, what happened in Bosnia in the 1980s is rather the emergence of political Islam in terms of collective identity debates. Indeed, Bougarel (2003, 2007) describes these processes as the politicisation of Muslim ethnic identity, accelerated by the 1990s war.

approved Islamic Community (*Islamska zajednica*). The Islamic Community is also responsible for organising the Karići pilgrimage. The annual Karići pilgrimage is due at the end of July. The date is counted according to an old calendar as the 11th Tuesday after *Jurjevdan* (6th May). However, there are also prayers for rain in the Karići site during June and July, preceding the pilgrimage, between the 5th and 10th weeks after the *Jurjevdan*, and attended mainly by a small number of local Muslims.<sup>124</sup>

The pilgrimage begins by Friday's noon prayer and lasts until the Sunday midday prayer. Unlike the Ajvatovica pilgrimage only male Muslims are allowed to attend at Karići. Apart from reciting *Qu'ran*, singing *ilahija* and praying *hatma-dova* for Hajdar-dede Karić, there are the following performances after the evening prayer on Saturday evening: reciting of *mevlud* (both in Turkish and Bosnian) and *tevhid* for the Ottoman as well as Bosnian *šehide* (martyrs), and performing *kijam zikr* mainly by dervishes (*qiyam dhikr* in Arabic, *zikr-i Kiyam* in Turkish).

#### **8.2.4 Sacred sites in the making: contested meanings**

In local conversations with Muslims in the mountains, the Karići pilgrimage appears often as a matter of concern. Male villagers usually began their narratives by the exact date when they visited Karići for the first time. For example Fadil told me that since he could walk a longer distance as a child, his father brought him. When I asked Fadil how many times he has visited the holy site so far, his answer was straightforward 'only Allah knows, but as far as I remember I have never omitted, as my father never did'. While discussing the Karići with younger generations of male Muslims in the mountains, I was often told that they attended the pilgrimage for the first time only after the end of Yugoslav communism, or after the 1990s war. Another source of memories was a dervish sheikh from Herzegovina, who explains

'I visited the Karići for the first time in 1981. I remember very vividly how I met old men in very old traditional clothes, fezzes wrapped in a golden cloth which they brought from *haji*, and with beautifully decorated horses. It was astonishing. They were so nice. Today it is different, those *dove* are one of the last expressions of living Bosnian Islam'.

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<sup>124</sup> The Karići site bears other characteristics of *dovište* (the outdoor site for rain prayers) listed by Hadžijahić (1978) as the site is located at the top of the plateau, with the mosque, a gravestone of *evlija*, and an old lime tree.

However, while talking to Muslims in the mountains who attend the pilgrimages my friends were constantly juxtaposing pride and anger, as well as Karići and the Ajvatovica pilgrimage respectively. During my fieldwork in 2008 and 2009 I compared the advertisements for the Ajvatovica and the Karići, and the latter did not receive almost any attention in the public sphere and in the media in particular. Muslims of various walks of life from the region blamed the Islamic Community and its Imams as being responsible for overlooking the Karići and prioritising the Ajvatovica, although at the same time they were proud of the fact that the Karići has not been ‘polluted’ yet by any novelties. During the conversations I was characteristically told

“Today, the Ajvatovica is like many other gatherings (*dove*) you can attend, all are just one big parade and party (*teferić*). While Karići is the place where people come to pray and contemplate together, to have a conversation (*mehabet*) but not any party (*teferić*), and it has been like this ever. Karići has had a continuity! I tell you what, these Bosnian gatherings (*dove*) aren’t what they used to be. Today, people say that they are going to a gathering *dova* but they mean a parade (*teferić*). And the Ajvatovica? Ehh, that’s for tourists. Only the Karići still continues in the way of traditional Muslims’ gatherings (*dova*) how it used be everywhere here. Even a few decades ago you could meet so many *hajis* in the Karići, the golden fezzes were just everywhere. Indeed, in the past people said “Karići, this is our little *hajj*””.

This narrative as told by a male villager in his late thirties opens eloquently some of the contradictory perceptions of the pilgrimage sites. The narratives and conversations I encountered in the mountains often critically attend to the organisational aspects of the pilgrimages. Such perspective sheds light on the dynamics of power relations and agency of various actors in the process of making sacred sites. Moreover, it magnifies the contradictions in changing Muslim politics in Bosnia as perceived by Muslims in the mountains. The contradictions produced and expressed during pilgrimages emanate into the everyday forms of discontent between Muslims. Hence, in the rest of the chapter I trace the contradictions assembled around the Karići and the Ajvatovica, as well as prayers for rain, and how these affect the lifeworlds of Muslims living in the mountains. In doing so, I shall subsequently illustrate transformations of the sacred landscape and living Islam by and large in Bosnia today.

## Ajvatovica

The *Ajvatovica* is characterised in the local narratives and perceptions as advertised everywhere with a very expensive and conspicuous program of events, where for example the folk groups from Turkey are invited to perform 'classical Turkish sufi music' and 'whirling dervishes' as a part of constructing 'traditional Bosnian Islam' (Picture 8.5). On the other hand, paradoxically, as I was reminded, it was the same Bosnian Islamic Community who was historically hostile to dervishes, banned all dervish orders in 1954 and closed dervish sanctuaries (*tekija*). In the late 1970s a few dervish groups were restored in Bosnia again; however, only the conformist ones and de facto under direct control of the Islamic union. In the post-socialist period during which more and more members of the Islamic union adopted a particular orthodox-oriented version of Islam, the hostile attitudes towards several dervish communities, especially Alevi oriented, intensified. On the other hand, whirling dervishes from Turkey have become an inextricable part of the *Ajvatovica* pilgrimage program, whereas Bosnian dervishes are not allowed to perform there whatsoever. Hence, in the local perceptions of the *Ajvatovica* pilgrimage, an enduring, creative spiritual and religious syncretism that characterised Bosnian Islam for centuries has been replaced by a conspicuous eclecticism controlled by the Islamic Community.



