

## ERRATA

***Muslim Lives in Eastern Europe: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Transformation of Islam in Postsocialist Bulgaria.* By Kristen Ghodsee. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010. xvi + 252 pp. \$67.50 Cloth, \$25.95 Paper – ERRATA**

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Several typographical errors were made in the proofing of this article. Therefore, we are republishing this book review for completeness.

Notwithstanding the prevailing trend to impute an increased sense of adherence to Islam among some indigenous Balkan Muslim populations as a result of transnational, more global post-1989 conditions, Kristen Ghodsee makes a convincing case for an alternative approach. She argues that Bulgarian-speaking Muslims (Pomaks) “embrace new forms of Islam for locally defined reasons” and traces how “macro factors interact with particular local conditions” to replace many local forms of Islamic practice with “more ‘purified’ ones imported from abroad” (5). Ghodsee offers a fresh and vivid account of “Muslim lives” in a cluster of predominantly Muslim towns, including Madan, located in the south-central part of Bulgaria’s Rhodope Mountains. By telling the stories of ordinary people studied between 2005 and 2008, the author seeks to raise more general questions “that go beyond just one city on the edge

of Europe; they apply to postsocialist populations from Budapest to Vladivostok” (13).

Ghodsee’s overall analytical approach is based on Talal Asad’s influential concept of “orthodoxy” in Islam, although Ghodsee recognizes the confusions that such a term may cause in the study of a predominantly Orthodox Christian country. The adoption of this concept can indeed be misleading due to the Christian foundation of the term. However, Ghodsee’s use is presented against the backdrop of other concepts and approaches (15–27). The “revived” Muslim individuals and groups under study do not simply rediscover their religious roots lost during the communist rule (1944–1989): many of them are eager to discover the teachings of what they imagine as “true Islam.” In doing so, they are interested not only in the “true practice,” but also in “true belief.” On the one hand, the striving to introduce a “universalist Islam” has been typical for many revivalist movements in Islamic history. On the other hand, each attempt to impose such a “de-culturation” in favor of a universalist “true” belief has inevitably turned into “re-culturation” accompanied by the introduction of other culturally conditioned models. Revived Pomaks are no exception — be their Islam “(re)-universalized” in a Wahhābī-Salafī manner or a more sophisticated path like that of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Pomaks’ pursuit of “true Islam” is instructive for different religious, social, and political transformations in Bulgaria and the post-Cold War Balkans. The author focuses on the changes occurring in social and religious lives of Pomaks by foregrounding the collapse of the lead-zinc mining industry related to GORUBSO-Madan enterprise. Ghodsee describes how this decline, and the subsequent closing of the mines in the postsocialist period, destroyed the local economy and devastated the entire area. Her argument works best when she foregrounds the interplay between the shifting gender roles after the decay of the mines and the advent of a “new” type of Islam. At the core of the book is a thorough demonstration of how “local gender roles were starting to be redefined so that the ideal family had a husband who worked to support a pious, stay-at-home wife whose primary responsibility was the proper Muslim education for her children — a radical departure from the communist past” (172).

A larger issue overshadows Ghodsee’s excellent monograph. Alongside her insightful context-oriented case study of the shifting gender roles in Madan she tries to formulate a more general concept that seems highly controversial. For this purpose, she invokes Olivier Roy’s idea of

“globalized Islam” as well as his and Gilles Kepel’s arguments for the existence of similarities between the roles of Marxism and Islam in Western Europe. According to the two French scholars, Islam is replacing leftist politics as a form of protest against the established order (190–191). Ghodsee suggests that “if Islam in Western Europe is being Westernized and increasingly shaped by individualist ideas of religiosity and the assumed compatibility of Islam with a liberal, multicultural society, then it might be reasonable to claim that Islam in Eastern Europe is being ‘Marx-icized’ (200).” Bulgaria’s and hence Eastern Europe’s displacement of ‘traditional’ by ‘orthodox’ Islam is for Ghodsee the result of “the historical legacies of communism” (196) with its collectivist ideals. However, the foregrounded “emphasis on the ‘true’ Islam’s commitment to social justice” (155) is not necessarily due to “a strong legacy of Marxist-Leninism” (157). After all, notions of social justice (*‘adl*) and the common good (*al-maṣlaḥa al-‘amma*) are deeply rooted in both modern and pre-modern Islamic history, thus preceding Marxist ideology and Eastern European socialism.

Referring to earlier studies (e.g. by authors such as Evangelos Karagiannis or Evgenia Ivanova) neglected by Ghodsee would have offered additional insights for the author to prove her argument vis-à-vis the identity crisis of the Pomaks, which underlies their revived sense of adherence to Islam in the post-1989 era. The works of Asen Balikci on Pomak gender roles, including within one and the same gender (e.g., the generational relations between old and young women) would have developed the book’s core argument for continuing ‘masculinity’ namely through revived forms of Islam. David A. Kideckel’s *Getting By in Postsocialist Romania*, on working-class culture dealing with mining and miners in postsocialist Romania, would have been important as a study against which one could ‘measure’ to what extent the “the historical legacies of communism” were important to Bulgaria.

In sum, the theoretical concepts and field-work approach of *Muslim Lives in Eastern Europe* makes it an important contribution to understanding contemporary debates on religion and gender, particularly on the shifting roles of men and women, among Muslims in Bulgaria and elsewhere.