Picture 8.5

Apart from various Bosnian Muslim folklore groups, in 2009 for example *Istanbul Tarihi Türk Müziği* was invited - a Turkish ensemble that characterises their performances in the abovementioned way (see [http://www.ittmt.org/index\\_eng.htm](http://www.ittmt.org/index_eng.htm), last accessed 1st June 2010).

However, the last argument that Bosnian dervishes are not allowed to participate during the *Ajvatovica* is exaggerated. Nowadays, also Bosnian dervishes pray *zikr* at the pilgrimage, and yet there is another annual pilgrimage organised by the Islamic union

chiefly for dervishes in Blagaj tekija near Mostar. Therefore, I shall argue that the problem lies elsewhere and the Ajvatovica or the Karići pilgrimages only magnify it; that is the rivalry between various dervish orders and their (non)conformity with the Islamic Community. In particular, the Naqshibandi order is considered as being the ruling one in Bosnia, and yet the conformist one. Indeed, the Naqshibandi order has a long continuity in the region (Algar 1971; Bringa 1995; Čehajić 1986; Norris 2006). Although other orders have a long continuity of their presence in Bosnia as well, these have never been successful in intermingling with the local mainstream Islamic politics as the Naqshibandi order historically was (for a generalised argument see Weismann 2007). One of the main reasons why the continuity of Naqshibandi orders was not severed in Bosnia during communism is the fact that unlike other dervish orders, the Naqshibandi disciples were recruited primarily from families of their members, and also the 'sheikhhood' was often transmitted from father to son (cf. Bringa 1995: 251; Mićijević 1997). Such homogenous social networks could survive better in the anti-communist underground. Another, rather related, reason is that the Naqshibandi order in Bosnia was historically successful in recruiting disciples from the circles of Islamic clerics and Imams and neither the former nor the latter were banned during communism. On the other hand, other Bosnian dervish orders such as Kaderi, Halveti or Rifa'i sustained or recreated their continuity through their interactions with dervish lodges especially in Kosovo, where the continuity has never been severed.

Duijzings (2000: 106-131) argues that in socialist Yugoslavia the asymmetric relations within Islamic Community between what he calls the Bosnian-dominated official (Sunni) Islam and various heterodox Sufi orders especially in Kosovo can be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s. Nowadays, when the linkages between dervishes in Bosnia and Kosovo have been re-established again and/or even intensified, these old tensions gain new meanings in the Bosnian Muslim politics over sacred authority. Firstly, it is a 'free competition' over recruiting new disciples in the age of post-Yugoslav liberation of religious freedoms. Secondly, it is an issue of (not)belonging to and (non)conformity with the territory controlled by the Bosnian Islamic Community. Thirdly, it is a continuation of the tensions between an authorised version of Bosnian (Sunni) Islam and seemingly pluralistic and heretic dervish orders that are often blamed for having a Shi'i orientation. In his analysis of the Iranian revolution, Michael Fischer describes this enigmatic tension in Islam as the 'Kerbela paradigm' (Fischer 1981: 21, quoted in

Duijzings 2000: 123). It neatly captures Sunni dominance and Shi'i resistance and opposition, which becomes in practice an 'ideological and rhetorical device which provides moral and political guidelines vis-a-vis Sunni understanding of Islam' (ibid.). Duijzings (ibid.: 124) found similar debates among dervishes in Kosovo as well. In the case of Bosnia, several dervish orders, with whom I had an opportunity to work, also creatively and rhetorically turned their marginalisation into the formula 'a resistance we live by'. In doing so, the dervishes often referred to the legendary Imams Ali, Husayn and the Kerbela battle. So for example if one old dervish sheikh was explaining to his disciples why dervishes in Kosovo do not attend any prayers in mosques, he explained hyperbolically

'who goes to *tekija* (dervish lodge), he doesn't go to *džamija* (mosque); the prophet Ali went to the mosque once, and they chopped off his head'.

Another dervish sheikh asked his *murids* during Ramadan,

'so what are your dreams about my lovely brothers? There is no dream I haven't dreamt about during Ramadan. Last night my wife was crying while sleeping. When she woke up, she said that she dreamt about the prophet Ali and then she started crying again. I told her that some people would give their life for such a dream, isn't it true?'

### *Karići*

Similar tensions and competing meanings over holy sites as well as muslim practice emerge from the conversations about Karići as well. In summer 2009, when I was conducting research on the sacred landscape in the mountains, a group of Turkish Muslims from a Turkish Islamic aid organisation were invited by the local branch of the Islamic Community to attend the Karići pilgrimage. This group organised at the time a summer school for studying the Qur'an for children in local mosques in the region as a part of their 'social aid' in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>125</sup> However, some of the Turks even took part in the Karići's programme such as reciting the Qur'an (in Arabic) and *mevlud* (in Turkish). Eventually, at the time of the night sermon one of the Turkish guests held a short speech during which he discussed the importance of Hajdar-dede Karić, and even more importantly he discussed the Sultan Mehmet II. Fatih, who conquered Bosnia, and the ways the Sultan spread Islam. He also put emphasis on how the Sultan established

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<sup>125</sup> By 'social aid' I mean an intersection of Islamism and humanitarianism (cf. Bellion-Jourdan 2000; Ghodsee 2010: 134-139), that is, a *da'wa* activity (call to Islam) modified to the needs and problems of the 21st century Muslim societies.

intimate and enduring (kin)ties between Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This speech sharply contrasted with the speech of the Imam who represented the Islamic Community. The Imam repeated very briefly a few historical facts about Hajdar-dede Karić. During the talk, he did not consider Hajdar-dede Karić as someone who brought Islam to the region, nor any relations of the place to sufism; in his view, the Karići pilgrimage is just a traditional gathering of Muslims. And at the end of his speech he was mostly grateful to the Bosnian Telecom for their financial help.

However, in the reactions of many pilgrims I heard rather an echo of discontent, and contradictory and ambiguous reactions. In his speech the Imam detached himself from the local narratives about Hajdar-dede Karić and thus also from the ways Muslims in the region conceive themselves as Muslims. My friends also refused the Turkish effendi, despite the fact that he included Hajdar-dede Karić into his speech firmly. Nevertheless, he did so by embedding the regional narratives into a grand narrative of post-imperial Ottoman nostalgia in which Turkey is the centre and Bosnia and Karići a periphery which was ‘civilised’ by the Ottomans. Indeed, the most repeated motive in responses of Muslims I talked to was ‘did they come to Turkify (*turćit*) us again?’.<sup>126</sup>

The local dervishes introduced another layout in this multivocality of discontent. Despite the dervishes’ help with the restoration of the damaged mosque after the war, and their strong attachments to Hajdar-dede Karić, they did not take part during the gathering at all. The main reason was, that the Islamic Community did not allow them to lead the *zikr* prayer which is an inextricable part of the pilgrimage as well. Instead the *zikr* prayer was led by a sheikh of the Nakshibandi order who is closely related to the Islamic Community, and yet he is not from the region. Hence, the dervishes organised during the first night of the pilgrimage a big *zikr* prayer in their *tekija* which a few other sheikhs also attended. During that night, I constantly heard ‘this is our Karići’; and indeed, their extremely long and exhausting overnight *zikr* prayer was devoted to Hajdar-dede Karić and Allah. Then one of the dervish sheikhs pointed out to me

‘let me make one point clear, dervishes have been always children of their time, what you have seen here tonight, it wasn’t an act of resistance but a deep worship’.

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<sup>126</sup> The verbs *turćit* or *poturćit* come from the period of Islamisation and spreading the Ottoman cultural patterns and mean ‘to Turkify oneself’ (see also Malcom 1994: 59), the usage of the verb today is rather ambiguous or negative (for similar argument in contemporary Bulgaria see Ghodsee 2010: 132).

These various sources and layouts of discontents and competing meanings over the Ajvatovica and the Karići pilgrimage respectively shed light on the pilgrimage debate, here with a particular reference to the Muslim world. In his classic work Victor Turner argued that the moments of pilgrimage create antistructural communitas. However, the notion of temporal antistructural communitas seems to be problematic in the case discussed here. As the examples of Ajvatovica and Karići pilgrimage illustrate, such a ritual gathering might create, at times, antistructure within antistructure, strengthen differences, detachment or conflict, during which ritual can serve to negotiate the differing relationships of its participants (cf. Baumann 1992: 99). Therefore, both pilgrimages ought to be understood as contested places where the interpretations of what constitutes 'correct' Muslim practice, as well as power relations between various Muslim actors are negotiated in the mountains of central Bosnia today.

### **8.2.5 Prayers for rain: Conversations and discontent in the mountains**

Prayers for rain in the Bosnian mountains are the annual gatherings of Muslims around the holy sites such as tombs, or at the tops of hills, springs, caves and lime trees. The organisation of the prayers and their relation to the agricultural production and fertility ritual and symbolism were discussed in the previous chapter. Here I continue with unwrapping of the politics of holy sites and sacred authority.

After 1945 during the socialist period there were many restrictions and attempts imposed by the state to erase various religious practices such as prayers for rain. Nonetheless, most of the places were worshiped despite the restrictions, and continue to be an important part of the sacred landscape in the mountains of central Bosnia today. As some of the older generations of Muslims pointed out to me '*dova za kišu* (prayer for rain), it was the only place and time where you could meet even people engaged with the Party (i.e. Communists)'. After the post-communist liberation, the organisation of rain prayers has become another opportunity to publicly display, negotiate and celebrate the authenticity and tradition of Bosnian Islam in the public sphere.

The organisation of prayers for rain is also under the competence and control of the local branch of the Islamic Community. The gathering usually consists of a recital of

the Qur'an, the midday prayer and prayer for rain. An inextricable part of the gathering is a sermon delivered by the Imam during which he characteristically discusses current moral issues of Bosnian society, such as hampered inter-generational relations, weakening of family ties or drugs, and yet it is time to commemorate the bravery of Bosnian Muslims during the wars, and Bosnian martyrs (*šehide*) in particular (for the argument about *šehide* see Bougarel 2007). Although the prayers for rain continue to be conceived by many Muslims in the mountains as agricultural and fertility rituals, the Islamic Community and other actors embrace the rain prayers by debating, channeling and authorising the discourses on religious orthodoxy, the political identity of Bosnian Muslims, and their authenticity and tradition.

During my fieldwork I visited most of the prayers for rain in the region. After one prayer for rain I met the Imam who led the gathering. He is a very knowledgeable, and pious Muslim with a degree from Medina University (Saudi Arabia) where he spent several years. He was also the Imam who delivered the speech at the Karići pilgrimage. When we met, he was surprised that I was interested in this kind of worship and then he ironically pointed out to me

‘It would be better to abandon such heretical (*bogomil*) traditions (...) [and then he added] what a folk Islam, I don't understand why people still care’

However, Muslims in the mountains conceive these Imams ambiguously. During my fieldwork I was often told that someone who was not born in the region and did not grow up there could hardly understand ‘why people still care’. The villagers’ reaction is telling

‘He is not traditionalist but revolutionist. He is not interested in any tradition. If so then it is the dead tradition contained in the books. He is from the outside, he does not understand what people care about and strive for here’

However, after another prayer for rain which was led by the local Imam Mujo effendi, the very same Muslims commented differently

‘He is a good effendi, one of us, he does not pretend anything. The effendi is from here not like those young Imams today who don't

respect our tradition, the tradition of Bosnian Muslims. Contrarily, they try to impose various foreign novelties from Turkey and/or Arabia where they studied. This is not good (*Ovo nevalja*).<sup>127</sup>

These tensions, however, are not in any case a black-and-white conflict between the ‘detached’ Islamic Community and ‘rooted’ regional paternalists or traditionalists. The narratives of belonging, as well as an interpretation of what constitutes ‘correct’ practice are often contradictory even between various Muslims in the mountains. In particular, in those mountain villages where the new mosques were built only recently and often thanks to the foreign ‘humanitarian aid organisations’, the prayers for rain were very often relocated from the outdoor holy sites to the mosques which has generated multiple tensions in local politics and often drove a wedge even between neighbours. I visited one village with an ongoing dispute over the relocation of the *dova* from *dovišće* to the mosque and the argument the villagers made is straightforward

‘we have a new mosque even with a balcony so why should we climb to the hills ever more, to the *dovišće*? We should follow progress, we ought to be modern!’

Despite this argument and the rainy and cold weather, never mind an hour long walking distance to the hills, about two hundred men of various age got together in the local *dovišće* to pray for rain. However, as I have argued, prayers for rain are to a great extent under the control and competence of the Islamic Community and any decision needs to be discussed, at least, with the respective Imam as well as with the respective local branch (*medžilis*) of the Islamic Community. At the time, the dispute in the village had been intensified because the newly allocated village Imam was not from the region. Moreover, he also studied in Medina and his attitudes to prayers for rain were also very cold and detached. Therefore, some of the villagers did not hesitate to call him straightforwardly *wahabija* (wahabi) and argued

‘The problem is if the Imam agrees to relocate *dova* to the mosque. And those Imams who are without any bonds to the tradition don’t care.’

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<sup>127</sup> The gap is considered even deeper and is not a matter of narratives only. The Muslims I worked with draw also a ‘sensorial line’ between Imams who recite the Qur’an, or *azan* in Arabic in a Bosnian or a ‘foreign’ way (for the arguments about the ethics of reciting and listening see Hirschkind 2006; Marsden 2005).

In the conversations with Muslims in the mountains the question of what constitutes a 'correct' Bosnian Islam today is emerging, implicitly or explicitly, again and again. The public representations, as well as the contradictory narratives of difference and identity, or difference in identity, highlight the ambiguity and rupture between official discourses and social knowledge derived from actual social life. Put in this way, the two examples - one of the two pilgrimages and one of prayers for rain - cast light on the complexities of living Islam in Bosnia today. The multiplicity of discontent in Muslims' conversations as well as competing discursive constructions of Bosnian Muslim politics unpack various uncertainties of both post-war and post-socialist Bosnian society, and made the notions on tradition and authenticity constantly fragile, situational and uncertain. As the intimate conversations with Muslims in the mountains reveal, an ethno-national discursive framework does not necessarily dominate Muslims' lifeworlds. Furthermore, the conversations cast light on how Muslims in the mountains embrace 'local' or 'regional' 'national' as well as 'global' modes of imagination and belonging to the Muslim world by and large in the post-Yugoslav turbulent times. However, the local conversations also point to another layout of the politics of sacred authority today, that is the role various foreign Islamic humanitarian or aid agencies play in Bosnia today and how they might affect living Islam in the mountains.

### **8.3 Recasting the sacred landscape?**

The processes of renewing and transforming the tradition of Bosnian Islam after the decades of Communist oppression and the ethno-religious conflict have recast considerably the Bosnian sacred landscapes. These upheavals left many scars of shattered possibilities and broken certainties. In this uncertain period various Islamic aid organisations from the Gulf, Iran and Turkey emerged in Bosnia and redrew the religious landscape as well. Such an environment of competing discourses on religious authority, (dis)continuity of practice, and debating as to which Islamic tradition is 'correct', let multiple discursive frameworks emerge into which people might locate their narratives on what it means to be a good Muslim today. However, the scale of influence and power these aid organisations hold and enact upon Muslim communities in the Balkans after the collapse of communism has been assessed only recently.

The massive spread of Islamic NGOs in the post-socialist countries in the Balkans needs to be related to the socio-economic problems after the collapse of communism in Southeastern Europe (cf. Benthel and Bellion-Jourdan 2003; Blumi 2002; Ghodsee 2010). In many cases, humanitarian organisations have supplied the weak states, and hence local populations often relied on NGOs in many respects more than on the state. Indeed, the humanitarian activities are usually targeted at economic, educational, religious and pastoral support, and thus Islamic NGOs often bifurcate the legitimacy and authority that used to be held and enacted solely by the state. The latter activities are very often in sharp contrast to local Islamic traditions and this might, at times, produce tensions (Blumi 2000; Ghodsee 2010).

Put in this way, today we witness an activity in the field of development that embraces 'Islamism' and 'humanitarianism'. The idea of Islamic humanitarian aid stands on the key religious pillar that is the concept of *da'wa* (call to Islam). For example Benthel and Bellion-Jourdan (2003) argue that within the Islamic relief organisations the *da'wa* oriented attitude is always present because it 'justifies the universal ambition of Islam as a religion destined for the whole of humanity'. In arguing so, Bellion-Jourdan (2000) provides three supporting reasons. First, it is a political worldview, that identifies conflicts and catastrophes where the victims are Muslims. Second, it is pragmatic, because the majority of victims in various conflicts are usually Muslims. Third, it is a dogmatic argument, that money collected by Muslims should be distributed within the *Ummah* to those who are in need. Indeed, the list of places where various Islamic aid organisations established their programmes and projects would be long, ranging from Afghanistan, Central Asia, throughout the Caucasus, to Bosnia-Herzegovina as well.

Although my research in the mountains of central Bosnia was not focused on the impact of Islamic aid organisations in the region, nonetheless, as the conversations reveal, the encounter of local Muslims in the mountains with these foreign notions and understandings of Islam mediated by various foreign Islamic aid projects has become a serious matter of concern. Whereas this topic is in the case of Bosnia relatively well researched by political scientists (Bougarel 2000; Cetin 2008; Karčić 2010; Sarajlić 2010), a substantial grass-roots ethnographic account is still missing. However, as Ghodsee (2010) illustrates in her ethnography of a mountain region in post-socialist

Bulgaria, the spread of foreign Islamic aid organisations might eventually transform the everyday lives of Muslim communities at large.

The role of Islamic aid organisations in Bosnia changed over the past two decades. Immediately after the outbreak of the war in the 1990s, the organisations distributed humanitarian help; during the postwar year, the main target was the reconstruction of religious infrastructure such as damaged mosques and building new mosques in places where they have never been before. During the second decade after the war, we can observe a shift from humanitarian aid to various development projects, mainly focused on education at large, that also renegotiate living Islam in Bosnia. Karčić (2010) provides us with a useful and comprehensive account and typology of Islamic aid organisations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to his argument, there are three key actors in the field of Islamic aid in Bosnia today, that is Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran.

Firstly, let us consider the Saudi Arabian multifaceted influence. Saudi Arabia has been active in Bosnia-Herzegovina for a long time. It brought to the country financial support, humanitarian help, *salafism* and also Mujahideen fighters (2010: 525). In particular, the *Saudi High committee for assistance to Bosnia-Herzegovina* invested US \$600 millions in reconstructions. Other institutions that played a significant role are the Islamic Development Bank, The Saudi Development Bank, Al-Haramain. The Saudi embassy in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, also provides various scholarships to study theology at Saudi Arabian universities. Another vector of activities is targeted at (re)building the mosques, both those damaged during the war and new mosques. This process often goes hand-in-hand with the spread of *salafi* literature as well as teaching (cf. Cetin 2008). Although the idea of *salafism* is broader, it takes the shape of *wahabism* in particular in the Bosnian context. Although some of the Western media (e.g. New York Times) nurture an image of increasing numbers of *wahabi* followers in Bosnia, this image is too exaggerated. Nonetheless, there are still active *wahabi* groups throughout the country, but the overall majority of Bosnian Muslims reject *salafism* and several conflicts between *wahabi* followers and local Muslims were also reported during my fieldwork. The main tension lies in *wahabis'* denouncing local Islamic practices as *bid'ah* (i.e. religious innovations and hence a sin; see Cetin 2008: 15). According to some intelligence reports and newspaper articles the *wahabi* movement in Bosnia has aspired to create a parallel institution to the Islamic Community and subsequently take over the

religious affairs of Bosnian Muslims at large (Karčić 2010: 531). Therefore, the Islamic Community has finally taken this problem seriously in the last few years and tries to control these tensions through issuing various regulations of mosques' usage or other resolutions.<sup>128</sup>

Secondly, there is a Turkish influence, that operates mainly at the semi-state level.<sup>129</sup> Although the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) is involved in some development projects, the main spheres of influence, help and cooperation are education such as providing scholarships, and religion such as financing Islamic centers or sending Turkish Imams abroad. Sarajlić (2010) also observed that there is an increased convergence between *Diyanet* (The Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Turkey) and the Bosnian Islamic Community, which might be well illustrated by the newspaper article I found during my fieldwork where the leaders of both Muslim communities attended a ceremonial opening of a renewed mosque in the Bosnian town of Gorazde, that was built by the TIKA agency (Picture 8.6). Nonetheless, as Öktem (2010) argues, the relations between Bosnian Islamic Community and the *Diyanet* are not always understood unanimously by the Bosnian representatives.

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<sup>128</sup> As Karčić (2010: 531) points out, some of the local Islamic legal scholars argued against *salafi* influence in Bosnia by highlighting *Hanafi* School of *fiqh* as well as the *Maturidi* School of creed as the traditional elements of Islamic practice in Bosnia. Furthermore, the scholars highlighted a concept of Islamic reformism *islah* which is a part of the Bosnian Islamic tradition (of Bosniaks).

<sup>129</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the 'Turkish presence' in the Balkans today see Öktem 2010.

Fazlagića Kula kod Gacka

# Džamija obnovljena PO DRUGI PUT

Sad smo je napravili. Možda će je opet srušiti. Hajmo mi obećati da ćemo je opet, ako Bog da, napraviti, poručio reis Cerić • Turska razvojna agencija TIKA pomogla ponovnu izgradnju

U Fazlagića Kuli kod Gacka jučer je otvorena obnovljena džamija, koja je izgorjela u požaru u noći uoči Kurbanbajrama 8. decembra prošle godine.

Džamiju u Fazlagića Kuli, koja je nakon rata u Bosni i Hercegovini po drugi put obnovljena, svečano je otvorio reis-u-ulema Islamske zajednice u Turskoj Ali Bardakoula. Njeni ključevi će biti u rukama novoimenovanog imama Islamske zajednice Gacko Sadeta ef. Bilalija, koji je učenjem odlomka iz Kur'ana počeo svečanost u Fazlagića Kuli, nadmak Gacka u jugoistočnoj Hercegovini.



Picture 8.6

Bosnian and Turkish religious elites in local newspapers

Nowadays, there is also a newly emerging area of Turkish presence in Bosnia, that is the field of private education (Öktem 2010: 37). The Bosnia Sema Foundation in particular plays an active role, and its activities range from primary schools to colleges, and a university (International Burch University Sarajevo). Although these institutions in Bosnia are not chiefly concerned with religious education they have enabled for example students from Turkey and other places to study, who cannot attend a university because of their Islamic attire (Öktem 2010: 39).

Thirdly, the Iranian influence played a considerably important role during the war. Today the cooperation is chiefly at the level of education and cultural promotion and exchange. There is the Iranian cultural institute that organises various training programmes in Persian language, issues a journal and supports translations of Persian and Shi'i authors into Bosnian. The Iranian government also supports the Ibn Sina Institute that mediates Shi'i inspired ideas and works to the Bosnian audience. Last but not least, there is also the Persian-Bosnian College that is, according to Karčić (2010: 530), a pro-Iranian and pro-Shi'i oriented teaching institution.

In the mountains of central Bosnia both the Muslim sacred authority and holy sites have been affected by the post-war proliferation of Islamic 'aid' organisations, chiefly in two

ways. In the villages throughout the region many new mosques flourished during the past two decades thanks to various foreign Islamic donations (Picture 8.7). The architecture of those mosques often differs from local sacred architecture and reflects rather architectonic patterns that are common in the donor's country. This produces in local conversations a discontent associated with betrayal of local tradition and loss of control over its expression and authentications. On the other hand, in conversations with Muslims in Brdo, my friends always put emphasis on the fact that the village mosque was not built from foreign donations. Villagers were proud that they had succeeded to collect enough money in Brdo and build their own mosque. This argument is also sometimes used during inter-village rivalries.



Picture 8.7

A mosque built thanks to a donation from the United Arab Emirates

Secondly, in many cases the newly build village mosques are used rather occasionally for festivities such as funerals, *bajrams*, or Ramadan as there is often no Imam living in the village. During my fieldwork I often witnessed complaints that whereas the Bosnian landscape has been stamped by so many mosques, no one cares about making sure that the mosques will be used regularly. The problem, then, lies with villagers in recruiting Imams as there is a lack of local Imams who would be from the region. Today, Imams are an occupational group, and the Islamic Community, who employs them, cannot afford to pay Imams for each village where is a mosque. The main criterion for (not) having an Imam is the village size. There is a whole new generation of Imams recruited by the Islamic Community and many of them were educated abroad. These young Imams gained training often thanks to the generous help of foreign Islamic aid organisations. However, such a process of recruitment sometimes produces at the grass-

roots level tensions, hostilities and misunderstandings between village Muslims and the appointed Imam, or between two different understandings of Islamic practice and orthodoxy<sup>130</sup>. That is also why the Imam told me during one of the prayers for rain ‘It would be better to abandon such heretical (*bogomil*) traditions (...) [and then he added] what a folk Islam, I don’t understand why people still care’.

#### **8.4 Instead of a conclusion: Holy sites and appropriations of fortune**

Would it really be better if Muslims in the mountains abandoned such ‘heretic traditions’ as the Imam argued? This is a moral question. Nonetheless, the second part of his argument is intriguing: why do people still care? The answer to the question ‘why people still care’ needs to be situated within Muslims’ lifeworlds, that means to unwrap Muslims’ intimate relations to the holy sites. Veneration of holy sites in rural Bosnia is more complex than any analysis of identity politics would reveal. It is the way Muslims in the mountains cope with the contingencies of everyday life. Hence, as I argue, it needs to be understood as an assemblage of techniques, practices and ideas through which individuals appropriate fortune, good luck and well-being.

While describing the Karići pilgrimage site, I pointed out that the materiality of the sacred place is important. For Muslims in the mountains Karići, as well as *dovišt’a* (outdoor places for prayers for rain) are not just a place of traditional religious gatherings demonstrating collective identity. The holy sites are sources of divine agency. The tomb of Hajdar-dede Karić (Picture 8.8) with the healing water from its pit embodies *bereket* (divine blessing) of Hajdar-dede Karić, here and now. *Bereket* is a generic term for divine blessing (cf. Werbner 2004; Werbner and Basu 1998) and is imbued with various materialised objects, such as tombs, or water. The Karići site, hence, amplifies the saint’s charisma, his friendship with God and generosity to provide blessing. In local conversation Muslims in the mountains associate the veneration of holy sites with personal blessing (*bereket*), fortune (*nafaka*) or luck (*sreća*). Hence, visiting the Karići, praying at the sacred site, or touching the tombs are forms of symbolic exchange of divinity and appropriation blessing.

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<sup>130</sup> These tensions were observed by Bringa (1995) already in the late 1980s when more Imams could complete their theological training in the Middle East.



Picture 8.8  
Hajdar-dede Karić's tomb

Another source for good luck and fortune are prayers for rain. I showed that the rain prayers are tightly associated with agricultural activities in the mountains. People for example do particular activities, such as haymaking between particular prayers for rain. These practices are part of the poetics of dwelling in the mountains (cf. Ingold 2000). The dwelling perspective is in the mountains concentrated around the house. The house is conceived by and large as a metaphor of the processes of life and human existence. In the house perspective, prayers for rain are an inextricable part of caring for and blessing the land. The land, so neatly associated with the house, 'gives life' as villagers often say to the members of the house, and veneration of *dovišt'a* during rain prayers is a mode of appropriation of divine blessing and *nafaka* for the house and its persons. Indeed, throughout the thesis I used an example of 'milk pedagogy' in which old Fadil eloquently embraced in a single sentence this divine relationship between people, the house, the land, as blessed by Allah. As such, sacred sites are inextricable parts of the lifeworlds of Muslims in rural Bosnia, and any attempt to understand the transformations or questioning of local practices associated with living Islam ought to embrace the perspective of personal luck and fortune as a serious matter of concern of Muslims in the mountains.

In this chapter I critically reassessed the dominating discussions on sacred landscape and holy sites in Bosnia. I showed that these debates are chiefly concerned with questions of identity politics, and as such these are often driven by a particular epistemological logic of 'groupism' that might hamper an analysis. Nevertheless this chapter attended to the holy sites ethnographically, and introduced the pilgrimage sites, agency and conversations of various actors assembled around them as a subject matter. It opened

multivocality and various forms of discontent between Bosnian Muslims over the practice, tradition and authenticity of living Islam, and the sacred landscape in particular. A nuanced analysis of agency around holy sites then shed light on two ongoing processes, that is Muslim politics over sacred authority, and an intimate relationship between holy sites and Muslims' lifeworlds.

Bosnian Muslim politics over sacred authority parallels, at least, two large processes. After the collapse of the communist regime and the liberation of religious freedom various holy sites were nationalised and politicised. Renewing or reinventing of tradition associated with particular sacred sites served to cement authenticity and expression of collective identity of Bosnian Muslims. These processes even accelerated after the war in the 1990s (cf. Bougarel 2003, 2007). However, a nuanced ethnographic analysis of politicisation of holy sites unravels tensions and discontents between Bosnian Muslims themselves, and contingencies and fragility of the public rhetoric on tradition and collective identity of Bosnian Muslims that is employed by the Islamic elites. However, it opens the second set of questions on Muslim politics, here understood as a 'competition and contest over both the interpretation of symbols and control of the institutions, formal and informal, that produce and sustain them' (Eickelman and Piscatory 1996: 5). During my research I encountered multiple actors, such as the Islamic Community, foreign Islamic aid agencies, Imams educated abroad, dervishes as well as local Muslims, all of which are competing over the interpretations of living Islam in Bosnia. By tracing conversations and contradictions in conversations I showed forms of discontent that I witnessed in the mountains. Furthermore, what is usually portrayed as a community of Bosnian Muslims is far too complex and effervescent to be analysed in terms of collective identities if we want to understand to the processes of transformation of the ways Bosnian Muslims develop and redefine their self-understanding of what constitutes Islam and being a Muslim at the grass-roots level (cf. Rasanayagam 2006). Indeed, in rural Bosnia, visiting holy sites is not always a matter of Muslim identity. Despite an ethnographic exploration of Muslims' lifeworlds casts light on holy sites as a serious matter of concern in the mountains of central Bosnia. Muslims in the villages conceive those sacred spaces first and foremost as sources of divine agency that might influence individuals' fortune and luck in the flow of uncertainties of everyday life.

## 9 Conclusion

In this thesis I have been concerned with the question of what it means to be a Muslim and live a Muslim life in the margins of the postsocialist world. The question itself is multifaceted and effervescent. Hence the ethnographic chapters provided an anthropological perspective on living Islam and Muslims' lifeworlds in Bosnia from various angles. Throughout the thesis I have argued that our understanding of the ways Bosnian Muslims value and conceive of being a Muslim needs to be focused first and foremost on cultural creativity, knowledge, morality and domains that inform, shape and (re)create the lifeworlds and cosmologies of Muslims, and through which Bosnian Muslims exchange, communicate, validate and understand their religious experiences and imagination in the context of turbulent social, economic and political transformations. Here the arguments on living Islam and Muslim life are arguably situated and understood in thorough post-Yugoslav transformations of Islam and Bosnian society at large. In my analysis I integrated these processes in Muslim mountain villages of central Bosnia with widespread societal changes in the region of the former Yugoslavia through the lenses of anthropological studies of postsocialism, social breakdowns, (dis)continuities and changes. This argument is in contradistinction to the hegemonic interpretative frameworks portraying Bosnian Islam as only entrapped in the post-war politics of identity and ethnonational difference, and Bosnia-Herzegovina solely as a post-war society.

While studying the interrelationships between cultural knowledge and the micro-politics of everyday life, I provided the reader with ethnographic insights into the multiple temporalities and continuities, breakdowns and detachments, emotions and intimacies that emerge in the lifeworlds of Bosnian Muslims. In doing so, this thesis strengthens the argument that Bosnia is a kaleidoscopically assembled post-war and postsocialist society. The latter perspective, however, has for a long time been rather omitted from the analytical toolkit of many researchers. Hence, in this thesis I explored how 'actually existing postsocialism' might be characterised in the Bosnian context. Nonetheless, as I argued, our research in the post-Yugoslav regions needs to move even further and take into account local knowledge traditions as a serious matter of concern, and situate the war atrocities or postsocialist transformations within the larger analytical scales entwining cultural continuities and historicities with social, political and economic

breakdowns. As Layton recently pointed out in his comparative argument on social breakdowns

‘Revolutions never completely destroy existing social institutions. Examination of actual cases of radical social change suggests there is in fact always some degree of continuity in social practice, even where local communities face acute dispossession. The breakdown of social order rarely if ever results in total anarchy or asociality, but rather precipitates a shift between existing strategies, or the harnessing of current strategies to new ends’ (Layton 2006: 97)

By adopting this analytical perspective and intertwining it with the intimate ethnographic study of the micro-politics of everyday life in the Bosnian mountains this thesis analysed the scales of relatedness and the domains of knowledge traditions that assemble Muslims’ lifeworlds into tangible, coherent and meaningful social forms. In doing so, the thesis was inspired by the Barthian anthropology of knowledge in order to shed light on ‘what a person employs to interpret and act on the world’ (Barth 2002). A knowledge tradition, here understood as a local cosmology, is a product of multiple persons and relations that create the meaningful contexts in which knowledge and bodies of knowledge are produced and sustained (ibid.). Therefore, I argued in this thesis that the knowledge tradition that informs a ‘meaningful agency’ (Lambek 2000: 309) in the flow of the everyday sociality in the Bosnian mountains draws upon Islam as a morally appropriate practice and tangible context by and large. In particular, I have suggested that Muslim life in the mountains of central Bosnia is lived along four complementary contexts of knowledge, that is relatedness, spatiality, temporality and ritual.

Relatedness embraces multifaceted processes of ‘living together’ that (re)fabricate, relate and extend Muslim persons through *sharing* of substances, memories, identity and divinity. It is the domain of the house (*kuća*) whereby the vigorous processes of living together are flattened into a scale of relatedness where various (non)human actors and entities are intertwined (chapters 3 and 4). The local notions of social space and symbolic and moral geographies are associated with the idiom of ‘living in proximity’ (chapters 5 and 6). I showed that the flow of everyday sociality between persons who ‘live in proximity’ is tapestried from day-to-day forms of *exchange* such as hospitality, intimacy and mutuality between neighbours. The idiom of ‘living in proximity’ is enacted within two overlapping spheres, that is immediate (*komšiluk*) and

extended neighbourhood (*mahala*). The lifeworlds of Muslims as well as the flow of the everyday in the mountains are orchestrated and punctuated by particular *rhythms* embracing multiple forms of time reckoning and calendars, and orchestrating various agricultural activities and practices (chapter 7). The notions on rhythms of Islam in the Bosnian mountains juxtapose Muslim life as lived along the lines of Islamic orthodoxy, likewise through the practice and enactment of individual and/or collective piety as a response to the vicissitudes of the everyday. Ritual is *a mode of appropriation* of personal or communal good luck, fortune, blessing and well-being (chapters 6, 7 and 8). It cuts across the spheres of intimacy and proximity and embraces Muslims' lifeworlds, well-being of the house, the land and the persons with the sacred landscape and the divinity.

However, the grass-roots ethnographic examination of the outlined contexts of meanings points to various contradictions and discontents in/between Muslims' lifeworlds in the mountains of central Bosnia. Throughout the thesis I illustrated how rural areas of Bosnia struggle with economic hardship, (re)conceptualisation of subsistence farming as a response to omnipresent unemployment, transformation of many villages due to the withdrawal of many families from the countryside, and as a result with multifaceted metamorphoses of sociality, mutuality, help and exchange. In other words, I provided the reader with a picture of 'actually living postsocialism' in Bosnia today. Put in this way, Bosnia is no more a post-war than a postsocialist society at the margins of multiple Great Powers. Yet the ethnographic examination and tracing of the contradictions and discontent in local conversations, as well as conversations on discontent and contradictions, reveal that the local knowledge traditions have been thoroughly questioned, and thus also Muslims' understanding of what it means to live a Muslim life in the mountains of central Bosnia. Indeed, as I said in the Introduction, the second aim of the thesis was to cast light on living Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Balkans today, and hence contribute to the body of work on the anthropology of Muslim societies at large. In doing so, I provided the reader with an ethnographic account of various and often contradictory and conflicting Muslim interpersonal relationships and interpretations of what it means to live a Muslim life in contemporary Bosnia and in the mountains in particular. At the end of her lucid ethnography Tone Bringa wrote

'The war changes people and it changes their perceptions of who they are. As a reaction to and part of the process of the war and the politics behind it, many Bosnian Muslims are redefining both the content and

function of their collective identities, and identifying with a wider world community of Muslims more than before. To what extent these changes signal a more assertive Islamic identity and an extension of a Muslim-defined identity by expanding the use of Islamic discourse and symbols into new domains (e.g., specific Muslim greetings), or a redefinition of Muslim identity, is a subject for further research' (1995: 197-198).

The 1990s war shattered moral certainties and imagination, and likewise created a new range of possibilities. Nonetheless, today, two decades after the breakdown of the former Yugoslavia and more than fifteen years since Bringa raised the future direction of research on Islam in Bosnia, the hegemonic interpretation of Bosnian Muslims as entrapped in the politics of identity and ethnoreligious nationalism prevailed in the media, political debates, the international community's projects as well as in academic discourses. Throughout the thesis I illustrated that this perspective is impaired. Although in recent debates a critique of such an understanding has already emerged, its subject matter is different (e.g. Bougarel, Helms and Duijzings 2007; Gilbert, Greenberg, Helms and Jansen 2008). However, in this thesis I argue that we *also* ought to pay more attention to two perspectives and processes simultaneously. First, the new political economy of Muslim politics, and the ways Bosnian Islam reemerged on the map of the Muslim world in the age of globalisation. Second, how these processes affected the micro-politics of Muslims' lifeworlds.

As some authors already discussed at length (e.g. Eickelman and Piscatory 1996; Mandaville 2007; Manger 1999; Meijer 2009) the contemporary Muslim world ought to be seen as a complex, interacting world system with its own internal plurality, ethnic diversity and multiple discursive traditions where money, ideas, politics or knowledge circulate and/or compete over domination. Indeed, I illustrated how the mountain Muslim villages in Bosnia have been drawn into the whirls of globalisation during the 1990s war as well as in post-war times, through the activities of various humanitarian organisations from other Islamic countries in particular. Those development projects have often substituted the paralysed, dysfunctional and weak Bosnian state. However, these processes that I described in rural Bosnia are not unique in the context of transformations of Muslim communities in the Balkan peninsula after the 1990s collapse of communist regimes, as other authors recently documented (e.g. Blumi 2002; Ghodsee 2010; Öktem 2010; Sarajlić 2010). As the authors argued, it would be misleading to understand the changing geopolitics of Islam in the Balkans as mere

reorientation of local societies from Moscow, Washington or Brussels towards Istanbul or Mecca. Contrarily, Muslim communities in the margins of the Balkans have been re-wedged between the Great powers.

The map of the Muslim world that had been redrawn during the 1990s followed the turbulent political changes throughout Eurasia. This new entwining of Muslim communities in the Balkans with global flows and exchanges of Islamic knowledge also thoroughly recast the religious and sacred landscapes in Bosnia. Therefore, as I illustrated in the thesis, if we want to understand contemporary Muslim lives in Bosnia, we need to examine local narratives on authenticity, tradition as well as moral creativity within this changing discursive field of a Bosnian Islamic knowledge tradition, and how different knowledge traditions are mediated, interpreted and/or intertwined with it (Appadurai 1996). Nonetheless, although the world (system) perspective on the complexity of the contemporary Muslim world provides valuable and new insights into the ways the organisation of Islam has been transformed and power relations reconfigured, this perspective does not provide any ethnographic nuance of the lived experience of being a Muslim. Hence, I have argued that anthropological attention ought to be also aimed at the micro-level of Muslims' lifeworlds, and examine the processes of mediation, authorisation and authentication at the individual level in order to examine what it means to live a Muslim life at the grass-roots level. Today Muslims in Brdo as well as in other villages in the region develop their sense of understanding of what it means to be a Muslim through their experiences with the arrival and mixing with various (Islamic) knowledge traditions and not necessarily in contradistinction to the other ethnoreligious groups in Bosnia. In arguing so, I attempted in this thesis to unravel which are the contexts of knowledge that make Muslims' agency meaningful in the flow of everyday life. Therefore, the scale of analysis ought to also include what Lambek outlined as a new prolegomenon to the anthropological study of religion in general, that is

‘an investigation of the historically situated, socially constituted imagination and realization of meaningful ends, practical means, authoritative voice, dignified and virtuous agency, and reasoned as well as passionate submission’ (Lambek 2000: 318)

Throughout this thesis I showed that Muslims in the mountains understand Islam and ways of being a Muslim as a particular knowledge tradition that needs to be conceived

of as a cosmology of life illuminated by the embers of Allah. Here I used various life metaphors associated with Muslims' conceptions of divinity, such as an example of 'milk pedagogy' in which old Fadil eloquently embraced in a single sentence this symbolic exchange between the house, land and Muslim persons as blessed by Allah, to illustrate my arguments. In doing so, I showed that local Islamic cosmologies provide Muslims with meaningful and coherent reflections of the world and the place of humans in it, and navigate them in the flow of everyday sociality and engagement with the world at large (cf. Rasanayagam 2006, 2010). Indeed, I will always remember the moment when I was herding a flock of sheep with my friend Mujo in the gorgeous hills stretching above the village, during which after my naive laments over the man-made damages to nature Mujo explained to me 'the place of men in this *dunjaluk* [world] is to be part of it and not to govern it as lords, because the only lord is Allah'. By attending to the local cosmologies of life in the mountains of central Bosnia I questioned in this thesis whether is it appropriate to treat Bosnian Islam and the lifeworlds of Bosnian Muslims solely as an ethnoreligious threat and hatred? And I shall leave the reader to find the answer ...

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